

THESIS

**UNIVERSITY OF
NEW HAMPSHIRE**

**JAMES CONNOLLY IN AMERICA:
THE POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT OF AN
IRISH MARXIST AS SEEN FROM HIS
WRITINGS AND HIS INVOLVEMENT WITH
THE AMERICAN SOCIALIST MOVEMENT
1902-1910**

by

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MASTER OF ARTS

1971

A 2009 INTRODUCTION

I have been most fortunate in life as regards both educational opportunities and career choice. I say this as a preface to explaining how I came to be a student in the USA 1969-1971, and a student not only of the history of James Connolly's life in the New World a century ago, but also a witness of, and participant in, some of the most momentous developments in the living history of the US anti-war and social and labour movements of 40 years ago.

I was born on Dublin's South Circular Road in May 1949, to Kay Keohane [1910-1991] and her husband Micheál O'Riordan [1917-2006], an ITGWU bus worker. This was an era that preceded not only free third-level education, but free second-level education as well. My primary education was received in St. Kevin's National School, Grantham Street, and Christian Brothers' School, Synge Street. Driven to study - and not always willingly! - by a mother who passionately believed in the principle expounded by Young Irelander Thomas Davis - "Educate, that you may be free!" - I was fortunate enough to achieve exam success in 1961 in winning a Dublin Corporation secondary school scholarship. By covering my fees, this enabled me to continue with second-level education at Synge Street. In my 1966 Leaving Certificate exams I was also fortunate to win a Dublin Corporation university scholarship. That covered my fees at University College Dublin, from where I graduated in September 1969, with an Honours BA in Political Economy, National Economics, Politics and Statistics.

Based on my academic record to date, and following a March 1969 interview in UCD with Professor Sam Rosen of the Graduate School of Economics at the University of New Hampshire, USA, I was awarded a Graduate Assistantship to continue my studies at UNH, where I achieved an Honours MA in Economics and Labor Relations in January 1971. [*Labor* being the American spelling!]

I had more than one motivation for wishing to study in the United States. I had joined the Connolly Youth Movement in 1967 [serving on its Executive 1968-69], and developed a passionate interest in wanting to learn more and more about James Connolly's own life and work. Connolly had first visited the USA on a lecture tour in 1902, and he returned as an immigrant, with his family, to live and work there from 1903 to 1910. Arising from the fact, however, that the William O'Brien Papers were not to be made public in the

National Library of Ireland until the 1970s, the only hope that any 1969 student of Connolly had of accessing what he had actually written during his American years was to go to the USA itself.

I had originally conceived of collecting Connolly's US writings as a political and extra-curricular project, for which I would have had to find the time outside of my academic studies. I was, however, more than gifted with the good fortune of finding in Professor Sam Rosen [1920-2004], not only an outstanding academic mentor, but also a true friend and father-figure with the warmest of hearts. Sam and his wife Mary Berman [d.2006] proceeded to "adopt" this Irish "greenhorn" into their own family. Son of an immigrant Russian-Jewish tailoring worker, Sam and all his family were also labour radicals. His elder brother, David Ramsey, had been a leading economist of the CPUSA during the 1930s, while Sam himself, as a Young Communist Leaguer, composed the 1936 US Presidential campaign song of CP leader Earl Browder. By the time of the 1948 US Presidential elections, David had become an economic advisor to the unsuccessful Progressive Party candidate, Henry Wallace, who had served as President Roosevelt's Vice-President and Secretary for Agriculture 1941-45 and as President Truman's Secretary for Commerce 1945-46. Sam himself came to UNH in 1957 and became its Professor of Macroeconomic Theory. A founding member and twice president of UNH's American Association of University Professors, Sam Rosen led the fight to win collective bargaining rights at UNH, while all three of his children went on to spend their working lives as union organisers.

Not surprisingly, given such shared values, Sam himself became no less fired with enthusiasm for my proposed research on Connolly. And it is to the memory of the late Sam Rosen that full acknowledgement must go for making ***Connolly in America*** a much more realisable practical project. The Labor Relations component of my graduate studies also encompassed US labour history. Accordingly, it was Sam, as my mentor, who proposed that I should pursue the Connolly project as a labour history thesis in part fulfilment of my MA requirements. Sam went on to open the library doors that enabled me to proceed with that research – from Boston Public Library to New York Public Library, and from the Weidner Library of Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to the Library of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, on the Madison campus of the University of Wisconsin.

While the graduate assistantship paid for my UNH fees, as well as my bed and board, any extensive photocopying would have been beyond my means. I spent a full two months of the heat-wave summer of 1970 immersed in those various libraries, as I painstakingly copied out by hand - word-for-word and in full - Connolly's own writings for American Socialist newspapers, and any ripostes to such articles and letters, as well as those papers' accounts of his political activities. Apart from serving as the basis for my thesis, these same 1970 copybooks have now served a further purpose, as I have handed them over to Donal Nevin, former General Secretary of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and biographer of Connolly and Larkin, to assist with his own life's ambition of publishing all the collected writings of James Connolly.

The January 1971 thesis that follows was subsequently published in August 1971 by the Irish Communist Organisation [Athol Books], under the title of **Connolly in America**, but without my concluding Epilogue. I have, however, restored that Epilogue hereunder, in order to underscore how much my thesis was not only a product of its time, but also to illustrate how it dogmatically signed off with all the youthful arrogance and certitudes of a 21 year old! I remain reasonably confident of the quality of the core thesis itself, as well as of my conclusion that nothing before it, and not much else since, has given such an accurate picture of Connolly's political thought and actions in America during the years 1902-1910 [based, as that thesis was, on such a detailed presentation of what Connolly himself had actually written for publication during those years]. But the Epilogue with which I concluded, covering the years 1910-1916, was based on only the most superficial acquaintance with Connolly's writings during those last six years of his life, and it also expressed a naïve enthusiasm for the misplaced notion that, had he lived, Connolly would probably have become a Leninist.

Subsequent detailed research into Connolly's final years showed me how fundamentally mistaken were the Leninist conclusions of that 1971 Epilogue. Thirty years later, in an April 2001 paper, simply entitled **Researching Connolly**, I had come to the following, rather different, conclusions:

"The next area of extensive research which I conducted on Connolly dealt with his developing position in respect of the First World War. Greaves insisted that the essence of Connolly's position ran parallel to that of Lenin. In 1976 I argued that,

whatever about some of the internationalist propaganda written during the first six months of the War, or the initial slogan of serving neither King nor Kaiser, Connolly's position rapidly moved from a declared stance of neutrality to an intensely partisan pro-German position. He made it clear that among those inspiring him was [a life long opponent of Lenin], the Polish Nationalist and Socialist Josef Pilsudski, who had also allied himself militarily with Germany and Austria, against Russia, in order to fight for an independent Poland ...”

“None of us here can honestly say what Connolly's position would have been on contemporary politics and it is, I think, the wrong question to ask. And this is not only because none of us here have yet had the benefit of reading all of Connolly's writings in their great diversity. Nonetheless, while avoiding the temptation to invoke him for present-day political advantage, I will succumb to some speculation on a few of the issues that he would have had to confront if he had not been murdered by British imperialism, and if he had lived on into his eighties. While he would have welcomed and defended the Russian Revolution, he would not, I think, have ever become a Communist. Although long a private atheist, Connolly had also long ago decided to adopt *'the Catholic pose'*, as he put it himself. This would have been reason enough for him to reject Marxism-Leninism, as he had previously rejected the exact same arguments regarding the Party and religion, when put forward by Frank Janke in the SLP. Being too independent a thinker himself, Connolly had also had enough experience of a Socialist Pope, in the person of De Leon, to exchange him for any other Pope, even of the calibre of Lenin, and still less of either Stalin or Trotsky... But perhaps what all of us, who have in the past approached Connolly with Communist spectacles, have been most remiss in neglecting, are his writings on industrial unionism. We regarded them as rather too syndicalist and we failed to appreciate the core values and insights that they contained concerning industrial democracy and the battle for the control of economic development. I am now inclined to think that Connolly would have regarded James Larkin Junior as a worthy heir – but, as he in turn died in 1969, that is as far as I'm prepared to go in such speculation on what Connolly's perspective might have been in the 50 years subsequent to his murder...”

Three months later, I further developed this theme in a July 2001 paper entitled **James Connolly Re-assessed**, an up-dated version of which, under the title of **The Justification of James Connolly**, was published by SIPTU in 2006 in **James Connolly, Liberty Hall & the 1916 Rising**, edited by Francis Devine and Manus O’Riordan. I related:

“Connolly’s conception of a Socialist society underwent further development and deepening during his period in the United States of America and found expression in his 1908 series of lectures, subsequently published under the title of **Socialism Made Easy**. He wrote:

‘Social-Democracy, as its name implies, is the application to industry, or to the social life of the nation, of the fundamental principles of democracy. Such application will necessarily have to begin in the workshops, and proceed logically and consecutively upward through all the grades of industrial organisation until it reaches the culminating point of national executive power and direction. In other words, Socialism must proceed from the bottom upward whereas capitalist political society is organised from above downward... It will be seen that this conception of Socialism destroys at one blow all the fears of a bureaucratic state ruling and ordering the lives of every individual from above, and thus giving assurance that the social order of the future will be an extension of the freedom of the individual, and not a suppression of it.’

“Connolly belonged neither to the Soviet nor the British schools of State Socialism. But what happened to Connolly’s Marxism during the First World War? Did he abandon this explicitly Social-Democratic perspective to become instead a bloodthirsty proponent of violent Marxism, or did he abandon Socialism altogether for the ‘Physical Force’ Nationalism whose mystique he had previously challenged? He did neither. Britain’s World War had by definition closed off all peaceful options until that War should be brought to a conclusion. And it was the *Rule Britannia, Britannia Rules the Waves* basis of that War that had closed off the possibility, not only of Socialism itself, but also of free industrial development in its capitalist form. It was not merely as an Irish Republican but also as an International Socialist that Connolly sought Britain’s defeat. Only a month short of the Easter Rising, in the Worker’s Republic of March 18th, 1916, Connolly argued, in an article entitled ‘The German or the British Empire?’:

'Every Socialist who knows what he is talking about must be in favour of freedom of the seas, must desire that private property shall be immune from capture at sea during war, must realise that as long as any one nation dominates the water highways of the world neither peace nor free industrial development is possible for the world. If the capitalists of other nations desire the freedom of the seas for selfish reasons of their own that does not affect the matter. Every Socialist anxiously awaits and prays for that full development of the capitalist system which can alone make Socialism possible, but can only come into being by virtue of the efforts of the capitalists inspired by selfish reasons ... We do not wish to be ruled by either [the German or the British] Empire, but we certainly believe that the first named contains in germ more of the possibilities of freedom and civilisation than the latter.'

“If we might borrow the language of the great split that occurred in the Russian Socialist movement a century ago, Connolly was an Irish Menshevik rather than an Irish Bolshevik. He held that the political prerequisite for the construction of a Socialist society was the democratic mandate of majority support. But, no less importantly, he also held that the economic pre-requisite was that such a society should be built on foundations established by the full development of the capitalist system. On the eve of the Easter Rising Connolly nailed his socialist colours to the mast – the colours of evolutionary socialism.”

My studies in the United States completed, I returned to Dublin in February 1971. My desired career had already become fixed in my mind – I wanted to work as an economist on behalf of the trade union movement. During my seventeen months at the University of New Hampshire, I had assumed that such a career choice would have required still further emigration on my part, this time to Britain. But good fortune came my way again. I discovered that the very same Union of which James Connolly had been Acting General Secretary [1914-16] - the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union - had decided to set up its own Research Department and recruit an economist. I applied for the job, had a successful interview, and in March 1971 I commenced work, here in historic Liberty Hall, as the ITGWU's Research Officer. Following the reunification of the two Unions of which our founder Big Jim Larkin had been first General Secretary, it has also been my honour to serve as SIPTU's Head of Research since 1990.

Since ***Connolly in America*** has been out of print for several decades, I would now like to mark the centenary of the foundation of our Union in 1909 by making available, online, to my SIPTU comrades and colleagues, this unabridged version of my 1971 American thesis – warts and all!

Manus O’Riordan

Liberty Hall

September 22, 2009

99th anniversary of the birth of my mother

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**MICHEÁL MANUS O'RIORDAN
B.A. University College Dublin, 1969**

A THESIS

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis has as its main purpose a description of the political development of the Irish Marxist James Connolly, during the years 1902-1910 which were spent by him in the U.S.A. This is done through an analysis both of his writings during these years, and his relationship with the organizations which at that time made up the American Socialist Movement – the Socialist Labor Party, the Socialist Party of America, and the Industrial Workers' of the World.

The overwhelming amount of what Connolly wrote while in America has not been republished and is only available in the publications in which they originally appeared. This material has been studied at source by the writer, and together with the contemporary accounts in the American Socialist Press of Connolly's activities in America, it forms the essential data on which this thesis is based.

In view of the fact that Connolly's political position in America has been misrepresented, either through lack of reference to what he actually wrote and said during that period, or worse still, through distortions of it, a clear presentation of his position has necessitated the use of extensive quotations.

The thesis begins by presenting what Connolly's political position was prior to coming to America, and how their common struggle against right-wing reformism in the socialist movement led him to join the Socialist Labor Party.

The factors leading to his break with that Party are then presented. The ideological factor was essentially the anti-Marxist theory of wages being developed by its leader Daniel De Leon, which denied the usefulness of the struggle by workers for higher wages. This is followed by a documentation of the organisational questions which were the immediate cause for Connolly leaving the Party.

Next discussed are Connolly's relationship with the Industrial Workers of the World and his theory of industrial unionism. His deviations towards a semi-syndicalist position which downgraded the vanguard role of the Party are dealt with, and his own contradiction of much of that position during the same period is shown.

His views on the Church and religion are analysed as also are the reasons which led him to join the Socialist Party.

The thesis closes with a presentation of Connolly's progress away from a syndicalist position subsequent to his return to Ireland, and his movement towards a position similar in many ways to that of Lenin.

The writer does not pretend to any false neutrality in the treatment of his subject matter.

Connolly was a Marxist, and the thesis is written from a Marxist viewpoint. Rather than being an obstacle, it is the writer's belief that this outlook is the greatest asset to presenting and critically assessing Connolly's position as a Marxist. Throughout the text, therefore, Connolly and his associates and opponents are evaluated against the background of the teachings of Marx himself, and of his ablest interpreters, Engels and Lenin. In this manner it is shown that Connolly held the essential tenets of Marxism, while having, however, a number of weaknesses and inconsistencies, which are set against the background of the ideological confusion reigning in the working-class movement at the time. The conclusion reached is that, in the few years before his execution, Connolly, independently, was overcoming most of his previous weaknesses and was realizing once again the distinction between the vanguard organisation of the working class and the all-embracing trade unions.

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CHAPTER I

CONNOLLY AND THE SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

- THE STRUGGLE AGAINST OPPORTUNISM

James Connolly commenced a period of eight years involvement in the American Socialist Movement on the night of September 19, 1902 when he spoke at a meeting in New York held under the auspices of the Socialist Labor Party of America. This period was to have a deep impact on the ideological development of this Irish Marxist.

That his involvement with America commenced with the Socialist Labor Party is not surprising. Both had a record of strong opposition to the opportunism that was coming to dominate the Second International and most of its component parts – the individual socialist parties throughout the world.

This opportunism found its most sophisticated expression in the revision of Marx's teachings undertaken by the German Social-Democrat, Eduard Bernstein. In his book, *Evolutionary Socialism* (1898), Bernstein attacked Marx's theory of surplus value and stated that instead of being impoverished under capitalism, the working-class was permanently improving its economic conditions. Socialism would not need a revolution for its achievement, according to Bernstein. Rather would it be arrived at by the evolutionary process of reforms.¹

In 1908, Lenin wrote of the practice which would be followed by socialist parties based on Bernsteinism rather than on revolutionary Marxism:

'The final aim is nothing, the movement is everything' – this catch-phrase of Bernstein's expresses the substance of revisionism better than many long arguments. The policy of revisionism consists in determining its conduct from case to case, in adapting itself to the events of the day and to the chops and changes of petty politics; it consists in forgetting the basic interests of the proletariat, the main feature of the capitalist system as a whole and of capitalist evolution as a whole, and in sacrificing these basic interests for the real or assumed advantages of the moment.²

Both Connolly and the Socialist Labor Party fought strenuously against the opportunist revisionism best summed up by Bernstein. Connolly's political background had been in the revolutionary wing of the British Social-Democratic Federation, and, from 1896 onwards, in the Irish Socialist Republican Party which he led.

In 1894 he clearly put himself on the opposite side of the ideological fence to Bernstein's revisionism. He then wrote:

The return of a Socialist candidate does not mean the immediate realisation of even the programme of palliatives commonly set before the electors. Nay, such programmes are in themselves a mere secondary consideration of little weight, indeed, apart from the spirit in which they will be interpreted. The election of a Socialist to any public body is only valuable in so far as it is the return of a disturber of the political peace.³

It was as leader of the Irish Socialist Republican Party, though, that Connolly made his main theoretical contributions with regard to the role of the working-class in the bourgeois-democratic revolution, in many ways paralleling the same principles that were expounded by Lenin in relation to the Russian situation.⁴

Connolly's analysis showed that, because of the development of monopoly capitalism, the bourgeoisie could no longer accomplish their own revolution in Ireland. In other words, it was impossible to develop an independent Irish capitalist economy.⁵ Only by taking the path towards socialist development could Ireland break the grip of British imperialism upon her.

If you remove the English army tomorrow and hoist the green flag over Dublin Castle, unless you set about the organisation of the Socialist Republic your efforts would be in vain.

England would still rule you. She would rule you through her capitalists, through her landlords, through her financiers, through the whole array of commercial and individualist institutions which she has planted in this country and watered with the tears of our mothers and the blood of our martyrs.⁶

Connolly pointed out that the British Empire was but the highest political expression of the capitalist system. Therefore, the capitalist agitator for Irish independence, seeking merely a political Republic, could always be compromised. The Irish Socialist Republican Party was the only consistent fighter for Irish freedom.⁷

The Irish Socialists would, therefore, have to maintain the independent organization of the working-class in this struggle.

Having learned from history that all bourgeois revolutionists of to-day become the conservatives of to-morrow, the Irish Socialists refuse to deny or to leave their identity with those who only half understand the problem of liberty. They seek only the alliance and the friendship of those hearts, who, loving freedom for its own sake, are not afraid to follow its banner when it is uplifted by the hands of the working-class who have most need of it.⁸

In 1897, therefore, at the age of twenty-nine, Connolly had arrived at his concept of the united front, led by the working class, in the struggle for Irish independence. This was essentially the same principle of working-class leadership in the bourgeois-democratic revolution that was given international expression by Lenin, Stalin and Mao. In his first published pamphlet in 1897, Connolly made it crystal clear that it was at once a position of both unity with the bourgeoisie and of struggle against it:

No revolutionists can safely invite the cooperation of men or classes, whose ideals are not theirs, and whom, therefore, they may be compelled to fight at some future critical stage of the journey to freedom. To this category belongs every section of the propertied class and every individual of those classes who believes in the righteousness of his class position.⁹

Connolly's militant class-conscious position extended to all spheres of working-class activities. He showed himself to be a relentless opponent of class collaboration. While he had welcomed the development of the Dublin Labour Party – which although in no way socialist, did appear at first to be a genuine step forward in independent political action on the part of the working class – when it began to align itself with the bourgeois political parties and

abandon all pretence of independence, Connolly was merciless in his criticism:

No single important move in the interest of the worker was even mooted... The Labour Lord Mayor of the Dublin Labour Party declared he would represent no class or section and thus announced beforehand that those responsible for his nomination only sought to use the name of labour as a cover for the intrigues of a clique... We see in this contest ... not a fight between capital and labour but a sordid scramble for position between two sets of political wirepullers, both equally contemptible.¹⁰

The following year Connolly also indicated his hostility to Fabianism – which was then one of the most sophisticated forms of opportunism in the British Socialist movement. The Fabian Society saw the evolution towards socialism proceed through greater activity on the part of city and town councils in areas previously left to private enterprise. In *Justice*, organ of the Social-Democratic Federation, Connolly wrote to condemn these schemes of municipal “socialism”:

In order to prevent the Irish working class from breaking off entirely from the bourgeois parties and from developing a revolutionary tendency, the Fabians sent their lecturer to Ireland, to induce the Irish working class to confine themselves to the work of municipalising, and to fritter away their energies and break their hearts on the petty squabbles of local administration, to the entire neglect of the essential work of capturing the political power necessary for social reconstruction.¹¹

But it was perhaps in his second pamphlet, *The New Evangel*, published in 1901, that Connolly’s anti-revisionist views were most clearly expressed.

In this pamphlet he declared that his socialism was based on recognition of the materialist basis of history and that the Irish Socialist Republican Party prohibited all discussion of religion – including attempts to find a religious basis for socialism. He voiced his strong opposition to the parties of reform who lost their sole justification for existence when the Socialist parties incorporated

whatever just political demands they had, with the economic demands of the working class. In addition, Connolly strongly attacked the attempts by some socialists, mainly in England, to paint nationalisation by the capitalist state in socialist colours:

An immense gulf separates the 'nationalising' proposals of the middle class from the 'socialising' demands of the revolutionary working class. The first proposes to endow a Class State – repository of the political power of the Capitalist Class – with certain powers and functions to be administered in the common interest of the possessing class; the second proposes to subvert the Class State and replace it with the Socialist State, representing organised society — the Socialist Republic. To the cry of the middle class reformers, 'make this or that the property of the government', we reply, 'yes, in proportion as the workers are ready to make the government their property.'¹²

There was no doubt where Connolly stood in the international Socialist movement. His writings made it perfectly clear that he was with the revolutionary wing. There was no doubt either, at that time, that the Socialist Labor Party of America held the same position.

During this period the dominant labor organization in the United States was the American Federation of Labor. To say that it was dominant, however, is not to say that it made much of an impact on the overwhelming majority of the American working-class. The case was otherwise. By the turn of the twentieth century it embraced only five percent of the wage labor force and almost as many workers belonged to unions that were not affiliated with the A.F.L.¹³ Its dominance was due to the fact that it was the strongest of all existing organizations. Because of this dominance, it was also strongest in ideological influence, insofar as socialists regarded it as **the** American labor movement, with all the respect that the movement of the American working-class should have. Until the advent of Daniel De Leon as the leading figure in the Socialist Labor Party, there was no thorough consideration given to the idea that rather than being **the** American labor movement, it might in fact have been the greatest obstacle to such a movement developing.

That it was an obstacle to the organization of the working-class was due to its craft exclusiveness in organization, its high initiation fees, its hostility towards black and foreign workers and its general class collaboration. A.F.L. Vice-President John Mitchell had written: "Hostility between capital and labor is not a necessity... Upon a closer examination, the interest of the one appears to be the interest of the other." President Gompers and Vice-President Mitchell were each paid \$6,000 per annum for their membership of the National Civic Federation, "a capitalist body officially designated to settle disputes between labor and capital, while in reality organized for the purpose of fighting the revolutionary labor movement."¹⁴

The American capitalists were deeply appreciative of this "labor" policy. Melville Engel, the Chairman of four great railroads said: "It seems to me that your trade agreement offers the same protection to capital as to labor." Further appreciation was shown by Senator Mark Hanna, the sponsor of the National Civic Federation, who coined the title "lieutenants of the captains of industry" for the craft union leaders. Hanna commented: "I found the labor organisations prepared and willing to meet us more than half-way."¹⁵

There was an objective basis for this policy of the American Craft Unions who stood above and apart from the other 90 percent of American workers – the unorganised and unskilled. In 1912 Lenin commented:

The principal historical cause of the particular prominence and (temporary) strength of bourgeois labor policy in Britain and America is the long-standing political liberty and the exceptional favourable conditions, in comparison with other countries, for the deep-going and widespread development of capitalism. These conditions have tended to produce within the working-class an aristocracy that has trailed after the bourgeoisie, betraying its own class.

In 1915 he stated further:

Mr. Legien (German trade union leader) and Mr. Gompers and similar persons are not the representatives of the working class, they represent the aristocracy and bureaucracy of the working class.¹⁶

It was against this background, then, that De Leon assumed the editorship of the *Weekly People* in 1891 – a year after joining that Party. His initial strategy of boring-from-within the Knights of Labor and the American Federation of Labor, in the attempt to win these bodies over to a correct proletarian policy in the class struggle, failed, due to being outmanoeuvred by the officials of these organizations. Accordingly, in 1895 a new trade union movement was launched – the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance (S.T. & L.A.) – which was endorsed by the 1896 Socialist Labor Party convention.

De Leon adopted a position of firm opposition to the type of unionism practiced by the A.F.L. In 1896 he had the following to say on their approach: “Instead of being a militant, class-conscious organization, ever watchful of the interests of the workers and ever ready to do battle” against conditions that tended to degrade them, the trade union movement had “reduced itself to a mere benevolent organization.”¹⁷

In 1898 he made explicit his philosophy of class-conscious unionism, to a meeting of strikers in New Bedford, Massachusetts:

Between the working class and the capitalist class there is an irrepressible conflict, a class struggle for life... It is a struggle that will not down, and must be ended only by either the total subjugation of the working-class, or the abolition of the capitalist. Thus, you perceive that the theory on which our “pure and simple” trade organizations are grounded, and on which you went into this strike, is false. There being no “common interests” but only **hostile interests** between the capitalist class and the working class, the battle you are waging to establish “safe relations” between the two is a hopeless one.¹⁸

De Leon, then, held that it was necessary for independent working class politics to lead the trade union struggle – with a socialist perspective. On May 22, 1898, he wrote: “There is no hope in the economic struggle alone unless it is backed by a movement, politically, of their own exclusive class interests.”¹⁹

This was in line with Marx’s position as elaborated by A. Lozovsky, leader of the Profintern, or Red International of Labor Unions (1921-35):

Marx understood the primacy of politics over economics in such a way that, in the first instance, he placed the political all-class tasks of the trade unions higher than the private corporative tasks, and secondly, the political party of the proletariat must define the economic tasks and lead the trade union organisation itself.²⁰

Nevertheless, there were some in the S.L.P. opposed to this position, and under the leadership of the S.L.P. German-language newspaper –the *Volkszeitung* - they broke away from the S.L.P. in 1899. Ostensibly one of the issues was opposition to De Leon’s dual unionism – that is, his policy of refusing to bore from within the A.F.L. unions any more and of setting up rival socialist unions. Quite possibly many of the rank-and-file members who participated in the split from the S.L.P. genuinely believed that a revolutionary boring-from-within policy was both possible and preferable to De Leon’s position, which was sectarian to the extent that he was opposed to any work at all in the A.F.L. unions as an adjunct to S.L.P. activity in its own independent unions – the S.T & L.A. But with Morris Hillquit, Max Hayes and the other leaders of the splitters, the case was otherwise. Attacks on “dual unionism” and a lot of militant left-wing rhetoric served for a short while to cover up a right-wing policy. What was involved in reality was a complete capitulation to the A.F.L.’s policies rather than an attempt to revolutionize it from within. Ten years later, on September 2, 1909, the *Volkszeitung* admitted:

Yes, the *New Yorker Volkszeitung* went so far in its defense of the American Federation of Labor that it accepted the risk of a split in the Socialist movement of America in order to prevent a split in the trade union movement of the land, and to keep up the American Federation of Labor as the united body of American Unionism.²¹

Max Hayes, one of the leaders of the splitters, proudly wrote in the *International Socialist Review*, in May 1905, that “the trade unionists and sympathizers seceded from the S.L.P. and practically destroyed that party, which is more than our Republican and Democratic brethren have ever done.”²²

The “boring-from-within” policy of the splitters turned out to be anything but revolutionary. When the 1899 A.F.L.

convention passed a resolution calling for the study of trusts and monopolies so as to permit an “intelligent” stand on nationalisation, Max Hayes cried out: “This call practically places the A.F.L. in the position of endorsing the collective ownership of the means of production. It opens the door to socialism.”²³

This misrepresentation of facts – the equation of nationalisation with socialism and the pretense that the A.F.L. was practically socialist – was a repetition of the “boring-from-within” tactics, described by De Leon, of those who had refused to work with the S.T. & L.A. after its foundation:

By little and little their voices were extinguished. The borers from within in too many cases ceased to bore at all... Boring from within meant that you had to keep quiet, and get the applause of the labor fakir, so that he might do what he wanted to.²⁴

In 1901 the S.L.P. splitters eventually joined ranks with the Social Democratic Party, of which Eugene Debs was the figure-head, but Victor Berger the dominant policy-maker. The new party was called the Socialist Party of America.

Berger was a typical advocate of the schemes of municipal “socialism” which Connolly had so vigorously attacked, and in 1901 he made it quite clear what ideological position he held, by insisting that “the tactic of the American Socialist Party, if that party is to live and succeed – can only be the much abused and much misunderstood Bernstein doctrine.” By 1905 Berger was boasting that he was “rather proud of being called the ‘American Bernsein’.”²⁵ Berger refused to sign the 1904 Socialist Party platform unless all reference to ***The Communist Manifesto*** was deleted - which it was.²⁶

There can be no doubt, having examined his views on socialism, that such a party as the Socialist Party of America was repugnant to Connolly. There can be no surprise at him feeling a strong ideological affinity to the Socialist Labor Party. This was due not only to what was happening in the U.S.A. – but was also due to the common positions taken by both the S.L.P. and the Irish Socialist Republican Party at the Paris Congress of the Second International in 1900.

This Congress, more than any other previous one, showed the clear dominance that opportunism had achieved in the international socialist movement. True, only a minority openly espoused the right-wing revisionism of Bernstein. The dominant form of opportunism was “centrism”, or Kautskyism, which attacked Bernsteinism in word but practised it in deed. Kautsky was the German Social-Democratic leader who had originally attacked Bernstein’s revisions of Marx. But now Kautsky was developing his own revisions of Marx. In particular, he was denying the latter’s teaching that the state is by its very nature an instrument of class oppression. Foster has described the role played by centrism, or Kautskyism, in the international socialist movement: “Its basic function, with its stress upon radical phrases, was to provide a treacherous halting place for the masses midway in their revolt against the right and their march to the left.”²⁷

The dominance of centrism at the Paris Congress was shown by its adoption of a resolution from Kautsky which, while criticising the particular action of the French Socialist Millerand in entering a bourgeois government which included General Galliffet, “butcher of the Commune” [because Millerand had not obtained his Party’s permission first], in principle accepted the possibility of impartiality on the part of government in the struggle between capital and labor, and *ipso facto* the possibility of socialist participation in bourgeois governments, without this being a violation of socialist principles.²⁸

This resolution was a blatant negation of the Marxist theory of the state, yet it was opposed by only a small minority at the Congress, among which were the S.L.P. and the Irish Socialist Republican Party. The American Social Democratic delegate supported the Kautsky resolution, as did the British Social-Democratic Federation.

Connolly vigorously attacked the S.D.F.’s position, in alliance with its left-wing.²⁹ The left-wing was denied adequate coverage in the S.D.F. organ *Justice*, which also refused to publish an appeal to English Socialists, from Connolly’s Irish Socialist Republican Party, not to support the Irish Home Rule Party – which represented the forces of Irish capitalism. An S.D.F. branch was expelled for sending a letter to the American S.L.P.’s *Weekly People* on the

refusal of *Justice* to print the Irish Socialist Republican Party manifesto. Just before leaving for America on his S.L.P. sponsored tour, Connolly helped in the launching of the Edinburgh *Socialist* as the organ of the Scottish left-wing of the S.D.F.³⁰

It was against this common background of struggle against opportunism, then, that Connolly spoke at his first S.L.P. meeting in New York, September 1902. Here again he made his class position unmistakably clear:

I represent only the class to which I belong, and that is the working-class. The Irish people, like the people of this and other capitalist countries, are divided into the master class and the working class, and I could not represent the entire Irish people on account of the antagonistic interests of these classes, no more than the wolf could represent the lamb or the fisherman the fish.

The remainder of his speech continued in the same vein, and he strongly attacked the worthlessness for the working class of the reform measures proposed by the politicians of the Irish Home Rule Party. He particularly attacked their proposal of peasant proprietary as a solution to the land question. Connolly pointed out that this would be no solution, as the Irish small farms could not meet the international competition in agricultural production which had developed. He stressed instead the Socialist ownership of land. "Fighting foreign tyrants to put a native one in their place is no remedy and a waste of time."

Connolly closed by urging the Irishmen present to work and vote for the S.L.P. because whatever was done to promote Socialism and destroy capitalism in America would also be doing the same in Ireland.³¹

While on his lecture tour and passing through Salt Lake City, Connolly sent an article written on November 10 to the *Weekly People*, entitled "The S.L.P. 'Being Dead Yet Speaketh'."

He admitted that, due to the hostile reports concerning the S.L.P. which appeared in the British Social Democratic press, he was inclined to believe that the S.L.P. was in a pretty bad state numerically – but this did not, of course, deter him:

To me it was sufficient that the S.L.P. was following in America the same line of action which we in Ireland had mapped out for ourselves before we came in touch with S.L.P. literature, that although Ireland and Bulgaria were the only countries which at the International Congress had voted solid against the Kautsky resolution, yet the S.L.P. had followed the lead of France, Poland and Italy, and had backed us up by one vote, and that as long as their cause was just it did not matter whether the S.L.P. vote was 34,000 or the million which the S.D.P. did not poll in 1900. I believe firmly that the revolutionary Socialist movement will always be numerically weak until the hour of revolution arrives, and then it will be as easy to get adherents by the thousands as it is now to get single individuals.

With Connolly, then, principle came before numbers. But there was one weakness observed by him in the S.L.P. which he felt obliged to comment upon – its American Chauvinism: “Permit me also to say that in one respect the S.L.P. is thoroughly American; it has its full share of the American national disease –Swellhead.”³²

This latter point may appear to have been a criticism of a personal fault Connolly found in S.L.P. members, a criticism of a fault without much political significance. But it was to achieve political significance five years later, due to the S.L.P. hostility to Connolly’s proposals to cater for the foreign element among the American working class through race and language socialist federations.

The following month Connolly penned another article for the *Weekly People*, this one giving his opinions on the S.L.P. vote in the 1902 elections. Because the American system of elections was very unfavorable to small parties, Connolly felt that the comparatively small vote of the S.L.P., as contrasted with the Socialist vote of some European countries, was no reflection upon the tactics of the Socialist Labor Party. In fact, the reverse was the case:

The Socialist Labor Party vote is the only vote in the world today of which it can be unqualifiedly said it was a vote for Socialism, and absolutely uninfluenced by local considerations or by the personality of the candidates.

He went on to express his opinions on the vote of the Socialist Party, in comparison to that of the S.L.P., and in doing so showed that he held to the vanguard concept of the Party:

Compared with the vote of the Social Democratic, alias “Socialist”, party, it (the S.L.P.’s vote) is – assuming even that the Social Democratic Party is honest – the vote of an army compared with the vote of a mob; and who, in the days of battle, would hesitate in choosing between the support of a large mob or a small army?³³

This passage of Connolly’s is a refutation of the statement made by his main biographer, Greaves, that “he had no conception of a political party as the general staff of a class.”³⁴ In fact, Connolly’s position above is strikingly similar to Stalin’s exposition of the Leninist principle of the Party as the “advanced detachment of the working class” and the “General Staff of the proletariat”:

The Party cannot be a real party if it limits itself to registering what the masses of the working class feel and think, if it drags at the tail of the spontaneous movement, if it is unable to rise above the momentary interests of the proletariat, if it is unable to raise the masses to the level of understanding the class interests of the proletariat. The Party must stand at the head of the working class; it must lead the proletariat, and not drag at the tail of the spontaneous movement.³⁵

Connolly, then, stood behind the S.L.P. approach to elections, in opposition to that of the Socialist Party. This approach was summed up by De Leon as follows:

The pure and simple political socialist lays all his stress upon the parliamentary epoch of “political action.” The S.L.P. lays no stress whatever upon the parliamentary, but lays all its stress upon the pre-parliamentary or agitational epoch of “political action.” Hence, the Socialist Party will sacrifice anything for votes, relying on the *ignis fatuus* of what its politicians, elected in such a way, will do in parliament. The S.L.P., on the contrary, sacrifices nothing for votes, knowing that the essential part of “political action” consists in the propaganda carried on at campaigns.³⁶

Connolly's tour covered all the major centers in the United States where the S.L.P. was organized. In his speech at San José, California, on November 19, he drew attention to what he felt were important differences between the trade and labor organisations of Ireland and the United States. Even though the union in Ireland was pure and simple, whenever it did endorse candidates, it was men of their own class. In America, however, the practice was one of endorsing candidates from the capitalist class. He felt that one of the main reasons for the corruption of the pure and simple union in the United States was the great number of political jobs at the disposal of capitalist politicians. "Hence we find here 'labor fakirs' holding down all kinds of jobs from that of cleaning spittoons in city halls to that of Commissioner-General of Immigration."³⁷

Thus we can see that the reason for Connolly supporting the S.L.P. policy of independent unionism was not because the A.F.L. unions were not socialist – but because they were far worse than being merely "pure and simple", they were the "labor lieutenants of capital" who, because of their collaboration with the employers, were turning the trade unions into instruments of bourgeois oppression instead of organs of working class struggle. This was a difference between Connolly's and De Leon's philosophy of unionism. De Leon felt it was sufficient for a union to be merely "pure and simple", to justify setting up a rival socialist union in opposition to it.

Connolly ended his American tour with a final rally in New York on January 2.

He again felt the necessity to refer to the chauvinism he found pretty general throughout the country. He also attributed much of the lack of class consciousness and class solidarity which made itself apparent to him, to the extreme individualistic manner in which the United States was developed.

Connolly went on to present again his views on the nature and function of the party of the proletariat and to state his belief that the S.L.P. conformed to this concept. He believed the United States as a whole to be behind in the conception of the class struggle. From his observations of labor men he felt that what was wanted was "not conciliation or a broad platform that would embrace them, but a narrow platform broad enough for the honest man, but too narrow for any crook to put his foot upon."

Connolly concluded by reaffirming his belief that the Socialist Labor Party was the only party likely to carry out the emancipation of the workers.³⁸

In his reply, De Leon lent further substance to Connolly's complaint about American chauvinism, by presenting what might be called a left-wing version of American exceptionalism. He repeated his "prophecy" of "eight or nine years ago", that America would be the strategic battle ground in the conflict between capitalism and socialism, and that consequently it was the country upon which the emancipation of the workers of Europe depended.³⁹

Connolly returned to Ireland to fight a municipal election campaign in Dublin. In this campaign he put the S.L.P. policy towards elections into operation and refused to hold out false reformist hopes for the working class:

There is only one remedy for the slavery of the working class, and that is a socialist republic ... There is only one way to attain that, and that way is for the working class to establish a political party of its own... In claiming this we will be only following the example of our masters. Every political party is the party of class.⁴⁰

Soon after this election campaign, differences arose within the Irish Socialist Republican Party, and a "Socialist Labour Party" was set up in opposition to Connolly's I.S.R.P. The nature of this new group was explained in a letter to the *Weekly People* from Irish Socialist Republican Party Secretary, Michael Rafferty:

We have an attempt to disrupt the party by the wholesale resignation of an element which made the pretext of its resignation the charges of "bossing" against Comrade Connolly, said bossing consisting in the insistence of our duty to our American subscribers.

This new party took to itself the name of Socialist Labor Party in order, presumably, to trade on the reputation gained by your party in America and the new party in Great Britain.

In view of these circumstances ... the Irish Socialist Republican Party has passed the following resolution:

“Resolved, That the Irish Socialist Republican Party proclaims itself to be the Irish section of the Socialist Labor Party.”⁴¹

Meanwhile, events had developed rapidly in the British Socialist Democratic Federation. Yates, the manager of the Edinburgh *Socialist*, was expelled, and that newspaper condemned. In April and May of 1903 preparations were made by the left-wing in Scotland, who had withdrawn from the S.D.F. upon Yates’s expulsion, to set up a new party. Connolly went to Scotland to participate in the preliminary organising work for this party. Since the same anti-revisionist position was held by this group in Britain as the S.L.P. in America, Connolly urged the adoption of the same name. “It doesn’t matter what you call it”, he argued, “it will BE called the S.L.P.” He further stated that the “wobbling state of the movement in England” was due to S.D.F. leader Hyndman and his policy of “preach revolution and practise compromise, and do neither thoroughly.”⁴²

Accordingly, the S.L.P. was launched in Edinburgh on June 7, 1903.

In the June 1903 issue of the Edinburgh *Socialist*, Connolly, in an article entitled “The S.L.P. of America and the London S.D.F.”, explained why he supported the position of Daniel De Leon, as opposed to that of Hyndman’s S.D.F.:

The S.D.F. professes to be a political party independent of all others, and the only real exponent of Socialist principles, yet ever since the Independent Labour Party came into existence, the S.D.F. has never had the courage to be engaged in a parliamentary candidature without soliciting the help of the Independent Labour Party and playing for the votes of the radicals.

The S.D.F. declares Trade-Unionism to be played out, yet denounces any attack upon the labour leaders who declare Trade-Unionism to be all powerful ...

The S.L.P. does everything the S.D.F. has not the heart to do; it therefore shows its belief in its principles, and wins the respect of its enemies even whilst they hate it. On the other

hand, the S.D.F. recoils from the logical application of the principles it professes to believe in.⁴³

That Fall Connolly was obliged to return to America due to economic pressure, and he was to spend the next six years of his life as an exile in the United States. These years naturally commenced with his reinvolvement with the S.L.P. – this time as a member.

Upon his arrival in America, he told the readers of the *Weekly People* of the formation of the British S.L.P. While he admitted that the new party would have a hard fight, it would not be a fight to maintain its position as a Socialist Party. Due to the fact that it included whole branches which had left the S.D.F., the new party started with at least a local status everywhere.

But there would be a stiff fight with those parties already in the field claiming to represent labor – especially since more and more trade unions were putting forward parliamentary candidates.

When asked whether these candidates were Socialist, Connolly replied:

No! And as a rule they don't even claim to be. They are for the most part Liberals. Some are Socialists of the stripe of George Barnes of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, who ... declared ... that he did not mean "to set class against class or people against employers or labor."

The attitude of the British S.L.P. towards this movement was one of criticism and exposure of its reformism and the sophistry and crookedness of its leaders. The S.L.P. would enter candidates against them in the municipal elections, mainly for propaganda purposes, because:

In my opinion, a great deal cannot be accomplished in a municipal direction anywhere. We require primarily to capture the powers of National Government.

With regard to S.D.F., Connolly commented that their chief aim was to unite with the reformist Independent Labour Party:

They have been frightened by the big vote of the latter party and can think of nothing but running into its arms. On the other hand, the chiefs of the I.L.P. do not want to unite, and lose no opportunity of insulting and kicking the S.D.F. Keir Hardie wants no mouthers of revolutionary phrases in his show; besides Hardie has a healthy contempt for Hyndman and his pets, and doesn't propose to help them cover their failure with the S.D.F. by merging themselves in his ranks. ⁴⁴

In the light of this position of Connolly's on the I.L.P. as well as on the S.D.F., it is difficult to see how Desmond Ryan, one of Connolly's biographers and the selective editor of some of his writings, could make the following statement:

In 1894 Connolly stood as a socialist candidate for the Edinburgh Town Council ... He met Keir Hardie and his colleagues who had founded the Independent Labour Party the year before. Connolly came to regard that organisation as a far more effective model of what a popular movement should be than the Social Democratic Federation. ⁴⁵

Ryan produced no evidence from Connolly for such a statement. It is true that Connolly felt a strong friendship for Hardie and a respect for the latter's personal integrity. He praised Hardie's advocacy to the British working class of Home Rule for Ireland and Hardie's working-class internationalist stand in opposition to the First World War. This latter stand was in sharp contrast to that of the pseudo-Marxist Hyndman of the S.D.F. who supported British imperialism in that war. And Hardie made no pretense to be a Marxist. But Connolly's obituary for Hardie in 1915 was confined to praising Hardie the man and made no mention of Hardie's I.L.P. ⁴⁶ Connolly's preference was always for a genuine revolutionary party, and not a reformist one. It was this very position that first led Connolly to join the S.L.P. in America.

Notes to Chapter I

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CHAPTER II

WAGES, MARRIAGE AND THE CHURCH

The S.L.P. did not continue for long, however, to fully conform to Connolly's ideas of what a revolutionary Marxist party should be. In April 1904, a dispute erupted between Connolly and De Leon concerning certain tendencies which began to express themselves in the Party and which Connolly felt were in conflict with the declared policy of the S.L.P. and Marxist teaching.

There were two basic issues which prompted Connolly's letter in the *Weekly People* of April 9 – the letter which was the first shot fired in the controversy. The first was the occasion when Connolly presented the Marxist theory of wages at an S.L.P. meeting in Schenectady, New York, and had this theory attacked by other S.L.P. followers who denied the usefulness of agitating for wages increases, on the grounds that these would automatically and immediately be nullified by price increases.

The other basic issue was the article by the Belgian Social-Democrat Emil Vandervelde, entitled "Socialism or the Catholic Church?", which De Leon had published in the *Weekly People* of March 19.

In his article Vandervelde spoke of the increasing political activities of the Catholic Church in Europe on the side of reaction. These activities, in his opinion, were leading to the position where the Catholic Church was becoming the main enemy of socialism:

One may welcome or deplore the fact of this coming concentration of forces about the Catholic Church on the one side, the Social Democracy on the other. But none can deny that this concentration is inevitable, and that the future struggles will have to be fought out between these two armies.

In his enthusiasm for this struggle, which was not one designated as being between capitalism and socialism, but between Catholicism and Socialism, Vandervelde was merely giving a 'left-wing' cover to the campaigns of bourgeois atheism or free-thought. Bourgeois atheism can be described as that hostility to religion

arising from a purely individualistic motivation and a belief that capitalism could operate much better if unhindered by the moral and institutional restraints that religions impose on their followers. The atheism of Marxism is totally distinct and in fact opposite to this position. It is based on the scientific analysis of society according to the method of dialectical materialism, and sees religion as a product of society, as a mystification of what was at one time not readily understandable. Marxists combat religious ideas in order to ensure capitalism's overthrow - and not its "perfection" as do bourgeois free-thinkers –and this can only be done if the working class bases itself on a scientific, dialectical materialist understanding of reality.

The nature of Vandervelde's pseudo-socialism, and his position on the side of bourgeois free-thought, was indicated by the fact that he could so enthuse over this struggle against the Catholic Church, even though he admitted that

By a natural reaction (to the Church's political activity), anti-clericalism, which had been relegated to the background on account of the pressure of socio-industrial issues, has again appeared, and is spreading in every direction. In France, in Italy, and even in Catholic Spain, the old cry of "*a bas la calotte!*" resounds on all sides. The veterans of former battles return to the ranks. The youth are divided again into Catholics and anti-Catholics.

Vandervelde's article was calculated to ensure that that they would remain thus divided, and that the "pressure of socio-industrial issues" – the round-about way Vandervelde avoids using the term "class struggle" – would not emerge to the fore again.

To further ensure this, atheism was declared by Vandervelde to be almost synonymous with Socialism:

Wherever free thought penetrates, Socialism enters also. We know, it is true, many workmen who become Socialists without relinquishing, or without totally abandoning, their religious convictions; but aside from "yellows" and "blacklegs", who act solely from mercenary motives, we neither know nor can conceive of any free-thinking workman who is not at the same time a Socialist.

And, of course, since the principal enemy was the Catholic Church, it would be wrong to be too hard on the liberal bourgeoisie:

Justice forbids, however, to reproach English Liberalism as a body with the reactionary complaisance of the right wing. In France too, there is a distinction to be made. The Republican middle class and the radical democracy do not hesitate to accept the help of the Social Democracy in the fight against the Catholic Church by enrolling Millerand in the Ministry and electing Jaures Vice-President of the Chamber of Deputies.

The essence of Vandervelde's argument was that in the Old World "two gigantic coalitions are formed by the elimination of intermediaries – the Black International and the Red International."¹

Emil Vandervelde was one of the most notorious revisionist leaders of the Second International. When the Great War of 1914-1918 broke out he became a prime example of social patriotism and joined the Belgian bourgeois government, in which he remained even after the conclusion of the War. The fact that British imperialism was successful in getting young Irishmen to join the British Army and fight in the war, by claiming, among other things, that it was a war for the freedom of "little Catholic Belgium" did not seem to deter Vandervelde from joining the latter's government. Perhaps his rationale then was that the class struggle should now be described as being between Socialism and Germany, and "justice" ought to forbid reproaching the Belgian Catholic Church, who did not hesitate to enlist the support of Social-Democracy in their common struggle, by enrolling Vandervelde in the ministry.

In any event, Connolly sent in his letter, dated March 23 and entitled, "Wages, Marriage and the Church." He proclaimed the political position from which he was arguing: "I find myself in complete accord with the S.L.P. (of which I am proud to be a member) on all questions of policy and of discipline and of revolutionary procedure." He had found in the Party, however, comrades who held and gave expression to views on policy, and conceptions of Socialism, with which he would not for a moment agree, and he was writing this letter in order to have an earnest discussion on these points of disagreement.

Connolly referred to reading of a comrade who, in a discussion with a “Kangaroo” (the S.L.P. nickname for members of the Socialist Party), held that workers could not even temporarily benefit by a rise in wages, “as every rise in wages was offset by a rise in prices”:

When the Kangaroo quoted from Marx’s *Value, Price and Profit* to prove the contrary, our S.L.P. man airily disposed of Marx by saying that Marx wrote in advance of, and without anticipation of the present day combinations of capital. I am afraid that the S.L.P. speaker knew little of Marx except his name, or he could not have made such a remark. The theory that a rise in prices always destroys the value of a rise in wages might sound very revolutionary, of course, but it is not true. And, furthermore, it is no part of our doctrine. If it were, it knocks the feet from under the S.T. & L.A. and renders that body little else than a mere ward-heeling club for the S.L.P. I am prepared to defend this point if anybody considers me wrong upon it. It was one of the points in dispute between my opponents at the Schenectady meeting and myself. Until the party is a unit upon such points our propoganda in one place will nullify our propoganda in another.

Connolly then went on to raise the question of marriage and referred to an incident during his 1902 tour when he met in Indianapolis

an esteemed comrade who almost lost his temper with me because I expressed my belief in monogamic marriage, and because I said, as I still hold, that the tendency of civilisation is towards its perfection and completion instead of towards its destruction.

Connolly’s opinion was that the opposite view was held by a large number of members, especially since the publication in serial form in the *People of Woman* by the German Socialist August Bebel, Connolly held that these comrades were wrong, and

furthermore that such works and such publications are an excrescence upon the movement. The abolition of the capitalist system will, undoubtedly, solve the economic side of the Woman Question, but it will solve that alone. The question of marriage, of divorce, of paternity, of the equality

of woman with man, are physical and sexual questions, or question of temperamental affiliation as in marriage, and were we living in a Socialist Republic, would still be hotly contested as they are to-day.

Connolly then referred to a “case in point” where the husband in a marriage ceased to love his wife and loved another, yet his wife still loved him. The fact that socialism would guarantee the wife economic independence would not, however, solve the human and sexual side of the problem. “Unjust economic conditions aggravate the evil but they do not create it.”

Connolly continued: “Comrade De Leon says in his preface, which I have just seen, that Bebel’s *Woman* raises up for the *proletaire* friends in the camp of the enemy.” He felt that, on the contrary, getting involved in the sex question was going to weaken the political and economic struggle, as was going outside their own class for support. “In the days of battle, will the claims of sex or the claims of their class weigh most with the ladies of the Capitalist class?”

On this issue, Connolly concluded:

Bebel’s *Woman* is popular because of the quasipurient revelations of the past and present degradation of womanhood, but I question if you can find one woman who was led to socialism by it, but you can find hundreds who were repelled from studying socialism by judicious extracts from its pages.

The question of religion was next taken up by Connolly. He stated that theoretically every S.L.P. man agreed that Socialism was a political and economic question, and had nothing to do with religion. But

It is scarcely possible to take up a copy of the *Weekly People* of late without realising from its contents that it and the party are becoming distinctly anti-religious. If a clergyman anywhere attacks Socialism the tendency is to hit back, not at his economic absurdities, but at his theology, with which we have nothing to do.

Connolly proceeded to point out that Vandervelde's general "Kangarooism" or reformism was recognised by every thinking student of the European Socialist movement, "but lo! He speaks against the Catholic Church and presto, he is become an oracle."

Connolly added that Vandervelde's words were not a reasoned appeal to the working-class, but an appeal to the free-thinkers to look to the Socialists to fight their battles for them:

To this great doctrinaire the great struggle for freedom is but a kind of side-show, or perhaps, an auxiliary, to the free thinking movement.

Connolly made it clear that his position was the same as held by him in ***The New Evangel***, 1901, which was:

The Socialist Party of Ireland prohibits the discussion of theological or anti-theological questions at its meetings, public or private. This is in conformity with the practice of the chief Socialist Parties of the world, which have frequently, in Germany for example, declared religion to be a private matter, and outside the scope of Socialist action.²

In this letter to the *Weekly People* Connolly indicated that he opposed the anti-religious tone being developed by S.L.P. publications and speakers, since this would only serve to bring confusion and emasculation to the class struggle:

I shall certainly do my share towards repelling every such tendency as strongly as I would fight to prevent the movement being identified even by implication, with the tenets of the Catholic Church, or the Protestant, or the Shinto or the Jew.³

Connolly's position, then, was clear. It was as much opposed to Christian "Socialism" as to bourgeois atheism in the attempts of either to use the Socialist movement as vehicles for their own particular struggles.

In the same issue, De Leon published a lengthy reply from himself to Connolly's letter. He declared his agreement with the S.L.P. speaker that a Trade Union could not raise wages without this wage increase being wiped out by a price increase. He, too, drew

on Marx's *Value, Price and Profit* in an attempt to support his assertion, and quoted Marx as follows:

Despite all the ups and down, and do what he may, the workingman will, on the average, ONLY RECEIVE THE VALUE OF HIS LABOR, WHICH RESOLVES INTO THE VALUE OF HIS LABORING POWER WHICH IS DETERMINED BY THE VALUE OF THE NECESSARIES REQUIRED FOR ITS MAINTENANCE AND REPRODUCTION.⁴

De Leon added:

In other words, higher wages, in the long-run, without at least proportional higher prices of necessities, would mean a market price for labor out of keeping with its value, "which is determined by the value of the necessities required for its maintenance" –an economic absurdity.

De Leon disagreed with Connolly that such a position "knocked the feet from under the S.T. & L.A.". While a trade union could not raise wages in the long-run, he argued, there was a "next best" thing, "the preventing of wages from dropping to the point that they inevitably would in the total absence of organization." De Leon declared that wages were declining on the whole, relatively and absolutely, but the coolie stage would long ago have been reached if the union had not acted as a brake on the decline. The S.T. & L.A. was not alone in preventing further declines, as the pure-and-simple unions also performed the same function.

If this was so, what more, then, had the S.T. & L.A. to offer, in De Leon's opinion?

Class-conscious unionism CAN profit by the truces that it concludes with capitalism because it will not mistake them for treaties that end the war. Consequently its retreats would never be retreats that inevitably are but the preliminaries for further and even worse retreats; its retreats would be the preliminaries for final triumph.

De Leon then took up Connolly's charges against the *Weekly People* of "attacks on theology". He stated that he had searched in vain for any substantiation in Connolly's letter of these allegations.

He cited seven instances of ministers of various religions being criticized for their attacks on socialism, and put the question to Connolly, after describing each case, whether it was an attack on theology. Six of these could not have been said to be anti-theological. The seventh was a more doubtful case, and was certainly anti-Catholic. De Leon described it thus:

The whole Catholic hierarchy in chorus slandered the Socialists as murderers of rulers and disturbers of the State at the time of the Czolgosz affair [the anarchist who assassinated U.S. President McKinley – M. O'R.]. They were "hit back" by citing a long list of murderers of rulers down to the present days, including Czolgosz himself, all of whom were Catholics, and by showing that their theory of society, terrestrial society, by exaggerating the value of the individual and by claiming that governmental power comes from above instead of from below, was, under given conditions, a natural breeder of assassins of rulers, as the long list showed.

But then De Leon stated that socialism should not attack theology, even when hitting back hard at clergymen who attacked socialism. "No man of sense and surely none of feeling will 'hit back' at that tender vein (of religion)."

But it was quite another matter to allow clergymen to extend the jurisdiction of "theology" over terrestrial and civic matters. It was very necessary to hit back at this clerical usurpation of a domain which was not theirs.

De Leon summed up his position on this issue by saying it was the same as that of Daniel O'Connell [the Irish Catholic bourgeois politician who was thoroughly attacked by Connolly in his book ***Labour in Irish History***]:

With Daniel O'Connell, the S.L.P. says: "All the religion you like from Rome, but no politics."

The question of Bebel's "Woman" was next dealt with by De Leon:

Our critic is certainly right when he says that "judicious extracts", that is garblings, from the work will repel. So, decidedly so, would "judicious extracts" from the Bible or Shakespeare... Moreover, what sort of intellect is that, that

will place its judgement in the hands of garblers, and allow it to turn from a work by garblings?... Nor are we inclined to dispute the view that some of the revelations in the book may tickle the prurient who may see in them only pruriency... That, however, the popularity of the book is due to such pruriency, is an infelicitous statement, which, in its preposterous sweepingness, cannot but shake confidence in the coolness of our critic's judgements.

De Leon proceeded to say that Connolly's "case in point" was in strange contradiction with his earlier statement in the same letter affirming his belief in the perfection and completion of monogamy in the socialist society. He accused Connolly of carrying into future society the sights of the present, and the material impressions from which they proceed:

The opinion that "the abolition of the capitalist system will, undoubtedly, solve the economic side of the Woman Question, but will solve that alone", is utopian in that it denies the controlling influence of material conditions upon any and all social institutions.

De Leon quoted from Lewis Morgan to show that the monogamous family owed its origins to the institution of private property – which, of course, was also the position of Engels in his book *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, and a position that Connolly also was prepared to accept. But De Leon declared, in addition, and contrary to the accusations levelled by Connolly against the book, that Bebel's *Woman* also pointed to the perfection of monogamy in future socialist society, once the oppressive property aspects of it were abolished, and that he himself (De Leon) was another firm believer in the future of monogamy:

We hold that, using the term "monogamic marriage" in its ethnologic and only sense in which it may be properly used, both the facts gathered by Bebel and the further facts and argumentation presented by the translator's (De Leon himself) preface, leave room for no conclusion other than that monogamic marriage only awaits the economic freedom of the race to blossom like a rose.

On the question of Bebel's *Woman*, then, De Leon was clearly on the offensive against Connolly - but it was otherwise when dealing with Vandervelde's article.

He indulged in a lot of rhetorical questioning of Connolly's attitude to the FACTS (De Leon's capitals) Vandervelde presented concerning the political activities of the Catholic Church. These questions were entirely unnecessary, as Connolly was well aware of such activities, and, as will be shown later, he was to mercilessly expose them both in the United States and Ireland to the very end. There had been no questioning by Connolly of Vandervelde's facts about these activities; the questioning was of Vandervelde placing the struggle against the Catholic Church, in an alliance with bourgeois free-thought, as the principal coming task of Socialists. De Leon had on many occasions taken Vandervelde to task for his many "Kangaroo" activities, and he sought to capitalise on the fact that he had done so, in this reply to Connolly, so that he could proceed to ask: "Is a man wrong in what he is right because he is wrong in what he is wrong?"

What sort of argument is that which leaves allegations of fact – that may be true and may be false – untouched, and would seek by indirection to discredit them with the utterer's wrong doings in other respects?

What embarrassed De Leon, of course, was that Connolly **had** dealt with Vandervelde's facts and had analyzed his attitude towards them – such as the fact that the division of the youth into Catholic and anti-Catholic had pushed "socio-industrial issues", or the class-struggle, into the background in Belgium, and the fact that in the struggle against the Catholic Church in France, Social-Democrats like Millerand had joined the bourgeois government and had been most welcome therein. Connolly showed Vandervelde's favourable attitude towards these developments to be of the same kind as his general "Kangaroo" position, and his posing of the question "Socialism or the Catholic Church?", which was the title of the latter's article, instead of the question "Socialism or Capitalism?", was an attempt to emasculate the class-struggle.

De Leon made no attempt to answer these **class questions** raised by Connolly, but with one of the latter's criticisms of Vandervelde's article, he felt compelled to agree:

Vandervelde expresses private opinions and he also adduces allegations of fact. As to the former, for instance, his opinion touching the numbers of free-thinking working men who are socialists, such opinions are not statistics of facts but of fancy, like our critic's statistics about "hundreds of women who were repelled from studying Socialism by judicious extracts from Bebel's *Women*.

De Leon concluded:

Aye, Socialism is a political and economic movement, and the S.L.P. is seeking to clear the way for the Social Revolution. It will keep to that! It will neither degenerate into Kangarooic vain splitting of hair on economics, nor will it allow any one clergymen or organization of clergymen, to rule it one inch off its legitimate, terrestrial field of action. It will firmly keep hold of the whole of its big enough and noble proposition.⁵

Since both De Leon and Connolly each held that they were arguing from a Marxist position, it is necessary at this stage to review the position of Marx himself, and that of his ablest interpreters, Engels and Lenin.

First, the question of wages. Greaves has correctly pointed to the fact that De Leon's quotation from Marx directly stopped short of a passage which would have undermined his position.⁶

Marx had added:

But there are some peculiar features which distinguish the value of the labouring power ... from the value of all other commodities. The value of the labouring power is formed by two elements – the one merely physical, the other historical or social. Its **ultimate limit** is determined by a **physical** element... Besides this mere physical element, the value of labour is in every country determined by a **traditional standard_of_life**. It is not mere physical life, but it is the satisfaction of certain wants springing from the social conditions in which people are placed and reared up... The historical or social element, entering into the value of labour, may be expanded, or contracted, or altogether extinguished, so that nothing remains but the **physical limit**.⁷

De Leon's theory of trade union struggle would ensure that wages remained at the physical limit.

In a series of articles for the British *Labour Standard* in 1881, Engels pointed out that trade unions, by militant struggle, could raise this historical or social limit:

The great merit of trade unions, in their struggle to keep up the rate of wages and to reduce working hours, is that they tend to keep up and raise the standard of life.⁸

As Connolly had mentioned, Marx strongly combated the notion that the trade union struggle was little better than useless because this notion held that a rise in wages would automatically be wiped out by a rise in prices.

Such a position was based on the dogma that “the prices of commodities are determined or regulated by wages.”

But Marx pointed out to the advocates of such a dogma that profit and rent also formed constituent parts of the prices of commodities:

Consequently all the superannuated writers on political economy who propounded the dogma that wages regulate prices, have tried to prove it by treating profit and rent as **mere additional percentages upon wages**. None of them, were, of course, able to reduce the limits of those percentages to any economic law... Competition is sure to equalize the different rates of profit in different trades, or reduce them to one average level, but it can never determine the level itself, or the general rate of profit.⁹

There was no law of automatic price increases in response to wage increases, which would immediately nullify any attempt to alter the respective shares of wages and profit.

Much of the belief in the futility of economic action on the part of the working class was due to the “Iron Law of Wages” popularised by the German Socialist leader Lassalle. Lassalle was strongly attacked on this point by Marx, particularly in his *Critique of the Gotha Program*, in 1875. Lassalle had stated:

The iron economic law which, under present day conditions, under the rule of supply and demand of labour, determines wages is this: that the average wage always remains reduced to the necessary basis of subsistence that is requisite for existence and propagation.¹⁰

It is true that Lassalle did admit:

This extreme limit at different times can itself change, and therefore, it may well be that in comparing different epochs, we will find that the condition of the working-class of a later century or a later generation somewhat improved in comparison with the conditions of a century ago, because the necessary minimum subsistence somewhat increased.¹¹

Because Lassalle, however, held that the economic struggle of the working class was hopeless, recognition by him of the social and historical element in the value of labor-power was meaningless, as it could never be achieved and expanded in the absence of trade union struggle. This, therefore, did not improve Lassalle's position, it only made De eon's worse, since the latter granted no recognition to this element in the value of labor-power, and in his reply to Connolly had cut short his quotation from Marx just before Marx went on to deal with this aspect.

Lassalle's views were held widely in the socialist movement, both in Germany and America. They were adopted in the Gotha Program of the German Socialists in 1885, on which Engels wrote to Bebel:

Our people have allowed the Lassallean "iron law of wages" to be foisted upon them, a law based on a quite antiquated economic view, namely, that the worker receives on the average only the **minimum** of the labour wage, because, according to Malthus's theory of population, there are always too many workers (this was Lassalle's argument). Now Marx has proved in detail in *Capital* that the laws regulating wages are very complicated, that sometimes one predominates and sometimes another, according to circumstances, that therefore they are in no sense iron but on the contrary very elastic, and that the thing can in no sense be dismissed in a few words as Lassalle imagines.

Engels went on to point out the logical result that followed from the adoption of this position in the Gotha Program:

There is not a word about the organization of the working class as a class by means of the trade unions ... the real class organisation of the proletariat, in which it carries on its daily struggles with capital, in which it trains itself, and which nowadays even amid the worst reaction ... cannot be smashed.¹²

Now De Leon, of course, differed from Lassalle, in that he did not leave the unions without mention. The very opposite was the case. What he was doing now, however, was to nullify much of their economic function and concentrate solely on their political complexion. De Leon previously had indeed held that the political or class-conscious nature of unions was intimately connected with their degree of success in the economic struggle, as he stated in the *People* of August 21, 1898:

The total failure of the economic weapons is mainly the result of not being backed up by a strong class-conscious political movement in the working class... (But) so backed up, both the boycott and the strike could be sufficiently effective to furnish valuable palliatives.

Two weeks previously, on August 7, he had also written; "All economic weapons ARE useful, provided they are conducted by class-conscious organisations and are backed up by a class-conscious political party of the working class."¹³

It followed, from this position, that the Socialist Trade Union would have better economic gains for its members.

But this view was abandoned by De Leon in his reply to Connolly. Now his position was that the S.T. & L.A. and the pure-and-simple unions were equally as good in the sole economic function now allotted to the unions by De Leon – that of preventing the **decline** of wages from bring worse than it otherwise would be. That the S.T. & L.A. would now be at best no more successful than the A.F.L. Unions, and probably more unsuccessful, would of course follow if it were run on the principles of the dismal wage-theories that De Leon had begun to develop at the turn of the twentieth

century. Thus, on September 29, 1900 he spoke of the “futility” of the strike weapon – a tactic which “a century of conflict has proved to be utterly worthless”. “The strike in itself”, he said, “is often only the first step in a series of mistakes.”¹⁴

De Leon’s own peculiar brand of revisionism had, of course, its source in Lassalle’s “Iron Law of Wages”. Even when the Marxist position was predominant in De Leon’s thinking, and when he was giving outstanding leadership to the American working class in the 1890s, there was lurking in the background a weakness which before long was to push itself to the fore. McKee has commented:

For a socialist who claimed to be a follower of Marx, De Leon’s estimate of Ferdinand Lassalle was certainly an unusually high one. He described Lassalle as “a thinker of deep penetration”, who – along with Marx, Engels and Liebknecht – had “drunk deep at the fountain of science.” De Leon also opened the pages of the *People* to Lassalle’s addresses and thus propagated in America the ideas which Marx had so vigorously attacked.¹⁵

De Leon, then, developed a revisionism of his own with regard to Marxist economics. In the *Weekly People* of January 13, 1908 he absolutized the law of supply and demand so much that he insisted that “the oversupply of labour-counter-acted the law of value so completely” that the wages of labor constantly decreased, despite higher prices of necessities, which under the Marxian theory of value would necessitate higher wages.¹⁶

The fact that the more of Marx’s writings that were published, the more they backed up what he had written in ***Value, Price and Profit***, did not in the least deter DeLeon from his revisionism.

In Volume II of ***Capital***, Marx reiterated his position that capitalists could not automatically raise prices so as to wipe out a wage-increase:

If it were in the power of the capitalist producers to raise the prices of their commodities at will, they could and would so without a rise in wages. The Capitalist class would never resist the Trades’ Unions, if it could always and under all circumstances do what it is now doing by way of exception, under definite, special, so to say local, circumstances, to wit,

avail itself of every rise in wages in order to raise prices of commodities much higher yet and thus pocket the profits.¹⁷

In Volume III a slight variation was allowed – due to now taking account of the distinction between value and price of production – but the principle remained the same:

If wages are raised 25 percent: (1) the price of production of the commodities of a capital of average social composition does not change: (2) the price of production of the commodities of a capital of lower composition rises, but not in proportion to the fall in profit; (3) the price of production of the commodities of a capital of higher composition falls, but also not in the same proportion as profit.

Since the price of production of the commodities of the average capital remain the same, equal to the value of the product, the sum of the prices of production of the products of all capital remain the same as well, and equal to the sum total of the value produced by the aggregate capital. The increase on one side and the decrease on the other balance for the aggregate capital on the level of the average social capital.¹⁸

When Volumes II and III of ***Capital*** were published in English translation in 1909, the attitude of De Leon was to dismiss them. In the *Weekly People* of December 18, 1909, he wrote: “At the time the additional volumes came out, we thought it necessary to read them. When we got through we regretted the time wasted.”¹⁹

It was clear that Connolly was upholding the Marxist theory of wages in opposition to De Leon’s revisionism.

How did Connolly and De Leon fare as Marxists on the question of marriage? In his famous work, ***The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State***, Friedrich Engels was also inclined to the view that the future lay with a more perfected form of monogamy:

If now the economic considerations also disappear which made women put up with the habitual infidelity of their husbands – concern for their own means of existence and still more for their children’s future - then, according to all previous experience, the equality of woman thereby

achieved will tend infinitely more to make men really monogamous than to make women polyandrous.

But he refused to be dogmatic or utopian concerning the absence of a marriage question, even when these economic conditions had been fulfilled. It was this utopian view that Connolly had criticized in his letter. Engels went on to say, however, that such problems as would arise, would be more easily dealt with:

The intense emotion of individual sex-love varies very much in duration from one individual to another, especially among men, and if affection definitely comes to an end or is supplanted by a new passionate love, separation is a benefit for both partners as well as for society – only people will then be spared having to wade through the useless mire of a divorce case.²⁰

On the question of Bebel's *Woman*, however, Connolly was somewhat alone in attacking it. Clara Zetkin described an interview with Lenin on the woman question, where he said:

It is said that a pamphlet on the sex question by a Communist authoress from Vienna enjoys the greatest popularity. What rot that booklet is! The workers read what is right in it long ago in Bebel. Only not in the tedious cut-and-dried form found in the pamphlet but in the form of gripping agitation that strikes out at bourgeois society.²¹

Connolly's comrades in the Edinburgh *Socialist* also acclaimed Bebel's book, although some criticisms were made of utopianism on the part of Bebel with regard to relations between the sexes in the future socialist society. Another criticism was:

Throughout the book we occasionally find evidence of a strong anti-theological bias, almost querulous, and at times ludicrous in its irrelevance to the main argument. These, however, are minor faults in a great work, a work that should be in the hands of every Socialist, male or female.²²

Even Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Connolly's friend and fellow-worker in the Irish Socialist Federation which he was to set up in the U.S. a few years later, and a person who was strongly opposed to De Leon during her period as an organiser for the Industrial Workers

of the World, even she was full of enthusiasm for Bebel's *Woman*, despite Connolly's hostility towards it.²³

Connolly's position of being almost a minority of one among socialists in his opposition to Bebel's book, may, however, have been due to the possibility that he may not have read it carefully, if at all, at the time of writing his letter. This possibility is suggested by his statement that he had just read De Leon's preface to Bebel. His acquaintanceship with the book may have been precisely with what he called "judicious extracts" which were thrown at him by some S.L.P. members in an attempt to justify their arguments against monogamy, and which were torn out of the context in which Bebel had set them.

Indeed, as far as flowery language went, at least, Connolly would have had difficulty in competing with the lyrics De Leon had sung about the future of monogamy, in his preface to Bebel:

The monogamous family - bruised and wounded in the cruel rough-and-tumble of modern society - will have its wounds staunched, its bruises healed, and ennobled by the slowly acquired forces of conjugal, paternal and filial affection, bloom under socialism into a lever of mighty power for the moral and physical elevation of the race.²⁴

On the question of religion, Marx, the dialectical materialist, gave of course a materialist explanation for this phenomenon and saw it as a form of the alienation inherent in an exploitative society:

Religious distress is at the same time an **expression** of real distress and the **protest** against real distress. Religion is the sign of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the **opium** of the people.

The abolition of religion as the **illusory** happiness of the people is required for their **real** happiness. The demand to give up the illusions about its conditions is the **demand to give up a condition which needs illusions.**²⁵

This last sentence, which states the necessity for abolishing capitalism as a condition for the disappearance of the religious outlook, was, of course, ignored by the bourgeois atheists like

Vandervelde, who foisted themselves upon the socialist movement.

Materialism is by its very nature ideologically opposed to religion. Logically it should follow that a party based on Marxism and its philosophy of dialectical materialism should also apply this position to religion. This was not followed, however, by the parties of the Second International. The 1891 Erfurt Program of the German Socialists declared that “religion is a private matter” for members of the Party. This stand was attacked by Engels – but knowledge of his attack was suppressed by Kautsky and was only published for the first time in 1901, and then only in German.²⁶

Parties such as the I.S.R.P. and the S.L.P. held the same position as the Erfurt Program on this question.

The essence of Engel’s position was repeated by Lenin in 1905:

So far as the party of the socialist proletariat is concerned, religion is not a private affair. Our Party is an association of class-conscious, advanced fighters for the emancipation of the working-class. Such an association cannot and must not be indifferent to lack of class-consciousness, ignorance or obscurantism in the shape of religious beliefs.

Our programme is based entirely on the scientific and moreover the materialist, world outlook. An explanation of our programme therefore necessarily includes an explanation of the true historical and economic roots of the religious fog. Our propaganda necessarily includes the propaganda of atheism.

But Lenin added that this must be put in the proper context:

But under no circumstances ought we fall into the error of posing the religious question in an abstract, idealistic fashion, as an intellectual question unconnected with the class struggle, as is not infrequently done by the radical-democrats from among the bourgeoisie... It would be bourgeois narrow-mindedness to forget that the yoke of religion that weighs upon mankind is merely a product and reflection of the economic yoke within society. No number of pamphlets and no amount of preaching can enlighten the

proletariat, if it is not enlightened by its own struggle against the dark forces of capitalism. Unity in this really revolutionary struggle of the oppressed class for the creation of a paradise on earth is more important to us than unity of proletarian opinion on paradise in heaven.²⁷

On November 19, 1918, Lenin stated further:

We must be extremely careful in fighting religious prejudice; some people cause a lot of harm in this struggle by offending religious feelings. We must use propaganda and education. By lending too sharp an edge to the struggle we may only arouse popular resentment; such methods of struggle tend to perpetuate the division of people along religious lines, whereas our strength lies in our unity. The deepest source of religious prejudice is poverty and ignorance, and that is the evil we have to combat.²⁸

It is clear from the above that Lenin would have had nothing but the deepest contempt for Vandervelde's enthusiasm that Belgian politics were being divided along Catholic and anti-Catholic lines.

We have previously referred to Connolly's statements concerning his belief in the materialist basis of history. The I.S.R.P. was based on this position and was opposed to attempts to give a religious basis for socialism in place of the materialist one. As Connolly said:

(Socialists) do not base their Socialism upon any interpretation of the language or meaning of Scripture, nor upon the real or supposed intentions of a beneficent Deity... (The Socialist) realises that the facts upon which his Socialist faith is based are strong enough to withstand every shock, and attacks from every quarter... We feel that Socialism is based upon a series of facts requiring only unassisted human reason to grasp and master all their details, whereas Religion of every kind is admittedly based upon "faith" in the occurrence in past ages of a series of phenomena inexplicable by any process of mere human reason.²⁹

This then was Connolly's materialist position. What De Leon's stand was, poses a problem. While he generally presented a materialist position similar to Connolly's, he was quite capable,

when it suited him, of presenting an opportunistic caricature of it – as is evident from one of the examples he quoted in his reply to Connolly to show that, when hitting back at anti-socialism clergymen, he did not attack their theology:

Another Roman Catholic prelate pronounced Socialists unutterable on the ground of their materialist conception of history. He was “hit back” with two arrows from his own quiver. One was the passage where Jesus, before preaching to the multitude, satisfied their physical wants, and considered that so important as to even perform a miracle so as to first feed them on loaves and fishes.³⁰

In this case, at least, De Leon’s philosophical position seems to have been one of “miraculous materialism”!

While Connolly would only tolerate a materialist basis for socialism within the ranks of the I.S.R.P., and while he himself personally gave a materialist explanation of the forms religion took, he did not follow this position to its logical conclusion as stated by Engels and Lenin, that religion could not be a private affair for the Party. On paper, De Leon accepted Connolly’s position, based on the Erfurt Program, that religion **was** a private matter for the Party. Connolly, however, was unlikely to have known of Engels’s criticism of it, since only the German version was made available in 1901. De Leon would have been more likely to have known of it, since he was fluent in German, having translated Marx’s ***Critique of the Gotha Program***, Bebel’s ***Woman*** and Lassalle’s verse-drama ***Franz von Sickingen*** from German to English. If he did know of Engels’s criticism, unlike the case of Connolly, there would have been a conscious and deliberate rejection of it on De Leon’s part.

De Leon had once held to the Erfurt position in a principled manner and thoroughly denounced the anti-Catholic campaigns of the bourgeoisie, as was the case when he attacked the super-patriotic American Protective Association in “The People” of May 6, 1900:

The movement of the “anti-Catholic” Protestants is but one of a thousand and one manifestations of capitalist political and economic chicanery. It is but one of the many attempts to conceal the fact that the Protestant Capitalist will feast as readily as the Catholic or Jew Capitalist on the flesh and

marrow of the working class, and will enjoy the plunder levied on the Protestant workingmen not a bit less than the plunder on the Catholic or Jewish workingmen.³¹

This was also the attitude of Connolly towards such movements and he often referred to “the Unholy Trinity”, his collective term for the Catholic Government of Italy, the Protestant Government of Germany and the free-thinking Government of France (sometimes including, said Connolly, “a free-thinking fake Socialist kangaroo”) – all oppressing the working class.³²

De Leon, however, was to develop a **particular** hostility towards the Catholic Church, which in a Catholic country where it was the major bourgeois force might be understandable, but in a country like the United States, where Catholics were in a minority, where a large section of the most newly-arrived and most discriminated-against immigrants were Catholics from Eastern and Southern Europe, and where anti-Catholicism at this time was an important element in the dominant bourgeois ideology, the case was otherwise. The manner in which De Leon handled this particular prejudice of his, led him into ideological association with bourgeois “free-thinking fake Socialist Kangaroos” like Vandervelde, and contributed to bolstering up this particular aspect of the ruling ideology.

A revealing example of this was DeLeon’s comment on Czolgosz, already referred to in his reply to Connolly. Instead of giving a **class analysis** of the basis of anarchism and terrorism and showing their petit-bourgeois roots, De Leon gave a religious basis for it. In a speech made in 1901 he listed nine assassins, including Czolgosz, and stated: “It is no accident that all of these, down to Czolgosz, were Catholics.”³³

De Leon said this was due to Catholic theory giving exaggerated value to the individual. This was a strange utterance from De Leon, in more ways than one. If anything, the glorification of individualism could be more associated with Protestantism, which had been the ideology of the early bourgeois revolutions, than with Catholicism, which was then the ideology of the feudal reaction to them. Irrespective, however, of which religion might be more ideologically associated with individualism, the causes that produced anarchism had primarily a class and not a religious basis, and for De Leon to suggest otherwise was to confirm a large segment of the American population in their anti-Catholic prejudices and make them feel

self-satisfied with their own religious position – whether that be Protestant or free-thinking.

Connolly and De Leon both subscribed to the Erfurt principle, then. The difference was that Connolly did so in a consistent manner and yielded neither to Christians nor free-thinkers in his position, whereas De Leon yielded opportunistically to both, whenever it suited him, and could swing from miraculous “materialism” to anti-Catholicism without a political blush.

An Irish Communist has summed up Connolly’s position as opposed to that of people like De Leon:

Because Connolly saw clearly that Protestantism and “free-thinking” were also forms of bourgeois ideology (and were in fact its most typical forms) and because he refused to engage in the bourgeois radical campaign against the Catholic ideology, (i.e. to ally with our bourgeois force against another) he has also been viewed with great suspicion by “socialists” who are firmly on the most up-to-date kinds of Victorian bourgeois ideology.³⁴

What was the significance of Connolly’s letter and De Leon’s reply? It was that Connolly had exposed De Leon’s anti-Marxist position on wages – a position that in practice could only lead to withdrawal from activity in the day-to-day struggle of the working-class for higher wages. As a substitute for this activity, DeLeon was beginning to give exaggerated importance to the struggle against the Roman Catholic Church. Connolly exposed his opportunism in publishing Vandervelde’s article on this question – an article which was permeated throughout by a class-collaborationist attitude towards bourgeois-liberals. Unfortunately, De Leon was able to somewhat divert discussion from a Marxist analysis of these crucial issues, by fully exploiting the weaknesses in Connolly’s letter - specifically, his uninformed attack on Bebel’s **Woman**, and his overstatement that “it is scarcely possible to take up a copy of the *Weekly People* of late without realizing from its contents that it and the party are becoming distinctly anti-religious.” Giving a broad interpretation to the term “of late”, the only issue of the *Weekly People* from the very beginning of 1904 down to March 23 (the date Connolly’s letter was written) that could be said to be anti-religious was that of March 19 containing Vandervelde’s article. That, of course, was evidence enough, as was DeLeon’s

comment, three years previously, on the Czolgosz affair which he himself again brought up – but he was able to play on the fact of Connolly's overstatement and thus avoid a thorough discussion of his own revisionism.

The letter-columns of the *Weekly People* were full of correspondence on the Connolly-De Leon controversy until June 18, much of it, however, being merely an echo of what De Leon himself had said. Yet De Leon did not permit Connolly to insert one word in the *Weekly People* in reply to these letters, or even in reply to De Leon's own letter, because the latter charged Connolly with introducing new matter in his further letters.

The first letter with anything new to say on the issue came from Frank P. Janke and was published on May 7. The writer stated his agreement "on the whole" with De Leon's reply to Connolly. But he forcefully confronted DeLeon with the only consistent Marxist position on religion and the Party – a position which was strikingly similar to what Lenin wrote the following year.

Janke took exception to De Leon adopting the slogan of Daniel O'Connell: "All the religion you like from Rome, but no politics." Janke continued:

Scientific Socialism is based upon the materialist conception of history. The S.L.P. is a scientific Socialist body, and recognises the materialist conception of history as set forth in the ***Communist Manifesto*** by Marx and Engels. Our entire literature is based upon this theory.

On the other hand, theology or religion **denies** the materialist conception of history, and teaches that a divine being or power directs, or at least influences, the affairs of mankind. Therefore, how can Comrade De Leon say that the S.L.P. does not concern itself with or attack theology, when at the very basis of scientific socialism we take our stand as against the teachings of theology, and we should not try to pass or smooth the question over. Every member of the S.L.P. should be absolutely clear on this point, else trouble can follow in the future.

Janke went on to point out that the religious question was the weakest link in the Socialist mail, and when the day came when

capitalism would be in immediate danger it would enlist the aid of the Church to exploit this weak point and say to the workers:

See here, these Socialists have been trying to make you believe they do not interfere with your religious belief, but here they deny the existence of a divine being that rules the universe and guides the welfare of man. Does not their materialist conception of history deny all those things you now hold so dear?

On this question, Frank P. Janke concluded that “the editor of the *People* should have taken this stand and not the one he did take in his answer to Comrade Connolly.”

But Janke was not finished, for he also argued a point from a principled stand on inner-party democracy:

I wish to criticise ... as entirely unfair ... the denial of Comrade De Leon to grant comrade Connolly further space in *The People* to answer the questions and opinions put forth by the editor.

He pointed out that De Leon in his reply had asked Connolly the same question seven times and he concluded by saying:

I believe that Connolly should be given at least an opportunity to answer the questions which De Leon has put to him. Don't ask a man questions which demand an answer and then deny him the means to answer them.³⁵

We do not know if De Leon had ever previously confronted himself privately with what Engels had said on the question of religion and the Party, but this first public confrontation by Janke, with what we can call the Engels-Lenin position, must have shattered him. He did reply to the second part of Janke's letter and stated that Connolly's further letters had not been published because they had brought in “new and extraneous matter”. But De Leon did not utter one word in reply to Janke's criticism of him on the question of religion.³⁶

On the question of wages, not one correspondent held with Connolly's presentation of the Marxist theory. This may have been due to the fact that Connolly just presented the basic elements of it

without elaboration, in what he believed was to be the first of a number of letters from him which would be published. In fact, in his original letter he stated his willingness to defend his position if any correspondent was going to challenge it.

The letters on this issue that were published, then, were sometimes rather lengthy elaborations of the De Leonist theory of wages – with little or no reference to what Marx had to say on the question. Example of these were the letters from Fred Sibert on May 28 and Louis Ballhaus on June 18.

Ballhaus was, however, among the many De Leonists who indicated their belief in the future of monogamy in a socialist society. Others were T. Bernine on May 7, and Patrick Twomey on May 14, who commented:

As to Connolly's criticism of DeLeon's "Bebel", of which "Bebel" I have read only about one-half, it seems to me, as far as I have gone, that he has drawn altogether the wrong conclusion. I don't see how anyone can see it – that after reading that book the majority of the members of the S.L.P. should favour plural marriages, or how enemies to socialism could be made by such reading. It struck me as all the other way.

On the question of religion, Twomey stated that the *People* never attacked it, and the fact that Connolly claimed they did showed how superficially he read their paper. He did state, however, that he agreed *in toto* with Janke and would rather see religion attacked, and this done boldly: "As materialists we certainly deny theology, and should not be mealy-mouthed in so stating."³⁷

Other De Leonists, however, took exception to Janke's article, such as H. Eckstein, who said:

The impassioned retort of Janke is not quite germane to the question. Connolly does not ask whether the S.L.P. should or should not attack theology. Connolly says the party does, and he contends it to be wrong in doing so. As to Connolly, to the best of my knowledge, the party does not do as he claims. As to Janke, the party should not attack theology. Its phase is on the political field. What does Scientific Socialism

care whether theology is scientifically wrong? Let it go at that.³⁸

This position was also reiterated by Gus A. Maves in the issue of May 28.

Whereas De Leon's first reaction had been to ignore Janke's challenge to him, the fact that the latter's contribution was now being discussed in the correspondence called for a different approach. Therefore, in the issue of May 28, De Leon called for a playing down of the issues raised by Janke:

The central question is not whether *The People* should discuss theology or not. That question is legitimate in the discussion but only secondarily so. The first question on that head is whether the "hit-backs" by *The People* were theological or not. Of what importance is it to decide whether *The People* should discuss theology or not, before we are all clear upon the field that theology covers.³⁹

Meanwhile more questions had been raised of De Leon as to democratic procedure, in view of the fact that no chance had been given to Connolly to reply. These questions were raised by a member of the Troy, New York, branch of which Connolly was a member, and subsequently by the branch itself. DeLeon in reply went into extreme legalistic arguments about correcting debating procedure and the claim that Connolly was not conforming to it.⁴⁰

The controversy was finally closed at the S.L.P. convention on July 3 at which, according to the *Weekly People*:

De Leon explained the origin and development of the discussion and presented all the documents in the matter, including those which had not been published, pointing out from their incorrect and misleading contents why those unpublished had been allowed to remain so up to now.⁴¹

It is necessary at this stage to deal with the treatment of this dispute by Connolly's principal biographer, C. Desmond Greaves of the Khrushchevite Communist Party of Great Britain. Connolly's other political biographers, Ryan⁴² and Fox⁴³ have only dealt very superficially with it, although the little they have said does indicate some knowledge on their part as the material involved in the

dispute. Only Greaves appears to provide a reasonable survey of the whole dispute. For one who had read the dispute in the original, however, what emerges from Greaves is a caricature of its real nature. This is due both to misstatements of fact by Greaves, and more particularly, to careful omissions of other facts, the end result of which misleads the reader as to the respective positions held by the protagonists in the dispute.

The first misleading item in Greaves's account is the reference to Vandervelde as "the Belgian freethinker and Liberal".⁴⁴

Vandervelde, was not of course a member of the Liberal Party, but was one of the most important Social-Democrats of his time – being leader of the Belgian Workers' Party, and chairman of the International Socialist Bureau of the Second International.

Nowhere does Greaves mention these facts concerning Vandervelde's political position. The result of this is to avoid pointing to the fact that the anti-religious position was being taken by a right-wing leading Social-Democrat, and thus to create the impression that it was just being taken by an "ultra-left" Socialist (which is the adjective Greaves uses to describe De Leon) with the aid of some member of an openly bourgeois Liberal Party called Vandervelde.

Greaves could not avoid stating what the Engels-Lenin position was on the question of religion and the Party – this had been published and circulated widely since the translation of Lenin's article into English. Greaves also correctly points to the fact that Connolly's position coincided with the Erfurt Program of the German Socialists. But by omitting the facts that De Leon also claimed acceptance of the same principles and that he further stated his position on religion and politics to be an O'Connellite one, Greaves gives the impression that the dispute between Connolly and De Leon was one between a religious position and an anti-religious one. This impression is given because Greaves further states:

It seems likely that De Leon did not understand Connolly's position on religion. Connolly had been for many years working out a *modus vivendi* between scientific socialism, without which the working class could never become the victors, and Christian beliefs, for the sake of which many Catholics would forego all earthly benefits.⁴⁵

This is a complete misstatement of facts with regard to Connolly's position. While Connolly was on his S.L.P. tour of 1902, he said at San José that "most of the members of the Irish Socialist Republican Party were Catholics, but had the good sense to lay aside their religious beliefs when considering political matters."⁴⁵

Connolly's requirement that Christian beliefs should be abandoned when socialist questions were being studied can by no stretch of the imagination be reconciled with the view that he was working out a *modus vivendi* between them and scientific socialism. That Greaves was aware of the above refutation of the position he attributed to Connolly is indisputable, because he refers to the San José speech in his biography. While he did quote Connolly's statement in the same speech with regard to the Catholic Church's attitude towards Socialism, that "this institution would exercise the precaution of not placing all its eggs in one basket for fear they might be broken", he chose to omit all reference to Connolly's statement on religious beliefs.⁴⁷

The former statement of Connolly's could be acceptable to the most theologically-inclined of left-wing Catholics, but no theological-minded person could agree with his latter statement.

Clearly, then, there was no attempt on the part of Connolly to achieve this *modus vivendi* attributed to him by Greaves, and *ipso facto* there could be no requirement that De Leon should understand a position of Connolly's which just did not exist. In fact the charge of attempting this *modus vivendi* could more correctly be made against De Leon, in view of his supposed "defence" of materialism by referring to the Gospel story of one of Jesus Christ's miracles.

The ordinary reader of Greaves, unacquainted with the original source material in the dispute, would get the impression that De Leon had some sort of anti-religious position akin to that of Engels and Lenin. In view of De Leon's undemocratic treatment of Connolly's replies in the dispute, and in view of the fact that he also held an anti-Marxist theory of wages, the net result of Greaves's account would tend, by association, to discredit the Engels-Lenin position in the reader's mind, in contrast to the Erfurt position held by Connolly. This weakness in Connolly's position would then have been raised to the level of a virtue – as it would appear to be the only unbigotted position in the dispute.

In fact, Greaves suppresses all mention of the existence of a clear position almost identical with that of Engels and Lenin, in the dispute – a position which was directed **primarily against De Leon** and only secondarily against Connolly.

This, of course, was Frank P. Janke's letter. It is difficult to see how Greaves managed to avoid mentioning it. Aside from the religious question, this letter was the clearest criticism in the whole dispute of De Leon's undemocratic treatment of Connolly's right to reply.

In addition, Greaves quotes from Twomey, whom he describes as "the ex-Catholic, more anti-Christian than the devil", the following statement:

We certainly deny theology and should not be mealy-mouthed in so stating. We must fight organised Church fakirdom.⁴⁸

Greaves gives no indication that he stops his quotation mid-way through Twomey's sentence, the rest of which puts his anti-religious position in political perspective. Twomey's sentence reads in full:

We must fight organised Church fakirdom as we fight organised labor fakirdom, and that it is only in the measure that we hew our way through fakirdom of all kinds, will we ever reach our goal, namely, abolition of class rule and emancipation of the race from the last and the worst form of slavery.⁴⁹

Most important of all, however, is the fact that Greaves omits all mention of the context in which Twomey's statement was made, namely, that of agreement with Janke's criticism of De Leon. It seems that Greaves felt that knowledge of the existence of Janke's letter – one of the most important in the whole correspondence – should never be brought to the attention of his readers.

Greaves also gives a misleading impression as to what the marriage aspect of the Connolly-De Leon dispute was about. He states:

Connolly was on familiar ground in this controversy. Ten years previously in Edinburgh he had heard and criticised

Edith Lancaster and other bohemian socialists who advocated “free love” in its various forms.⁵⁰

The above statement would only have relevance if somehow the question of free love was at issue between Connolly and De Leon. He seizes on one point to get his impression across:

One correspondent proposed that men who took money in respect of life after death should be imprisoned for false pretences, and that “love should be free”⁵¹

The letter referred to, was one from Carl Schluter who said:

Marriage:

Every marriage is a world in itself, therefore, all laws are almost impossible to benefit the people, since love cannot be compelled and must be free.

The Church:

We must stand firm by science and knowledge. It is impossible for any human being to know how we will live when we are dead and any man who claims to know is a liar and a fakir. If he obtains money for it, he obtains money under false pretences and should be imprisoned.⁵²

This statement can be seen to be slightly more ambiguous as to its meaning than the clear-cut position one would understand it to be from Greaves. Whatever its meaning, however, Greaves seizes on this isolated crank letter and presents it as representative of the comments on the marriage question, in spite of the fact that it is the only letter in the twenty or so that comprised the correspondence, which could in any sense be interpreted as advocating free love.

Greaves is also indirectly disparaging about Bebel’s **Woman**:

Possibly it was the only now that he (Connolly) realised the dangerous strain in the S.L.P. He had overlooked this when his main efforts were concentrated on combating reformism in Britain. What he saw now was a swing to the other extreme. He picked up the *People* week by week and found there Bebel’s **Woman**, first serialised, then advertised in book form. Bebel’s speeches were translated *in extenso* and

everything was done to exalt his importance as a theorist. Partly this must have been done to stimulate the sale of the book.⁵³

Since Greaves did not make the slightest attempt to indicate exactly what he thought was wrong with **Woman**, the above statement, with its cheap swipes at Bebel, can be considered as merely an attempt to demolish a work without presenting any evidence against it.

More important still, while Greaves quotes De Leon to the effect that the monogamous family owed its origin to property – the classical Marxist position – nowhere does he state that, if anything, De Leon had a more enthusiastic position than Connolly on the future of monogamy under Socialism. That this was De Leon's own position and that of the majority of the S.L.P. members who wrote on this issue, was one of the main weaknesses of Connolly's letter – his exaggerated claim concerning hostility to monogamy in the Party due to the reading of Bebel.

Greaves refuses to point to these weaknesses in Connolly's letter. Instead he makes virtues out of whatever political weaknesses he had from the Marxist-Leninist viewpoint – such as his support for the Erfurt position. At the same time he makes it appear that Connolly had weaknesses which he did not have, by withholding mention of the consistency of Connolly's materialist position in refusing to give way to religious beliefs on matters of Socialism, and by suggesting that, on the contrary, he was trying to work out a *modus vivendi* between them. Greaves's general misrepresentations of Connolly's position have been exposed by others,⁵⁴ but the particular distortions of the Connolly-De Leon controversy are prize-winning in their scope and magnitude.

Notes to Chapter II

1. *Weekly People*, March 19, 1906.
2. James Connolly, *The New Evangel*, 1968 edition, p.5.
3. *Weekly People*, April 9, 1904.
4. The capital letters are De Leon's, not Marx's.
5. *Weekly People*, April 9, 1904.
6. C. Desmond Greaves, *The Life and Times of James Connolly*, 1961, p.142.
7. Karl Marx, *Value, Price and Profit*, Chapter XIV.
8. Friedrich Engels, *The British Labour Movement*, 1940 edition, p.13.
9. *Value, Price and Profit*, Chapter V.
10. Quoted in Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Program*, p.101.
11. Quoted in Michael T. Wermel, *The Evolution of the Classical Wage Theory*, 1939.
12. Reprinted in *Critique of the Gotha Program*, p. 29.
13. Quoted in Donald Kennedy McKee, *The Intellectual and Historical Influence Shaping the Political Theory of Daniel De Leon*, Columbia University, Ph.D Thesis, 1955, p.106.
14. Quoted in McKee, *op. cit.*, p. 103.
15. McKee, *op. cit.*, p.29 and p.30.
16. Quoted in McKee, *op. cit.*, p.116.
17. Karl Marx, *Capital*, Volume II, Chapter XVII.
18. Karl Marx, *Capital*, Volume III, Chapter XI.
19. Quoted in McKee, *op. cit.*, p.26.
20. Reprinted in Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin, *The Woman Question*, 1951 edition, p.75.
21. V.I. Lenin, *The Emancipation of Women*, 1966 edition, p. 103.
22. Reprinted in the *Weekly People*, July 30, 1906.
23. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, *I Speak My Own Piece*, 1952, p. 44.
24. Quoted in Daniel De Leon, *Abolition of Poverty*, 1969 edition, p.63.
25. Karl Marx, *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (Introduction) – included in Marx and Engels, *On Religion*, 1957 edition, p.42.
26. Greaves, *op. cit.*, p. 143.
27. V. I. Lenin, *Socialism and Religion*, 1963 edition, pp. 5 and 6.

28. ***The Emancipation of Women***, p. 60.
29. ***The New Evangel***, p. 5.
30. *Weekly People*, April 9, 1909.
31. Quoted in Daniel De Leon, ***The Vatican in Politics***, 1948 edition, p.19.
32. *Weekly People*, November 1, 1902.
33. Daniel De Leon, ***Socialism versus Anarchism***, 1962 edition, p. 23.
34. Brendan Clifford, "Connolly on Religion", *Irish Communist*, January 1968.
35. *Weekly People*, March 7, 1904.
36. *ibid*
37. *Weekly People*, May 14, 1904.
38. *ibid*
39. *Weekly People*, May 28, 1904.
40. *Weekly People*, June 4, 1904.
41. *Weekly People*, July 9, 1904.
42. Desmond Ryan, ***James Connolly – His Life, Work and Writings***, 1924.
43. R.M. Fox, ***Connolly the Forerunner***, 1946.
44. Greaves, *op. cit.*, p.136.
45. Greaves, *op. cit.*, p.143.
46. *Weekly People*, December 13, 1902.
47. Greaves, *op. cit.*, p.121.
48. Greaves, *op. cit.* p. 144.
49. *Weekly People*, May 14, 1904.
50. Greaves, *op. cit.*, p. 142.
51. Greaves, *op. cit.*, p. 144.
52. "Weekly People", June 11, 1904.
53. Greaves, *op. cit.*, p.136.
54. Irish Communist Organisation, ***The Marxism of James Connolly***, 1968.

CHAPTER III

CONNOLLY AND THE S.L.P.

- TOWARDS THE FINAL BREAK

Despite this dispute with De Leon, Connolly had not yet reached the stage where he became disillusioned with the S.L.P. He seemed to have been of the opinion that the anti-Catholic action of De Leon in publishing Vandervelde's article, and his challenging of the Marxian theory of wages, were but temporary aberrations from a basically sound Party policy. This was all the more so his opinion because these positions De Leon had taken up were in flat contradiction to his previous utterances. Connolly pointed to these contradictions in an article he wrote for the June 1904 issue of the *Edinburgh Socialist*, due to the fact that he had been denied access to the *Weekly People* itself for comment on the points raised by De Leon in the dispute.

Connolly recalled that when anti-Catholic agitation developed after Czolgosz had assassinated President McKinley, De Leon had resisted it on the grounds that the assassin's religion was irrelevant. He also pointed out that the Marxian theory of wages, which De Leon was now denying, had previously been clearly expressed by him. Connolly quoted De Leon as saying that "the theory that increased wages means increased prices, and that therefore, an increase of wages is a barren victory, is frequently advanced by half-baked Marxists".¹

In this article Connolly gave his opinion on what he felt was one of the weaknesses in the socialist movement of the time:

I have long been of the opinion that the socialist movement elsewhere was to a great extent hampered by the presence in its ranks of faddists and cranks, who were in the movement, not for the cause of socialism, but because they thought they saw in it a means of ventilating their theories on such questions as sex, religion, vaccination, vegetarianism, etc., and I believe that such ideas had or ought to have no place in our programme or in our party.²

Engels had also been aware of the same problem:

All those who have nothing to look forward to from the official world or have come to the end of their tether with it – opponents of inoculation, supporters of abstemiousness, vegetarians, anti-vivisectionists, nature healers, free-community preachers whose communities have fallen to pieces, authors of new theories on the origin of the universe, unsuccessful or unfortunate inventors, victims of real or imaginary injustice who are termed “good-for-nothing pettifoggers” by the bureaucracy, honest fools and dishonest swindlers – all throng to the working-class parties in all countries.³

Desmond Ryan mentions in a footnote that one of the examples given by Connolly of the type of people he had in mind in the passage above was George D. Herron.⁴ Ryan did not elaborate, however, on the political position of Herron. If he had, the full significance of Connolly’s statement would have been made clearer. This statement referred to the Socialist Party as well as to the Socialist Labor Party as far as the presence of the phenomenon, complained of by Connolly, was concerned, and, was directed as much against Christian “Socialists”, as against bourgeois free-thinkers, foisting themselves upon the working-class movement. For it was to the former that George D. Herron belonged. Herron was a member of the Socialist Party who was one of the Chief advocates of Christian “Socialism” in that Party.⁵

The fact that the position represented by Herron repelled Connolly as much as Vandervelde did, was but one of the many factors which militated against Connolly being attracted away from the S.L.P. by the Socialist Party. Both the Center and the Right wings, which dominated the latter party, held that strikes were too costly at best, and hopeless at worst.⁶ The class-collaborationist approach of the Socialist Party towards the A.F.L. leadership, a position which the S.L.P. vigorously opposed, would have intensified Connolly’s distaste for the former party’s trade union policy.

When all these factors are taken into account, then, in addition to Connolly’s belief that De Leon’s stand in the dispute was out of

character, it is not surprising that Connolly declared in this Edinburgh *Socialist* article that his political affiliation was still the same as it was before the dispute: "I consider the S.L.P. of the U.S. the clearest and most revolutionary of the Socialist parties in the world to-day."⁷

In the succeeding period Connolly continued to hold firmly to the S.L.P. concept of a well-disciplined clear-cut Marxist party. Thus, when Mrs. Olive Johnson wrote to the *Weekly People* advocating a more vigorous attempt to seek a basis of unity with Socialist Party members, Connolly, in reply, counselled caution in such a venture:

We could have got harmony a long time ago if the S.L.P. had allowed every one who chose to assume the name, and pose as a Socialist, whilst rejecting the necessary harness of a disciplined organisation ... I would be surprised to learn that the recent article of Mrs. Olive M. Johnson meant anything more than a plea for the more discriminating and tolerant tone toward the rank and file of the Social Democracy. At present that is, at least to me, all that seems safe or called for.⁸

On reading an account of the revival of the Irish Socialist Republican Party in the *People*, Connolly wrote in 1905 to a friend in Ireland, in order to hammer home the same principle: "If I was as satisfied that the propaganda is as clean and true to Socialist principles as I in my 'bullying way' strove to keep it in my time, I would be happy."⁹

Connolly's concept of the party, then, had not in the least been shaken by the dispute with De Leon. In the following years he began to work actively in order to rally support for the S.L.P., and to develop socialist class-consciousness among a most important section of America's working-class – the foreign immigrants. He paid particular attention to the Italian Socialist Federation, translating articles of theirs - which indicated a favourable attitude towards affiliating with the S.L.P. - from Italian to English for publication in the *People*.

Connolly strongly urged, in an introduction to one of his translations, that the S.L.P. should make a positive response to this friendly disposition of the Italian Federation, especially because there were some Italian "Kangaroos" trying to develop Socialist Party influences over it.¹⁰

Connolly's next step was to try and bring more of his fellow-Irishmen into the Socialist movement. Accordingly, in January 1907, a meeting of Irishmen was held in New York City to set up an Irish Socialist Federation, whose purposes were:

- (1) To develop the spirit of revolutionary class-consciousness among the Irish working class of America.
- (2) To spread a knowledge of, and help to sustain, the socialist movement in Ireland.
- (3) To educate the members upon the history and development of the struggle in Ireland. ¹¹

Quite unexpectedly, S.L.P. member Stromqvist launched into an attack on race and language federations in the *Weekly People* of February 23, 1907, and declared his opposition to the formation of the Irish Socialist Federation. The attack was unexpected, since the Swedes and Hungarians had already been given federations by the S.L.P. Stromqvist's position was that race and language federations would have a divisive impact on the Party and that every conceivable nationality would start demanding its own federation. He, a Swede, had been opposed to forming the Swedish Federation – although he was now prepared to admit that it produced some benefits. But, he continued, the first duty of a Socialist was to

tear down and remove all the artificial obstacles in the way of complete industrial and political unity of the Workers of the World presented by the differences in Race, Color, Creed and Standards of living, instead of trying to keep these things alive and erect others where none now exist. If we can not educate them without splitting them up, then I would sooner see them left to their own education and let ourselves keep those few we now have.

This was the remark of a Swedish immigrant who had himself become so completely affected by the S.L.P.'s American Chauvinism, so perceptively noticed by Connolly in 1902, that he arrogantly dismissed any attempt to deal with special problems of foreign immigrants in the struggle to win them to socialism.

But then the conclusion of Stromqvist's letter showed that all his previous talk about splitting up the party had been merely a red herring as far as the Irish Socialist Federation was concerned:

Although, as far as I can understand, your organisation will be entirely outside of the S.L.P. and not directly interfere with the latter, yet it will be a choice, for those who are member of both, as to which of the two they shall put their energy into.¹²

Connolly in his reply reiterated his opposition to race and language branches **within** the party and stated he would vote to abolish them all:

But, as strongly as I am opposed to Language Branches in the party, am I in favour of Race or Language Federations to organize all the sections of our heterogeneous population. The function of such bodies is to act as organizers or drill sergeants or that Socialist Army of which the American proletariat must furnish the main and directing body.

Connolly argued that, rather than splitting the party, the setting up of the federations would be an aid to unity, by catering for people who, as the situation stood then, had been brought into the party prematurely, either because of insufficient English or insufficient adaptation to American conditions.

While Connolly argued that the language difficulty did not apply to the Irish, there was still a great need for a Socialist federation catering for them. The fact was that the Irish were the only race in American among which were organised associations to support capitalist political parties in the old country. The only way these could be counteracted was by an equivalent socialist organisation. The Irish Socialist Federation would push Socialistic literature from Ireland among the Irish in America and prepare them to take their place in the revolutionary American proletariat. Connolly concluded: "Is Socialism an International movement or is it not? If it is, why do you object to us trying to help the movement in Ireland?"¹³

In the meantime, trouble for Connolly had been brewing in another quarter. In the same issue of the *Weekly People* there appeared a letter from New Jersey S.L.P. members Zimmermann, Kerrschaft, Hossack and Katz questioning the veracity of a report from Connolly to the New Jersey State Convention of the party that February, on the National Executive Committee meeting in January, to which he had been the New Jersey delegate.

The circumstances behind the letter were that - at the N.E.C. meeting in January - a dispute had arisen as to the functions and powers of the N.E.C. Sub-Committee. The N.E.C. met every six months, and on all other occasions its functions were delegated to the Sub-Committee, consisting of members living in or around New York City. De Leon had challenged the right of access by the Sub-Committee to the Party press for the publication of statements. Connolly disagreed with this and proposed the following motion: "That the N.E.C. considers that the N.E.C. and its Sub-Committee have the right to insert official matter in the *People*."

This motion was rejected, and Connolly reported to the New Jersey convention that this meant that henceforth the N.E.C. itself claimed no right of access to the *People*.

This, of course, can be seen to be the correct interpretation of the motion's defeat, because of its particular wording. It seems, however, that it was only after the N.E.C. meeting was over that the members who voted against the Connolly motion realised the implications of this for the N.E.C. itself, and not just for the Sub-Committee alone, which had been the main issue in dispute at the meeting. Objection could have been raised at that meeting to Connolly's motion, on the grounds that it necessarily tied the rejection of the right of the Sub-Committee to further rejecting the N.E.C.'s own rights. But no objection was raised, and since the motion was defeated, Connolly's interpretation of the consequences was the only valid one.

The way remained open for the N.E.C. to vote again on their own right of access to the party press at their next meeting, and thus undo the undesired consequences of the January meeting. But De Leon and his followers decided otherwise, and were to proceed instead to deny that Connolly's motion was worded the way he said it was.

In their letter to the *Weekly People*, the four New Jersey members said that Connolly's report stated that the N.E.C. had voted away its right of supervision over the Editor and the contents of the *People*:

That in so far as even Party notices, letters, etc. are concerned, the N.E.C. voted that the Editor of the *People* should he see fit, has the power to deny them publication.

The four wanted to have De Leon's explanation of the matter. ¹⁴

This, of course, was an entirely improper procedure on their part. The inquiry as to what happened at the N.E.C. meeting should have been addressed to the secretary who took the minutes of the meeting.

De Leon proceeded to give an extremely lengthy and ponderous reply to their question. He stated that Connolly's report was incorrect, that the rights of the N.E.C. were undisputed and indisputable, and that the point at issue at the meeting had been the Sub-Committee's rights. He added:

I recall no mention made of the N.E.C., except by myself when addressing the N.E.C. on Connolly's motion; I said that even if the motion contemplated the N.E.C. itself, so sweeping a motion would be senseless, where it is not superfluous. ¹⁵

In the issue of March 16, a letter appeared from New Jersey S.L.P. members, Eck, Wolf, Schonleber, Schrafft, Hossack and Zimmermann, introducing a series of replies they had received from N.E.C. members in answer to the request for their recollections of the January meeting.

Kircher replied that his answer was De Leon's answer – that Connolly was in error on the matter in his report.

Marek also agreed with De Leon's reply and stated that Connolly's report was "uncalled for, in so far as that the N.E.C. voted away its power over the editor of the Party organs, putting in the editor's hands the dictatorship of the Party organization."

Reimer had no recollection of the N.E.C. voting away its right of supervision over the *People*. He was of De Leon's opinion that only the Sub-Committee's rights were under discussion. If he had thought the defeat of Connolly's motion would have meant the denial of the N.E.C.'s rights he would have protested against it as a violation of the party constitution – which he thought Connolly should have done if he also thought it would have had the same results.

While Gilchrist stated that Connolly was in error on several particulars, he was of the opinion that the minutes should have been consulted for the information sought – "a much better way

than asking a member to state his recollection of certain occurrences.”

Concerning the Connolly motion Richter replied:

I am not sure whether it said N.E.C. or Sub-Committee of N.E.C. has the right to publish any matter in Party organs. I am inclined to believe that he put it N.E.C. as I recollect speaking upon his motion and pointing out that what the motion intended was so obvious that the motion was ridiculous, and worse – was irrelevant to the matter under consideration; the rights and powers of the Sub-Committee and the editor.

The last N.E.C. member, Jacobson, said that De Leon’s reply had stated the N.E.C. proceedings better than he could and he further approved it as correct as far as his memory went. He added, however:

I am not able to remember just the wording of the motion made by James Connolly. As a member of the Sub-Committee at that time I was first in favor of the motion of Connolly, but after the discussion the point was clearly made to me that it was dangerous to adopt a motion of that kind and I, therefore, recorded my vote against Connolly’s motion – with the disapproval of the Sub-Committee members present at the time.

He disagreed with Connolly’s interpretation of his motion’s rejection:

I consider that the N.E.C. at its last meeting clearly proved that it is the controlling power over all Party affairs and that the Sub-Committee is not the N.E.C. when the N.E.C. is not in session, the Sub-Committee only having that power in case of emergency.¹⁶

At the N.E.C. Sub-Committee meeting of March 10, Connolly made formal complaints against these New Jersey members for addressing their inquiries to the Editor of the *People* and the N.E.C. members, instead of to the National Secretary. He also complained that a letter sent by him on March 3 to the *Daily People* had not yet been published, although letters from the other N.E.C. members, dated later, had been. A committee of three was set up to investigate his complaint.¹⁷

On March 23, Connolly's letter was published in the *Weekly People*. He explained the reasons which led him to word the resolution the way he did:

in order to uphold the contention ... that, in the absence of the N.E.C., the Sub-Committee ought to exercise all its powers and functions subject to the overruling vote of the party membership. For this purpose it was necessary to include the two bodies, which I accordingly did in their proper order.

In effect, what Connolly was proposing was democratic centralism. It was necessary that there should be a full delegation of powers to the Sub-Committee, as the N.E.C. itself met only twice yearly. If the Sub-Committee was not to be allowed exercise of the same powers in between, the party would be like an army without its general staff. But while Connolly argued soundly that the two bodies should stand together, he can be faulted for posing as the alternative that they should fall together. Such a result as followed from the rejection of Connolly's motion left the situation worse than the one he was trying to rectify. The wisdom or otherwise of the precise wording of Connolly's motion, however, was not to be the issue between Connolly and his opponents. The issue was made to be one of whether the wording was as Connolly stated it to be. Connolly proceeded to clarify this point: "When this resolution was accepted as in order to be discussed, I made a copy of it and handed that copy to the Secretary. **The original is lying beside me as I write this letter.**"

Connolly also pointed out that after the N.E.C. meeting, and a month before the New Jersey convention, he had been instrumental in having a motion passed by the Sub-Committee that the minutes of N.E.C. meetings be sent to the State Committees:

Is it conceivable, then, that with the knowledge that, due to my own initiative in the matter, these minutes would soon be in the hands of the men I was addressing, I would be such a fool as to seriously misquote a resolution that would be in the very minutes?

He finished up with the very pertinent point: "But why all the heat? Let us have the minutes!"¹⁸

Replying to Connolly, De Leon made one valid criticism of his motion: “So far from it having been ‘necessary to include the two bodies’ in the motion, their inclusion could have only the effect of confusing.”

But this had little relevance to the issue raised by the New Jersey members concerning the veracity of Connolly’s report. Confusing or not, that was how Connolly’s motion stood. Instead of seeking to remove the undesired consequences of the N.E.C.’s rejection of it by a normal democratic process, such as proposing a motion that the N.E.C. be given back its rights of supervision over the party press, De Leon proceeded to develop a bizarre theory of “minutes” in an attempt to deny that the wording of Connolly’s motion still stood. He stated that in disputes over a motion a body is left dependent neither on the proposer’s original, nor even the minutes of the secretary. The recollections of the majority of those who acted on the motion were to be the determining factor!

De Leon went on to say that minutes were not minutes until approved by the body whose transactions they purport to report. Considering that the N.E.C. met only ever six months, this was a long time to depend on people’s memories as to whether a motion said N.E.C. Sub-Committee or N.E.C. and its Sub-Committee. Yet this was to have priority over the original motion, and the unapproved recorded minutes, according to De Leon’s new rules.¹⁹

In the same issue, Connolly’s fellow Irishman, P.L. Quinlan, who had moved the adoption of Connolly’s report at the N.J. State Convention, questioned the behaviour of those New Jersey members who had written to De Leon and the N.E.C. members:

I admit their right of asking anyone they pleased about Connolly’s report, but I am of the opinion that they ought at the outset to have questioned Connolly and secured a statement from him in writing, then bring the matter before the State Executive Committee or the National Secretary.

All four who had signed the letter to De Leon, stated Quinlan, had been present at the New Jersey State Convention - two as delegates and two as observers. But delegate Zimmermann was the only one of these to question Connolly’s report there and then. The second letter, to the N.E.C. members, Quinlan found stranger. The names of delegates Herrschaft and observer Katz now no

longer appeared among the signatories. The new names added were those of Eck, Wolff, Schoenleber and Schrafft:

As to Wolff's attendance at the convention, I can't certify. Schrafft, Schoenleber, and Eck I didn't see in the hall; I am positive they were not present when Connolly made his report. Here you have men asking for information of National Committee men on the strength of hearsay talk ... Picture three men, revolutionists, acting as Eck, Schrafft, and Schoenleber. The old story of men jumping at conclusions.²⁰

In the issue of March 30 another letter from Connolly was published, this one addressed to National Secretary Frank Bohn, asking whether the N.E.C. minutes confirmed the wording of Connolly's resolution.

Bohn replied that minutes had been accurately transcribed and that Connolly's resolution was before him in the handwriting of Olpp, who had acted as secretary at the N.E.C. meeting, "and is as stated in the copies mailed by me to the N.E.C. members and as stated by you in your communication to the *People*."²¹

On April 14 the special committee, set up to investigate Connolly's complaints, recommended that the N.E.C. Sub-Committee dismiss them. When Connolly announced, however, that he had sent a further communication to the Sub-Committee which apparently had not yet been received, it was decided to take up the issue again at the next month's meeting.²²

On May 13 the investigating committee announced an alteration to their verdict. They now recommended that the matter should be put before a tribunal of the Sections' Grievance Committee, where they felt it properly belonged.²³

Meanwhile, at the May 12 meeting of the New Jersey State Executive Committee, resolutions from two sections and a branch were received asking for a referendum to decide if Connolly should be recalled from his membership of the N.E.C. for allegedly misrepresenting the actions of that body in his New Jersey report. Since the same meeting also had before it a letter from Connolly offering his resignation from the N.E.C, the subsequent decision taken to put the recall demand to a vote of the New Jersey Party

Sections was entirely unnecessary and its sole function could only have been to humiliate Connolly.²⁴

The vote of the Sections was 27 for Connolly's recall, 6 for acceptance of his resignation and 4 for non- acceptance.²⁵

The next meeting of the N.E.C. itself took place in July, where the decision was made to remove the words "N.E.C. and its Sub-Committee" from Connolly's resolution as recorded in the minutes, and to alter them to read "N.E.C. Sub-Committee". Of those present at the July meeting of the N.E.C., Marek, Reimer, Jacobson, Kircher and Gilchrist had been present in January when Connolly's resolution had been offered. But Mrs. Olive M. Johnson and Julius Eck had not. Despite this fact, the motion to alter the minutes account of the Connolly resolution was proposed by Johnson. Gilchrist and Jacobson voted against this alteration.²⁶

On August 3 S.L.P. member John Duffy protested against this action:

We have an N.E.C. made up in part of different delegates than the January body. We have delegates to the July body moving and voting to "correct" the minutes of the January body's meeting – AT WHICH THEY WERE NOT PRESENT – and this action is taken despite the protest of delegates, whom I infer from the last report were present at the January meeting, and who asserted the correctness of its minutes. I repeat this is not "correction", it is FALSIFICATION.²⁷

De Leon's reply was more damaging to his position than if he had ignored these charges. It is true that he was correct in stating that the votes of Johnson and Eck, the two members not present at the January meeting, had not been needed to carry the alteration of the minutes. In addition to them, Reimer, Marek and Kircher voted for the alteration, and Gilchrist and Jacobson voted against. These five had all been present at the January meeting. But then De Leon proceeded to reveal the nature of one of these votes. While Reimer and Marek did indeed claim that Connolly's motion had been wrongly recorded, the position of Kircher was very different. DeLeon let it be known that Kircher argued:

that it turned out the motion had a "sleeper" in it, that it was a trick motion at best and conveyed to him a different

impression, on account of which it was not the motion he voted on, and therefore he would vote for the correction to eliminate the “sleeper”.²⁸

What this meant, of course, was that Kircher was voting for the alteration of the wording of Connolly’s motion as it appeared in the minutes, not because he denied that this was the original wording, but on the contrary, because he took exception to the implications of this original wording.

In addition to this point it should be noted that Richter, a January member of the N.E.C. had not been present at this July meeting. Richter was a staunch De Leonist who, in his letter which appeared in the issue of March 16, strongly attacked Connolly for allegedly making disparaging remarks about De Leon in his New Jersey report. Nevertheless, the same letter, in a passage we have previously quoted, stated Richter’s inclination to believe that Connolly’s motion did indeed refer to “the N.E.C. and its Sub-Committee”.²⁹

Therefore, of the seven N.E.C. members present at the meeting of January 1907 – Connolly, Gilchrist, Jacobson, Kircher, Marek, Reimer and Richter – only Reimer and Marek denied that Connolly’s motion was worded as originally reported in the minutes. In the light of this, their alteration merely indicates the extent De Leon and his cohorts were prepared to go in their attempt to further humiliate Connolly. It was perfectly clear that there was no longer any place for Connolly in the S.L.P. and, accordingly, he left the Party.

But the attempt to discredit Connolly was not yet over. In the *Weekly People* of November 21, 1908 there appeared the headline:

Documentary Proof that Frank Bohn, the then National Secretary, Falsified the Minutes of the January, 1907 Session of the National Executive Committee of the S.L.P.

The background to this headline was that the undemocratic treatment of Connolly by De Leon had not gone unchallenged by the Party membership. Mrs. Olive Johnson describes it thus:

Section New York was in a state of anarchy. It actually compelled De Leon to appear before it and defend himself against Connolly and others on matters in dispute.³⁰

This and other matters were to lead to Bohn, Ebert and other prominent S.L.P. member leaving the Party the following year.³¹

It was in the context, then, that the headline above appeared over an article by Paul Augustine, who succeeded Bohn as S.L.P. National Secretary. Augustine pointed out that if Connolly's motion had been worded as the latter claimed:

the defeat of such a motion would give color to the damaging charge made by Connolly against the N.E.C. for defeating such a motion, against the Editor of *The People* for promoting its defeat, and against the Party at large for tolerating such officers.

But such a motion had not in fact been defeated, contended Augustine. Connolly's motion had not been worded the way Connolly and Bohn claimed, and he (Augustine) had documentary proof. In the old papers that Bohn, when retiring as National Secretary, had left behind him, Augustine stated he had found the original minutes of the January 1907 N.E.C. meeting in Olpp's handwriting, from which he reproduced a photo-copy of Connolly's motion contained therein. This reproduction in the *Weekly People* appeared to read "the N.E.C. Sub-Committee", which seemed to give the lie of the claims of Bohn and Connolly.³²

This, indeed, was a most serious charge of falsification against Bohn and Connolly – yet none of Connolly's biographers have grappled with it. Greaves, at least, was aware of it, since it was restated in Rudolph Katz's biography of De Leon, which was one of the sources used by Greaves and from which he quoted other passages.³³

But Greaves makes no mention of it whatsoever –despite the fact that it meant, if the allegation was correct, that Connolly was a thorough scoundrel in being a party to such a falsification, or if it was incorrect, that it was the De Leonists who were the scoundrels in inventing such a charge.

The facts of the case were soon revealed by Bohn in the New York *Call* of November 24. Bohn stated:

The words “and its” (in the Olpp minutes written “& its”) were between “N.E.C.” and “Sub-Committee”. The use of “&” for “and” occurs repeatedly in the minutes and once again in the portion photographed and printed in the *People*. It should be remembered that the document was written with a lead pencil. The bungler who erased the two words left a portion of the “t” (the top of the vertical stroke) untouched, and it shows plainly in the photograph. The period after N.E.C. has been inserted. The “s” stood exactly in the present position. The word “have” after “Sub-Committee” clinches the case. It proves that the subject of the clause was plural – **“N.E.C. and its Sub-Committee”**. Had the subject been singular (N.E.C. Sub-Committee) the word “has” would have been used. But the bunglers dared not erase “have” for fear that even the utterly stupid, those who might not recognise the resulting wrong construction of the sentence, might be forced to admit the erasure.

What Bohn claimed was the top of the vertical stroke of the “t” did indeed appear in the photo-copy of Olpp’s minutes in the *Weekly People* of November 21. Without explanation, however, the whole of Augustine’s four-column article was again reproduced in the *Weekly People* of November 28 - this time with the stroke no longer appearing in this photo-copy!

To clinch the issue Bohn continued:

Finally, Comrade Fred A. Olpp, Secretary of the meeting – has turned the trick. Going, on Saturday last, to the *People* office, he demanded to see the minutes written by himself. Looking down the page, what he knew to be erasures appeared to be well done. The top of the “t” which shows in the photograph had since been removed. But holding the paper up to the light he showed the gullible suckling who now serves as National Secretary that the gloss of the paper had been taken off by the erasure. Other S.L.P. members have since seen the document and agree that another crime has been committed in the *People* office.

Because Bohn's letter had received such wide circulation, De Leon felt obliged to reprint it to the *Weekly People*, where he tried to pooh-pooh it under the headline:

Bohn squeals Guilty. But, as was to be expected from the Gentleman, not as a man. (!!!)³⁴

There was not the slightest attempt, however, to refute the contents of Bohn's letter.

The case of Fred Olpp is of further interest. He had not been involved in the De Leon-Connolly or De Leon-Bohn disputes. Indeed, Augustine in his article referred to him as "Comrade Olpp" and in no way implied that his allegations against Bohn also extended to Olpp. But, as Bohn pointed out, Olpp could not stand idly by after his minutes had been tampered with. Olpp was Secretary of the New York State Executive Committee of the S.L.P. from Spring 1907 – and it was under his name that the New York S.E.C. reports and notices appeared in the *Weekly People*. The last report signed by him appeared in the issue of December 19, 1908. The next report from the New York S.E.C. appeared on January 23, 1909, over the name of Edmund Moonelis as Secretary. Moonelis referred to the fact that Olpp had been expelled from the Party. No explanation was given, but it would not be presumptuous to assume that it was in connection with his protestations against the erasures done on his minutes.

While Katz's biography of De Leon, which was originally serialised in the *Weekly People* of 1915, did repeat, as we have mentioned already, Augustine's allegations against Connolly and Bohn, subsequent S.L.P. writers have felt it wiser to drop them. Thus, in 1950, the then S.L.P. National Secretary ignored this issue, despite the fact that in his "account" of the Connolly-Bohn-De Leon dispute he was prepared to raise another fantastic question, whether "Connolly may or may not have been a paid tool of the Catholic political machine". (!)³⁵

This is also the case with Olive Johnson's 1931 "account", which states that Connolly "wanted the paper and the Party – for a job for himself – after both had been purged of all that was obnoxious to the Church of Rome."(!)³⁷

De Leon next proceeded to carry his vendetta against Connolly into the ranks of the Industrial Workers of the World, to which both belonged.

Notes to Chapter III

1. Quoted in C. Desmond Graves, *The Life and Times of James Connolly*, 1961, p.145.
2. Footnote in James Connolly, *The Workers' Republic*, (edited by Desmond Ryan), 1951, p.60.
3. Friedrich Engels: "On the History of Early Christianity", reprinted in Marx and Engels, *On Religion*, p. 319.
4. Footnote in James Connolly, *Labour and Easter Week*, (edited by Desmond Ryan), 1949, p.60.
5. Ira Kipnis, *The American Socialist Movement 1897-1912*, 1952, p.267.
6. Kipnis, *op. cit.*, pages 123 and 171.
7. Quoted by the Irish Communist Organisation in *The Marxism of James Connolly*, 1968 p.8.
8. *Weekly People*, December 11, 1906.
9. Quoted in Greaves, *op. cit.*, p.148.
10. *Weekly People*, September 15, 1906.
11. Greaves, *op. cit.*, page 160.
12. *Weekly People*, February 23, 1907.
13. *Weekly People*", March 2, 1907.
14. *ibid.*
15. *ibid.*
16. *Weekly People*, March 16, 1907.
17. *ibid.*
18. *Weekly People*, March 23, 1907.
19. *ibid.*
20. *ibid.*
21. *Weekly People*, March 30, 1907.
22. *Weekly People*, April 20, 1907.
23. *Weekly People*, May 18, 1907.
24. *Weekly People*, May 25, 1907.
25. *Weekly People*, June 12, 1907.
26. *Weekly People*, July 13, 1907.
27. *Weekly People*, August 3, 1907.
28. *Weekly People*, August 3, 1907.
29. *Weekly People*, March 16, 1907.
30. Henry Kuhn and Olive M. Johnson, *The Socialist Labor Party 1890-1930*, 1969 edition, p.83.
31. *ibid*, p.84.
32. *Weekly People*, November 21, 1908.

33. Rudolph Katz, "With De Leon Since '89", included in ***Daniel De Leon – The Man and His Work - A Symposium***, 1969 edition, p.129.
34. *Weekly People*, December 5, 1908.
35. Arnold Petersen, ***Bourgeois Socialism - Its Rise and Collapse in America***, 1963 edition, p.75.
36. Kuhn and Johnson, *op. cit.*, p.82.
37. Kuhn and Johnson, *op. cit.*, p.83.

CHAPTER IV

CONNOLLY AND THE I.W.W.

- INDUSTRIAL UNIONISM AND SYNDICALISM

The first constitutional convention of the Industrial Workers of the World was held in Chicago, June 1905. This was a militant class-conscious industrial union movement formed by a coming together of De Leon's Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance with the Western Federation of Miners led by Big Bill Haywood, along with other elements which had withdrawn from the A.F.L. because of the latter thwarting their efforts at developing industrial unionism from within.¹

The "boring from within" approach to the A.F.L. was running up against a stone wall. The A.F.L. discouraged any form of militant trade union struggle, and its financial support of a then member union, the Western Federation of Miners, during its officially endorsed strike in Leadville, Colorado, 1896-97, was so meagre that in December 1897 the Western Federation of Miners withdrew from the Federation.²

The A.F.L. craft unions jealously guarded their form of organization which was unable to stand up to the big, and ever bigger, combinations of capital as industry became more and more trustified. Many skills were becoming antiquated and obsolete and therefore the strikes of the craft unions were becoming less and less effective.³ Since an industry usually had different grades of skilled workers employed, to say nothing of unskilled workers employed, and since a separate union catered for each skill, strikes were lost, because when one union struck the others remained working. Thus, not alone were the craft unions unable to adequately struggle in the interests of their own members, still less were they able to unionise the over 90 percent of the American working-class who were unorganized and, for the most part, unskilled.

But this failure of the A.F.L. was mild compared to the fact that it actively sabotaged the struggles of those workers who were showing signs of organising on an industrial basis. An I.W.W. pamphlet by William Trautmann in 1911 referred to a street car workers' strike in Philadelphia in 1909. Most of the workers were

then unorganised and other employees of the same company joined the street car workers in the strike, which they won. The next strike in 1910 was a failure because, in the meantime, the A.F.L. had forced the workers to join separate unions, so that when the street-car men struck again the other workers had to remain at work.⁴ This same A.F.L. policy was to force the United Brewery Workmen, Trautmann's own union which had organised on industrial lines, to consider leaving the Federation in 1904. The background to this was that in 1896 the Coopers' Union demanded it get the brewery coopers. Then in 1898 came a demand to surrender the engineers. In 1902 the A.F.L. ordered the firemen and engineers out of it. The last straw was when at the 1904 A.F.L. convention the teamsters demanded 10,000 beer truck drivers.⁵

This, then, was the background to the setting-up of the I.W.W. in 1905. One of the significant political results of this action was that it, in the words of William Z. Foster,

brought about the first real crystallization of the left wing nationally within the Socialist Party, of those forces which, under new circumstances and with a sounder program, were to produce the Communist Party. The S.P. right-wing leadership condemned the I.W.W. vigorously ... Between right and left the struggle sharpened over the basic question of trade unionism, with the I.W.W. in the center of the fight. This quarrel was fated to become more and more intense as the spectacular history of the I.W.W. developed during the next few years.⁶

This development was to be significant as far as Connolly was concerned. Hitherto the left-wing Socialist Party members had not differentiated themselves in practice from the center and the right. Now that they had, there was some political force that Connolly could gravitate towards, when the final break with the revisionist De Leon was to take place.

For the time being, however, De Leon was to play a valuable role in the I.W.W. in cooperation with left-wing Socialist Party members such as Haywood. De Leon was to be in the leadership of the forces which defeated the attempted take-over by right-wing Socialist Party elements, led by Charles Sherman, at the I.W.W.'s second convention in 1906.⁶ That De Leon was making a positive contribution to strengthening the I.W.W. in the years 1905-6 was

probably one of the reasons why Connolly remained with the S.L.P. after his 1904 dispute with him.

De Leon's contribution was to become negative, however, in 1907. At the same time that Connolly was being edged out of the S.L.P. because of his New Jersey report, the anti-Marxist wage theory popularised by DeLeon was to be injected into the I.W.W.

In the I.W.W.'s *Industrial Union Bulletin* of June 15, 1907, Frank Reed wrote that "a raise in wages virtually means a 'cut-down'. If the cost of production is 20 percent greater, the price of the product will usually be 30 percent greater. A forced rise in wages means increased cost of living." According to Reed's thesis, then, a strike for higher wages was not merely useless, but positively detrimental and would lead to a decrease in real wages.⁸

This letter was answered with an article by J.P. Thompson, entitled "Marx or Reed, Which?" which referred Reed to Marx's ***Value, Price and Profit***, where the former's position was countered.¹⁰

P.L. Quinlan wrote to agree with Thompson, and referred to the fact that the *Weekly People* was one of the vehicles of such anti-Marxist views of wages as had been expressed by Reed. Quinlan's comment on such revisionism was that "those men who would rewrite Marx are nothing but conceited braggarts and intellectual nuisances".¹⁰

On August 17, a letter from E. Baer appeared disagreeing with Thompson and Quinlan, while Reed himself replied to Thompson's criticisms on September 28 and restated his original position.

This dispute had continued for months in the columns of the *Bulletin*, and it was not until October 26 that Connolly entered it. He referred to the fact that he had brought up this question with S.T. & L.A. in 1904, when it appeared to him that some of its spokesmen were putting forward these erroneous wage theories, and were thus reducing the organization to a negligible economic force.

But my words then only evoked ridicule, and the less the writer knew about economics the stronger and more vitriolic was their ridicule. That the I.W.W. might not fall into the

same pitfall, might not make the mistake of confounding revolutionary phraseology with true revolutionary teaching, I desire to say a few words in amplification of the contention of my fellow-organiser, Thompson.

Connolly continued:

I would not deny for a moment that he (the capitalist) can recover his losses eventually by speeding up, by new machinery, by improved methods, by the levelling process of economic crises, reducing wages again below their former level, and by many other means.

This was not the question at issue, however, stated Connolly. The question was whether the raising of prices was the method by which a capitalist could recover what he lost through a rise in wages. Connolly's answer was "No!". He argued that wages paid were not the determining factor in causing high prices, citing ***Value, Price and Profit*** in support:

The contention that a rise in wages is offset by a rise in prices, is best crystallized in the formula that wages determine prices, a theory that Marx calls "antiquated and exploded" and ... an "old, popular and worn-out fallacy".¹¹

One of the most significant aspects of Connolly's letter was that his argument that wage increases were not immediately and automatically wiped out by price increases was by no means a reformist contention that the prospect for the worker was one of ever-increasing prosperity due to successful trade union struggle. On the contrary, being the Marxist that he was, he pointed out the workers' living standards were being constantly undermined by the accumulation of capital and its impact on the introduction of new machinery and the ups and downs of the industrial cycle. If trade union struggle did not take place for higher wages attainable during the upturn of the cycle, which would be the result of accepting the De Leonist theory of wages, these downward pressures on wages would never be even partially offset, and the prospect would be one of a rapid secular decline of the working class's standard of living. This is how Marx himself expressed it:

During the phase of sinking market prices and the phases of crisis and stagnation, the working man, if not thrown out

of employment altogether, is sure to have his wages lowered ... If during the phases of prosperity, when extra profits are made, he did not battle for a rise of wages, he would, taking the average of one industrial cycle, not even receive his **average wages**, or the value of his labour ... If he resigned himself to accept the will, the dictates of the capitalist as a permanent economical law, he would share in all the miseries of the slave, without the security of the slave.¹²

On November 6, De Leon wrote to Rudolph Katz, an S.L.P. member of the I.W.W. General Executive Board. He stated that he had been requested by two people to write an article for the *Industrial Union Bulletin* in reply to Connolly's one on "Wages and Prices". De Leon continued:

I don't fancy the idea of taking the initiative in the matter. Edwards (editor of the *Bulletin*) having exhibited his woeful ignorance on economics by publishing such stuff, and also his lack of alertness by allowing such an assault on the S.T. & L.A., a spontaneous answer by me might wound his susceptibilities.

De Leon was of the opinion that Katz should write to Edwards suggesting that he (De Leon) be requested to answer Connolly's letter in the *Bulletin*.¹³

Apparently not all of the stages were accomplished in De Leon's rather awkward and roundabout approach to writing a simple article. No "refutation" of Connolly's article written by him appeared in the *Bulletin*. But while De Leon wrote no article, he did pursue his attacks on Connolly by more elaborate methods. Thompson describes the background as follows:

The General Executive Board (of the I.W.W.) met in New York Dec. 22, 1907 ... Connolly appeared before it with a plan that, if acted upon promptly, might have brought 12,000 New York longshoremen, then independent, into the I.W.W. Action was hampered when De Leon induced the Board to go into secret session to try Connolly on his charge that his articles on economics constituted heresy. Even the S.L.P. members of the Board felt all this was

ridiculous, but indignantly rallied to their leader when the Board published its proceedings.¹⁴

I.W.W. Secretary William Trautmann's minutes were published in the *Bulletin* of February 1, 1908. According to these minutes, De Leon intimated that there was a "police spy" at work in I.W.W. affairs, and proceeded with the outline of his theory, "until he had established sufficient grounds to bring out open charges against James Connolly, the organiser of the Industrial District of New York City".

Trautmann stated that De Leon commenced his accusation against Connolly by stating that the mischievous acts of one man in the S.L.P. must be reflected in his doings in the I.W.W. De Leon then discussed at length the "destructive effect" of Connolly's article on "Wages and Prices" in the *Bulletin* – an article in which he assailed the record of the Socialist Trades and Labor Alliance, by asserting that said Alliance had taught false economics, whilst in reality the claim of Connolly that prices go up first before wages are increased was an absurd and false doctrine to propound.

Further charges against Connolly were that he had used I.W.W. stationery to write derogatory letters concerning the I.W.W. and that he had poured cold water on a strike led by Katz.

De Leon's accusations then became trans-Atlantic when, according to the minutes, he stated that Connolly's record in Ireland proved him "to be a destroyer and wrecker of any movement he had been connected with" and that he "had ruined the Socialist Labor Party of Ireland."

The chairman of the meeting, Williams, then ruled that such charges were out of place before a G.E.B. meeting, and furthermore that Connolly's article could not be construed as an attempt to inject S.L.P. matters into the I.W.W. inasmuch as the S.T. & L.A. was considered an economic organisation.¹⁵

Katz protested against these minutes on February 8 and was replied to in the same issue by Trautmann who revealed further aspects of De Leon's accusations against Connolly. All members of the G.E.B., except Katz, agreed that the minutes were complete and detailed, although others had demanded that the "chain of evidence" against Connolly presented by De Leon in secret

session should also be published. Trautmann had not done this, as the “chain of evidence” dealt largely with the domination of the Catholic Church over affairs in the labor movement and, if published, might induce libel actions by people who had been named in connection with this. If demanded by the G.E.B., however, this would be published by Trautmann at a serious risk.¹⁶

De Leon published his version of the affair in the *Weekly People* of February 29. De Leon admitted accusing Connolly of seeking, “with injury to the movement in America, to inject into it the religious question”, but this had been a minor element in his “evidence” against Connolly. De Leon continued:

I charged Connolly with using the *Industrial Bulletin* to befuddle the workers with false economics, and to slander a valuable I.W.W. contingent, the S.T. & L.A. element in the ranks of the I.W.W. I proved my charges by submitting the *Industrial Bulletin* of last October 26, in which Connolly advanced the theory that “prices INVARIABLY go up first”, and wages climb up afterwards, and by submitting the statistical report of prices and wages, proving that prices went up during, before and after the rise in wages.

De Leon admitted to further charging Connolly with seeking to inject the religious question into the S.L.P as soon as he had arrived in America, and that he was now trying to inject the racial question into the movement.¹⁷

What was the significance of this behaviour by De Leon?

The first point to note is the existence of a new political difference between him and Connolly – the “racial question.” His accusation that Connolly was trying to **inject** it into the movement is without foundation. As Connolly explained his position, described in the previous chapter, he was trying to **take it out** of the Party where it already was causing difficulties, by setting up auxiliary organizations to cater for foreign immigrants. The position De Leon now took revealed his agreement with Stromqvist’s opposition to such developments, in line with De Leon’s general American chauvinism towards the special problems of immigrants.

De Leon’s rehashing of his differences with Connolly on wages and the Church also revealed that the 1904 disputes was not a

temporary aberration on the part of the former, but the beginning of a revision of his previous Marxist position on wages and his Erfurt position on religion.

This time, however, De Leon was not prepared to systematically tackle Connolly's presentation of the Marxist theory of wages. Instead, he seized on one incorrect statement in Connolly's article, which had little or not relevance to the main issue raised by Connolly. If anything, De Leon's "correction" of Connolly served to undermine his own position – that wage movements governed price movements. The statistical evidence presented by De Leon showed price rises to take place independently of wage rises – thus demolishing still further the causal relationship that was inherent in the De Leonist theory of wages.

The fact that De Leon felt Connolly's criticism of the S.T. & L.A. to be an attempt to inject S.L.P. matters into the I.W.W. also indicated that De Leon was of the opinion that Party and Union affairs were pretty much synonymous. This view was to be transferred to the I.W.W. itself, and its leaders felt that De Leon's action against Connolly was one more example of undue S.L.P. attempts to interfere in I.W.W. affairs. They increasingly complained of De Leon's sectarian actions within the I.W.W. which were having a detrimental effect on building it up as a strong union movement to organize the unorganized.¹⁸

The growing friction with De Leon was to lead to a split at the 1908 I.W.W. Convention – De Leon then setting up his own "I.W.W." with headquarters in Detroit.¹⁹

The actions of the Detroit "I.W.W." were to reveal the practical implications of the De Leonist theory of wages – that of social-pacifism in the economic struggle. "We propose to win by intelligence, not brute force", declared the *Industrial Union News*, its official organ, on May 12. The Detroit "I.W.W." would rather lose a strike than win by having "one drop of human blood spilled".²⁰ This position was to lead to the defeat of a strike of silk workers in Paterson, New Jersey, led by Rudolph Katz of the Detroit "I.W.W." in the spring of 1912. In keeping with De Leonist philosophy, no effort was made to keep scabs from entering the struck mills. "Peaceful means' is the slogan", reported a newspaper on March 31 from Paterson. "All forms of disorder and even peaceful picketing are barred. The strike-leaders notified strikers that if any

of them took the law into their own hands the union would not help them out of trouble with the police.”²¹

The De Leonist theory of wages, then, was merely a pseudo-left cover for a right-opportunist practice.

While De Leon was working himself out of genuine struggle in the working class movement, Connolly was becoming increasingly absorbed by the I.W.W. The impact of this movement can be seen clearly in his writings during the next few years.

Connolly had a deep hostility to the craft unionism of the A.F.L. which kept workers divided. It was necessary he said, to “build up unions which will teach their members to look upon themselves not as engineers, conductors, miners, printers, bricklayers, clerks, etc., but simply and solely as WORKERS.”²²

In no sense, according to Connolly, could the A.F.L. be held up as the American labor movement.

Will somebody please get out an injunction to restrain Mr. Gompers from unwarrantably using the name of labor? ... The American Federation of Labor membership forms but a small minority of the American Working Class. Mr. Gompers, who can lead only a fraction of the American Federation of Labor, presumes to speak in the name of Labor, yet Labor stays outside of his organisation.²³

In February 1910 Connolly wrote an article entitled “Industrialism and The Trade Unions” for the *International Socialist Review* of Chicago. In this article he summarized certain principles expressed in his book ***Socialism Made Easy***, to which we shall refer presently. These principles were, in his own words:

First, that the working class as a class cannot become permeated with a belief in the unity of their class interests unless they have first been trained to a realization of the need of industrial unity; second, that the revolutionary act – the act of taking over the means of production and establishing a social order based upon the principles of the working class (labor) cannot be achieved by a disorganized, defeated and humiliated working class, but must be the work

of that class **after** it had attained to a commanding position on the field of economic struggle.

There are two distinct principles enunciated here, which must not be confused – that of industrial unionism and that of a semi-syndicalist concept of revolution. The principle of industrial unionism holds that the industrial union is the most class conscious form of unionism – as it unites workers as a class and does not pander to sectionalism. Because it is the most class conscious form of unionism, it is also the most effective in waging the economic struggle, all workers in an industry striking together.

The other principle enunciated by Connolly – that of the semi-syndicalist concept of revolution – was one which he had been developing under the impact of the dominant ideological element of the I.W.W.

It may seem strange that a Marxist like Connolly should have held such a non-Marxist position, which led to a downgrading of the role of the party in the revolution, the major place now being taken by the industrial union. This is a stranger still if viewed against the background of his theory of the vanguard party, described in Chapter I, which was remarkably parallel in many respects to the Leninist position.

That such a non-Marxist theory was held by Connolly, however, was to a major extent the fault of Daniel De Leon, who made use of a statement attributed to Marx - whose authenticity was highly dubious and for which nothing similar could be found in anything that Marx had ever written - in order to support this same concept of the vanguard role of the union.

This alleged statement of Marx was:

Only the economic organisation is capable of setting on foot a true political party of Labor, and thus raise a bulwark against the power of Capital.

From this dubious sentence, and by a process of argumentation itself of a dubious nature, De Leon “derived” the following syndicalist conclusions, in an article entitled “With Marx for Text”, which was published in the *Daily People* of June 29, 1907:

[1] That a true political party of labor is bound to carry into the political arena the sound principles of the revolutionary economic organization **which it reflects**.

[2] That the revolutionary act of achieving the overthrow of Capitalism and the establishment of Socialism is the **function reserved to the economic organization**.

[3] That the “physical force” called for by the revolutionary act **lies inherent in the economic organizations**.

[4] That the element of “force” consists, not in a military or other organization implying violence, but in the **structure** of the economic organization.

[5] That the economic organization is not “transitory” but is the present **embryo of the future Government of the Republic of Labor**.²⁴

Thus, De Leon appeared to give Marxist legitimacy to some syndicalist ideas – which he himself did not adopt until as late as 1905, when they had been previously espoused by Thomas Hagerty and William Trautmann of the I.W.W.²⁵

It is in the light of this apparent Marxist sanction for some of these ideas, that their espousal by Connolly from 1908 must be viewed.

But De Leon had been somewhat underhand in his use of this alleged sentence of Marx’s which he was supposed to have uttered in “a conversation that Marx had in 1869 with the officer of a Union named Hamann”. McKee recounts that although De Leon was asked on at least seven occasions where the text of this conversation might be found, his answers were evasive and he never gave any specific source. McKee comments:

It is quite possible that De Leon did not know where the Hamann quotation might be located. If this was the case, his contacts with his correspondents were hardly straightforward ... If he did know and if the passage was an authentic Marxist source, it is difficult to imagine why De Leon should want to conceal it; for he was desperately in need of such texts to justify his post-1905 theory. If he did know, therefore,

it is probable that he recognised its dubious authenticity and for this reason did not wish to reveal it.²⁶

Here again, therefore, De Leon was guilty of generating ideological confusion in the working class movement.

To return to Connolly's discussions of industrial unionism, in the February 1910 article, he posed the question of whether "the present form of American trade unions (can) provide the socialist movement with the economic force upon which to rest" or whether "the American Federation of Labor (can) develop towards industrialism sufficiently for our needs?"

Connolly felt the answer was in the negative – but he hastened to point out, in case of misunderstanding, that he was not debating whether it was possible for an A.F.L. member to become an industrialist, or for all its members – but whether, even if this happened, the organizational nature of the A.F.L. was such as to permit the subsequent transition to the industrial form. He believed not, and pointed to the consequences which would follow if, say, all the building trades branches of Chicago resolved to join together in an industrial union. Every branch which did so, would forfeit its charter in the craft union and in the A.F.L., and outside Chicago its member would be considered scabs.

Connolly's conclusion was that the I.W.W. should be built up because "the most dispersive and isolating force at work in the labor movement today is craft unionism, the most cohesive and unifying force, industrial unionism."²⁷

Perhaps Connolly's best known work of his period in America was the pamphlet ***Socialism Made Easy***, published in 1909. Section II, which dealt with the trade union question, was based on the two articles by Connolly in his own magazine *The Harp*, June and December 1908, and another article in the *Industrial Union Bulletin*, April 19, 1908.

This was Connolly's most comprehensive expression of his industrial unionist and semi-syndicalist positions.

Connolly again demonstrated how craft unionism, by keeping one grade of workers on the job, while another was on strike in the same plant, sabotaged the economic struggle of the working class

and fostered a spirit of sectionalism. In contrast, he cited the successes of industrial unionism in Scandinavia. He felt that there were political conclusions to be drawn also from the negative effects of the craft spirit, and asked whether it was not common sense to expect that “the recognition of the necessity for concerted common action of all workers against the capitalist enemy in the industrial battleground must precede the realization of the wisdom of common action as a class on the political battlefield?”²⁸

But then Connolly went on to expound his semi-syndicalist theory of the proletarian revolution:

In a previous chapter I have analysed the weakness of the craft ... form of organization ... as a weapon of defence ... in the everyday conflicts on the economic field, and as a generator of class consciousness on the political field, and pointed out the greater effectiveness for both purposes of an industrial form of organization. In the present article I desire to show how they who are engaged in building up industrial organizations for the practical purposes of today are at the same time preparing the framework of the society of the future.

He indicated his agreement with the statement of Socialist Party member Stirton that political institutions were not adapted to the administration of industry and since only industrial organizations were adapted for the administration of the cooperative commonwealth for which they were working, there was no constructive socialism except in the Industrial field. Connolly elaborated upon his own views on this matter:

The political institutions of today are simply the coercive forces of capitalist society ... Under a Socialist form of society the administration of affairs will be the hands of representatives of the various industries of the nation ... (The) union will democratically control the workshop of its own industry ... Representatives elected from these various departments of industry will meet and form the industrial administration of the country ... (Industrial Unionism) prepares within the framework of capitalist society the working forms of the Socialist Republic.²⁹

This important role which Connolly assigned to the union was to lead him to downgrade the political struggle in comparison to the economic one. He paraphrased the dubious statement attributed by De Leon to Marx as follows: “that a Socialist Political Party not emanating from the ranks of organized Labor is ... simply a Socialist sect, ineffective for the final revolutionary act”, and he proceeded to draw the syndicalist conclusion that **“the conquest of political power by the working class waits upon the conquest of economic power**, and must function through the economic organization.”³⁰

The tendency known as syndicalism has been defined as follows by William Z. Foster, the former leader of the Syndicalist League of North America who later abandoned that position and became the outstanding leader of the Communist Party, U.S.A.:

Syndicalism ... may be defined very briefly as that tendency in the labor movement to confine the revolutionary class struggle of the workers to the economic field, to practically ignore the state, and to reduce the whole fight of the working class to simply a question of trade union action. Its fighting organization is the trade union; its basic method of class warfare is the strike, with the general strike as the revolutionary weapon; and its revolutionary goal is the setting up of a trade union “state” to conduct industry and all other social activities.³¹

Connolly’s position might be called semi-syndicalist, because he did not fully conform to this definition. He still emphasized the necessity of political struggle and, in ***Socialism Made Easy***, he underlined this point by putting it in capital letters:

If we accept the definition of working class political action as that which brings the workers as a class into direct conflict with the possessing class As A CLASS, and keeping them there, then we must realise that NOTHING CAN DO THAT SO READILY AS ACTION AT THE BALLOT BOX.³²

This political action, however, took second place in importance because of his acceptance of other syndicalist ideas.

The Irish Communist Organisation has pointed to Connolly's incorrect understanding of the Marxist position on the difference between the development of the proletarian and bourgeois revolutions. Connolly expressed his confusion on the point in Chapter 6 of ***Socialism Made Easy***, which was reprinted from an article of his in *The Industrial Union Bulletin* of April 18, 1908, and also in an article of his in the April 1908 issue of *The Harp*, where he said:

The first act of the workers will be through their economic organizations seizing the organized industries; the last act the conquest of political power: ... The working class will follow in the lines traversed by the capitalist revolutions of Cromwellian England, of Colonial and Revolutionary America, of Republican France, in each of whom the capitalist class had developed their economic power before they raised the banner of political revolt.³³

The Irish Communist Organisation stated that Connolly was incorrect on this point because:

Capitalist production could develop within feudalism because capitalism and feudalism were both based on private property and class exploitation ... But socialist production ... allows for only one class in production: the working class ... Every last ounce of bourgeois political power will be used to prevent the development of Socialism (of a real Socialist Party, not to mention **socialist production**) in bourgeois society. Socialist production, therefore, cannot begin until political power is taken from the bourgeoisie and the political power of the working class takes its place.³⁴

This subordinate role assigned by Connolly to the struggle for state power also led him to substitute the general strike in place of armed struggle as the method of revolution:

In facing (the Zeppelins of the bourgeois state) in the hands of our remorseless and unscrupulous masters, the gun of comrade Victor Berger will be as ineffective as the paper ballot in the hands of a reformer ... (But) we still have the opportunity to forge a weapon capable of winning the fight for us against political usurpation and all the military powers of earth, sea and air ... Its name is industrial unionism.³⁵

This position of Connolly's overestimated the ability of the ruling class to be forever victorious over the armed risings of the working class. In another way it underestimated the strength of bourgeois state power in the belief that a general strike, unsupplemented by armed force on the part of the working class, would emerge victorious in the face of the armed reaction of the authorities. This worshipping of the general strike as the panacea for the working class, and the underestimation of the power of the state to break it, was developed in an even more extreme form by the I.W.W., and was attacked by the American Communist leader Charles E. Ruthenberg in 1919, when he said that the trouble with the I.W.W. theorizing was that it overlooked entirely "the fact that in the very process of organizing industrial unions and carrying on their strikes they run into opposition to the organized power of capitalism as embodied in the State". Communists, he said, were in full agreement with the industrial form of labor organization which the I.W.W. carried out, but they did not believe that the workers "can obtain any high degree of industrial control without first achieving control of the power of the State".³⁶

This position of Connolly's expressed above, however, was out of character, and in later years he was clearly to abandon it, both in theory and practice.

Connolly also had some misconceptions of the State under socialism. His belief was that the role of the union would be the same as that of the state. The passages from ***Socialism Made Easy*** quoted in this Chapter reveal his belief that the administration of socialist society would be in the hands of the industrial organizations.³⁷

This again was a syndicalist formulation previously expressed by De Leon in 1905.³⁸

This syndicalist position of De Leon has been confused with the non-syndicalist statement by De Leon in April 1904 that the industrial organization forecasted the future constituencies of the parliaments of the Socialist Republic.³⁹

There was nothing in De Leon's ***Burning Question of Trade Unionism*** speech of 1904 which stated his later position that these labor organizations should be the actual administrative

organs of socialist society and should take the place of the political state in regulating economic and social life.

The S.L.P. has tried to create confusion by claiming that somehow Lenin agreed with De Leon's concept of trade union states.⁴⁰ The only "evidence" they attempt to offer for this assertion is based on hearsay versions of conversations – because Lenin never once wrote about De Leon's theories either of industrial constituencies or the syndicalist one of industrial union government. The only work by De Leon that Lenin actually wrote about was his 1902 ***Two Pages from Roman History***, which was directed against reformism. The occasion was in 1920 when Lenin wrote to Bukharin, urging that this work be published in Russian.⁴¹

Even with regard to the hearsay reports, some of which are extremely dubious as to their correct nature, the only one to actually refer to De Leon's writings also reveals no awareness, on Lenin's part, of De Leon's syndicalist writings. This account was by Leningrad Professor Raisky, who stated that former S.L.P. member Boris Reinstein had told him of a conversation held with Lenin at the end of May, 1919:

"But did not De Leon err on the side of 'sectarianism'?" Lenin asked half jestingly, half earnestly, but added that he was mightily impressed by the sharp and deep criticism of reformism given by De Leon in his ***Two Pages from Roman History***, as well as the fact that, as far back as April 1904, De Leon anticipated such an essential element of the Soviet system as the abolition of parliament and its replacement by representatives from production units.⁴²

Even if this hearsay evidence is accepted, all it means is that Lenin noticed that De Leon's non-syndicalist ***Burning Question*** put forward in 1904 a concept of industrial constituencies, paralleling those developed in the Soviet Union after the 1917 Revolution. Stalin thus stated their significance:

Soviet power, by combining legislative and executive power in a single state organization and replacing territorial electoral constituencies by industrial units, factories and mills, thereby directly links the workers and the laboring masses in general with the apparatus of state administration, and teaches them how to govern the country.⁴³

Whether or not Lenin was opposed to the concept of trade union administration, put forward by De Leon and Connolly, does not, however, depend on any hearsay evidence. Lenin made his opposition to it perfectly clear in his published works concerning his 1920-21 dispute with Trotsky and Bukharin on trade union questions.

Lenin emphasised that due to the initial lack of sufficient political development on the part of the proletariat as a whole, the socialist state, i.e. the dictatorship of the proletariat, could not be exercised by an organization taking in the whole working class – such as the trade union movement. The proletarian dictatorship could be exercised only by a vanguard Party that had absorbed the revolutionary energy of the working-class.

The role of the trade unions in such a situation was to stand between the Party and government. The functions of government could not be performed without the trade unions acting as a “reservoir” of the state power, and as a link between the vanguard and the masses. These functions however, had to be performed through the medium of special institutions of a new type known as Soviets, which were the industrial constituencies of the new government system.⁴⁴

A resolution of the Second Congress of the Communist International, which was amended and supplemented by Lenin, pointed out that in the first stage of socialism it was absolutely necessary not to blur the distinction between Party, trade union and Soviet – due to the uneven development of socialist class-consciousness.

The necessity of a political party of the proletariat can cease only with the complete abolition of classes. On the way to this final victory of Communism it is possible that the relative importance of the three fundamental proletarian organizations of modern times (Party, Soviets and Industrial Union) may undergo some change; and that gradually a **single type of workers’ organisation will be formed**. The Communist Party, however, will become absorbed in the working class only when **Communism ceases to be the object of struggle**, and the whole working class shall have become Communist.⁴⁵

The refusal to recognise the distinction between the vanguard and mass of the proletariat in the transitional stage of socialism, however, was the difference between Communism and syndicalism, as described by Lenin:

Communism says: The Communist Party, the vanguard of the proletariat, leads the non-Party workers' masses, educating, preparing, teaching and training the masses ("school" of Communism) – first the workers and then the peasants – to enable them eventually to concentrate in their hands the administration of the whole national economy.

Syndicalism hands over to the mass of non-Party workers, who are compartmentalized in the industries, the management of their industries ("the chief administrations and central boards"), thereby making the Party superfluous, and failing to carry on a sustained campaign either in training the masses or in **actually** concentrating in **their** hands the management **of the whole national economy**.⁴⁶

Syndicalism not alone undermined the vanguard role of the Party **after** the revolution, it also undermined its role for the **pre-revolutionary** period. It was under this syndicalist influence that Connolly began to give expression to ideas on the Party which conflicted with his previously held position of assigning a vanguard role to it, as described in Chapters I and III.

In July 1908 he wrote:

Within recent years there has grown up in the socialist movement a change of opinion relative to the functions of a political party ... that the political party which exists for the fight at the ballot box is primarily and essentially an agitational and destructive force, and that the real constructive work of the Social Revolution must come from an economic industrial organization; ... that, since the political party was not to accomplish the revolution but only to lead the attack upon the political citadel of capitalism, there no longer existed the same danger of the uncleanness of its membership, nor compelling necessity for insisting upon its purification ... From all this it is our belief there will

evolve, if there has not in principle already evolved, as the fighting army of the workers of this country:

One Socialist party embracing all shades and conceptions of Socialist political thought.

One Socialist Industrial Organization drilling the working class for the supreme mission of their class – the establishment of the Workers' Republic.

Between these two organizations – the advance guard and the main army of labor – there should be no war, and no endorsement.⁴⁷

It is true that Connolly still described the Party as the advance guard of labor – but this role was greatly undermined by his abandonment of his previous belief in the danger of unclearness on the part of its membership. This downgrading of the Party by Connolly was a logical consequence of his acceptance of the false “Marxist Legitimacy” that De Leon had given to such syndicalist ideas.

All these criticisms of Connolly's semi-syndicalist position are in no way intended to belittle him. On the contrary, in view of the sea of confusion generated by revisionism in the working class movement, it could be expected that he would get his feet wet while most drowned.

Objective conditions in America were very conducive for the development of syndicalist views. Among the factors favouring them were the existence of great masses of disfranchised immigrants and migratory workers, the widespread corruption of American politics that disgusted many workers with political action generally, the ultra-reactionary regime of the A.F.L. which disgusted progressive unionists, and, last but not least, the petty-bourgeois control and reformist policies of the Socialist Party which convinced many left-wing Socialists that neither reform legislation nor votes for socialism would bring workers any closer to the Socialist Republic.⁴⁸

A. Lozovsky, leader of the Red International of Labor Unions asked:

What brought revolutionary syndicalism closer to revolutionary Marxism? The protest against parliamentary cretinism, the protest against collaboration with the bourgeoisie.⁴⁹

It is only in the light of this that we can criticise Connolly's semi-syndicalist statements. It is only because revolutionary conditions were stronger in Russia, thus enabling Lenin to thoroughly analyse the weaknesses of syndicalism as an adequate revolutionary position and develop his own successful strategy for revolution to be passed on to us today, that we find ourselves in a position to attempt to give an adequate Marxist criticism of these weak points in Connolly's position.

But Connolly was to recognise many of these weak points himself. Not alone did he later abandon many of these positions but, **contemporaneously** with his semi-syndicalist statements, he was to make others which were in contradiction with them and reiterated his Marxist position.

Connolly never felt himself at ease in the syndicalist camp and was always searching for a correct Marxist strategy. This we shall see in the next Chapter.

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CHAPTER V

THE HARP, 1908-1910

In January, 1908, the Irish Socialist Federation, which had been set up despite the opposition of the De Leonists, launched a monthly journal as its main means of socialist propaganda among the Irish in America. This journal was entitled *The Harp*, and was edited and mainly written by Connolly himself.

In 1924 Connolly's biographer Desmond Ryan commented on its significance:

Too long has James Connolly been known to the mass of his countrymen through his published books and pamphlets. His maturest thoughts and developed convictions lie buried in the scattered files of Labour journals in Ireland, Great Britain and America. In his genial and trenchant manner he expresses in the *Harp* his best criticisms of American society, Irish-American politicians ... [and] his complete political and social ideals, as well as his practical policy for Irish workers.¹

Despite this testimony by Ryan, he was to leave most of Connolly's *Harp* articles and all of his *Weekly People* writings still buried, although publishing many of Connolly's mediocre and repetitive writings in his three volume 'selection' of the works of Connolly, two decades later.

It is our intention to focus attention in this chapter on Connolly's views on the Church, Religion, the Party, and the Irish National Question, as revealed in the *Harp*.

It is in this journal that we find Connolly's clearest refutation of the De Leonist allegation that he was submitting to the attacks of the Roman Catholic Church on the Socialist movement. Connolly's attacks on clerical interference in political and educational matters were to be much stronger and more specific than anything De Leon or Vandervelde had said when Connolly challenged their positions in 1904. The fundamental difference was that Connolly's criticisms were made from a socialist point of view, whereas Vandervelde's and De Leon's were made from a crude bourgeois-

liberal and anti-Catholic position which could only have the effect of splitting up the working-class along religious lines.

In the issue of May 1908 Connolly strongly attacked the despotic control by the Church over education in Ireland, and the arbitrary exercise of its power to dismiss teachers at will. Connolly explained the origins of the Church's power:

This system is the direct result of an "understanding", or as the Americans would say, a "deal" between the Vatican and the English government in Ireland – a direct outcome of the secular policy of the Papacy. Every revolutionist in Ireland realises that this compact is the source of the unflinching opposition of the higher Catholic clergy to every real revolutionary movement in our country.

Connolly stated that he knew he would be regarded as "anti-clerical" by many for uttering such sentiments, but he freely confessed that:

I would rather trust for the freedom of Ireland to the Irish Working Class than to the Irish Priesthood, and I had always a sympathetic feeling towards the saying attributed to Thomas Francis Meagher, to wit, "If the latter stands between man and his freedom, I would say, Down with the altar".

And Meagher was no enemy of the Catholic religion nor yet given to anti-clerical ideas.²

In October of the same year, Connolly replied to attacks on the Irish Socialist Federation by the Chicago Catholic newspaper, *The New World and the Citizen*. In strong language he commented:

It is amazing to observe how the editor of the organ of the bishop of Chicago, and the editor of the *Citizen*, described above, and the editor of the *Daily People* (De Leon) all rushed to attack the Irish Socialist Federation in the one time. Not only is it true that birds of a feather flock together, but this proves that curs of a breed yelp together.³

But Connolly was not to confine his analysis to that of the secular activities of the Church alone. He was also to apply dialectical

materialism to the analysis of religion itself. In doing this he was moving away from the Erfurt position and closer to the Leninist one - in contrast to De Leon who was moving away from it in the opposite direction, towards bourgeois anti-Catholicism. Clearly a materialist analysis of religion, as was offered by Connolly now, reversed his position adopted in the 1904 dispute with De Leon, that socialists should not attack theology. True, Connolly did not mount any frontal assault on it, but its explanation in terms of dialectical materialism could only have the effect of undermining its influence over people, and therefore had the same objective result as a direct attack – probably a more successful result since it was not abusive in form.

Connolly offered this analysis in the issue of September 1908 and he extended it to interpret also the roots of bourgeois free thought.

On religion he commented:

That which the cultured man of the twentieth century would explain and understand as “a natural process”, the mental vision of our forefathers could only see as a result of the good or ill will of some beneficent or evil spirit – some God or Devil ... The different stages of development of the human mind in its attitude towards the forces of Nature created different priesthoods to interpret them, and the mental conceptions of mankind as interpreted by those priesthoods became, when systematised, Religion. Religions are simply expressions of the human conceptions of the natural world; these religions have created the priesthoods. Only he who stands upon the individualistic conceptions of history can logically claim that priesthoods create religion. Modern historical science utterly rejects the idea as absurd.

Connolly proceeded to show the class roots of free-thought:

It is in truth in the camp of the enemy that such ideas belong, such doctrines are the legitimate children of the teachings of individualism, and their first progenitors both in England and France were also the first great exponents of the capitalist doctrines of free trade and free competition, free contract and free labor. Such conceptions of religion are entirely opposed to the modern doctrine that the intellectual conceptions of men are the product of their material

conditions, and flow in the grooves channelled out by the economic environment.⁴

On one occasion Connolly did depart from a thorough materialist explanation of religion when he wrote:

In face of successful crime and wealthy plunderers sitting honored in the high places of society it is no wonder if some men and women can not believe in a Heavenly Father, but when all men and women are well fed and clad, and have all the possibilities of life open to them in a sanely organised society it will be easy to believe.

Hungry men naturally “curse God and die”, well fed men can easily reconcile themselves to the idea of a “Father in Heaven”.⁵

This view of **irreligion** being due to poverty and oppression, and that it would be easier to believe in religion in Socialist society when this poverty would have been removed, in strange contradiction with the Marxist view. Marxism in fact holds that, on the contrary, it is poverty and oppression which explain the persistence of religious belief, and only when these causes of alienation are abolished by Socialism, will it be possible for religion as a product of alienation to disappear also.⁶

While Connolly still held to the application of dialectical materialism to explain the successive **forms** that religion took, in this passage he did not apply it to explain the **nature** of religion itself.

Whether or not Connolly had religious beliefs of his own, is hard to tell. The above passage by him would indicate that at the time of its writing he had some belief. Greaves has stated that “there is much uncertainty as to his private opinions on the subject of religion.”⁷ This is partially true. But it also is true that even more uncertainty than might otherwise exist has been created by commentators such as Greaves himself when he made the false statement - contradicted in Chapter II of this thesis - that Connolly had been working out a *modus vivendi* between scientific socialism and Christian beliefs.⁸

If Greaves had a genuine interest in presenting what Connolly stood for, instead of adding to the uncertainty he would have tried

to diminish it. But it was the former that he decided to do. This is also made obvious in Greaves's comments on the *aide-memoire* published by a Catholic priest in 1942, that Connolly had received the last rites of that Church from him before his execution by the British in 1916. We are not in a position to comment on the veracity of this statement, but we can pass judgement on Greaves's reaction to it. Greaves is correct in pointing to the fact that this *memoire* did not claim any retraction was made by Connolly of his political views. But Greaves is totally incorrect in stating that there was no retraction at all, if it is true that Connolly died as a Catholic.⁹

Whatever uncertainty there may be as to whether Connolly had or had not some religious belief, there can be no uncertainty that he was not a Catholic during most of his political life. It is true that he was a Catholic at the time of his marriage in 1889. This can be deduced from the fact that he married his Protestant bride in a Catholic Church.¹⁰

But Connolly subsequently left the Catholic Church and his daughter Ina has stated that, to the best of her memory, Connolly never took her or the other Connolly children to Catholic religious services. The only time he went with them to a Catholic Church was when they visited St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York – to view the architecture.¹¹

The fact that Connolly's children were raised as Catholics, however, remains somewhat of a puzzle. He certainly did not teach them any Catholic doctrine, and his Protestant wife only taught them Protestant prayers. The children attended church with the other Catholic children in the neighborhoods that they lived in.

An explanation of this mystery may have been Connolly's sense of honor that a promise once made should be implemented. The promise to raise the children as Catholics had to be made at the marriage ceremony, since it was a mixed marriage between Catholic and Protestant. Apparently Connolly decided not to reverse it, even though he himself had left the Church.

One thing else is certain about Connolly's views on religion. The fact that he gave a materialist interpretation of the forms of religion would conflict with the teachings of any religion, and most of all with those of the Catholic Church. If Connolly did have any

religious belief, it is to his eternal credit that his sense of class consciousness was so strong that he produced such materialist analyses, as these would have the effect of undermining the religious beliefs of his readers, and most of all, his own.

However, the aberration by Connolly from correct Marxist teaching in January 1909 was omitted by him that same year when he included the rest of that discussion of religion in the American edition of “Workshop Talks”, which comprised the first half of his pamphlet, ***Socialism Made Easy***. And the rest of that discussion was itself rather irreligious, for it denied the meaningfulness of religion in present-day society:

We also know that neither capitalist nor worker can practice the moral precepts of religion, and without its moral precepts a religion is simply a sham. If a religion cannot enforce its moral teachings upon its votaries it has as little relation to actual life as the pre-election promises of a politician have to legislation.¹²

The following April Connolly showed that, whether he had some religious beliefs or not, his opposition to Christian “Socialism” remained as resolute as ever. He did admit that it could be all right for socialists who themselves were Protestants to appeal to their fellow-Protestants to become socialists, by using among their arguments Scriptural Interpretations which differed from those accepted by the teachers or clergymen of their Churches. This might be possible since Protestantism permitted private interpretation of Scripture. This was not the case with Catholicism however, where the tenets of this religion vested the power of interpretation with the clergy alone. Socialists who were Catholics, therefore, should not use religious arguments in the attempt to win their fellow-Catholics to socialism. It goes without saying that this position of Connolly’s applied even more strongly to non-Catholic socialists who attempted to do the same thing. Connolly pointed out the dangers of using such religious arguments:

You are inviting the Catholic to contest the authority of clergy upon a question of religious beliefs ... But if we convince the Catholic worker that we are not concerned with interpretations of religion as adjuncts to Socialism, but that Socialism is an economic and political question, to be settled along economic and political lines – to be settled in the

workshop and at the ballot box and not at the altar ... then we can also convince them that the interference of the clergy is an intrusion, an absurdity.

But every time we approach a Catholic worker with a talk about “Christian Socialism” we make this a religious question, and on such a question his religion teaches him that the clergy must say the final word.¹³

In addition to attacking Christian “Socialism”, Connolly was to resume his materialist analyses of religion in 1910. This was in his pamphlet ***Labour, Nationality and Religion***, written shortly before his departure from the United States to return home to Ireland. This pamphlet was a rebuttal of a series of attacks on Socialism made by a Dublin Jesuit. Connolly defended dialectical materialism against this priest’s criticism, and as an illustration applied it to analyse the changes in the Church’s teaching concerning the morality of such practices as slavery and usury.¹⁴

Connolly later proceeded to give a materialist interpretation of the successes of early Christianity:

All but the merest dabblers in Scriptural history know that the economic oppression of the Jewish people was so great immediately before the coming of Christ that the whole nation had been praying and hoping for the promised Redeemer, and it was just at the psychological moment of their bondage as a nation and their slavery as race that Christ appeared ... It was the “common people” who “heard Him gladly” in Judea, as it was the slaves and laborers who formed the bulk of His believers throughout the Gentile world until the fury of the persecution had passed ... Christ and his disciples spoke to them of redemption, of freedom. They interpreted, rightly or wrongly, the words to mean an earthly redemption, a freedom here and now as a prelude possibly to the freedom hereafter; and hence they joined with enthusiasm the sect hated by their oppressors.¹⁵

Such a materialist explanation of the spread of early Christianity, rather than an explanation ascribing it to Divine will, was clearly in conflict with the doctrines of any Christian Church, and this conflict was greatest with the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.

Connolly continued with this method of analysis to describe the materialist basis for the Protestant Reformation:

As Capitalism taught the doctrine of ever man for himself ... it created its reflex in the religious world, and that reflex, proclaiming individual belief was the sole necessity of salvation, appears in history as the Protestant Reformation. Now the (Catholic) Church curses the Protestant Reformation – the child; and blesses capitalism – its parent.¹⁶

If Connolly did accept the teachings of the Catholic Church immediately before dying, while this would not have involved any retraction of his belief in socialism, it would most certainly have involved a retraction of his belief in the philosophy of dialectical materialism. There is not one word written by Connolly between the 1910 writings above and the year of his execution in 1916, to suggest that he in any way reversed the position expressed above. This makes it highly unlikely that he accepted the tenets of Roman Catholicism before dying.

However, he may still have gone through the formal process of the last rites of the Catholic Church – but for purely non-religious reasons. A close friendship had developed between him and his fellow-leader of the Dublin 1916 Uprising – Patrick Pearse, who was also executed after his suppression. Pearse was a devout Catholic and Ryan, in the introduction of his biography of Connolly, states that it was at Pearse's request that Connolly received the last rites.¹⁷ Ryan believed this to be a genuine reconciliation by Connolly with the Church. We think otherwise, but we are prepared to accept that Connolly went through the formal motions in response to Pearse's dying request, in order to set the latter's mind at rest. Such an action would be in keeping with Connolly's previous action in formally having his children raised in the Catholic Church.

It was not only on matters of the Church and religion that the *Harp* was to clarify Connolly's position. Some of its most important articles dealt with his position on the Party.

In the first issue he declared his disapproval both of the Socialist Labor Party and the Socialist Party, whose attacks on one another now amounted to mere slander and no longer served the interests of the working-class. Yet a strong sentiment for common action did

exist among the rank and file of both parties. This common ground of action, however, could not emanate either from the S.L.P. or the S.P., or by unity conferences, or by amalgamation of the two parties. There were too many leaders, too many “saviours of the working class” who feared that a general reunion might mean a general housecleaning and their own consequent dumping on the garbage heap.

Thus, there was no organisation on the political field which could be clearly supported as the most acceptable party of the working class. But it was otherwise on the economic field where he had no difficulty in choosing the I.W.W. as against the class collaborationist A.F.L. Connolly felt that the I.W.W. could have an important political role to play in addition to its economic function:

On the day that the I.W.W. launches its own political party it will put an end to all excuse for two Socialist parties and open the way for a real and effective unification of the revolutionary forces ... We do not say this will end forever all fear of the existence of two parties calling themselves Socialists ... Compromisers and schemers will still erect parties to serve their personal ends ... but they will be deprived by their power to delude the real revolutionist by the simple fact of the existence of a political party of Socialists dominated by and resting upon the movement of the working class.¹⁸

Connolly was correct in viewing the I.W.W. as the most class-conscious proletarian organisation in the U.S. at that time. This was made clear in the first paragraph of the preamble adopted by its first convention in 1905:

The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life.

Between these two classes a struggle must go on until all the toilers come together on the political, as well as on the industrial field, and take and hold that which they produce by their labor, through the economic organization of the working class without affiliation with any political party.¹⁹

The second paragraph embodied the famous 'political clause' which was to lead to contention between De Leon and the I.W.W. in 1908. Even as it then stood, it embodied the syndicalist conception of the economic organisation playing the major role in the seizure of power by the working class. The commitment to political action was further limited by excluding affiliation to any political party. At the I.W.W. Convention it was De Leon himself who insisted on the inclusion of the words, "without affiliation with any political party."²⁰

But De Leon did not live up to the spirit of the resolution and he was accused of trying to bring the I.W.W. under control of the S.L.P. his campaign against Connolly in the organisation being one example.²¹

Therefore, to prevent such manipulation of the I.W.W. by political parties, it was decided to drop all reference to political action from the Preamble at the 1908 Convention. In addition, two extra paragraphs were added. One was syndicalist, and spoke of the Union being the future administrative organ of society. The other was militantly class-conscious, and drew a clear distinction between the policies of the A.F.L. and I.W.W.:

Instead of the conservative motto, 'a fair day's wage for a fair day's work', we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword, 'Abolition of the wage system!'²²

Connolly welcomed the results of this 1908 Convention, which also ousted De Leon from the organisation:

We desire to congratulate the (I.W.W.) organization on its work and trust that, having freed itself of the grasp of those who attempted to strangle it from within, it will now forge ahead as it ought.²³

This is not to say that Connolly was in agreement with the removal of any commitment to political action. When asked if he approved of this repudiation of it, he laughed and said: "It will be impossible to prevent the workers taking it".²⁴

The fact was that the removal of this clause did not yet set the I.W.W. on the anti-political road it would travel ten years later. The

removal was necessary to prevent the manipulation of the organization by De Leon, who in any case gave a very narrow parliamentary interpretation of political action. At the 1905 Convention he stated another principle of bourgeois respectability which he was developing. To him the 'political clause' was quite essential to keep the I.W.W. "in line and in step with civilisation". "The barbarian", he said, "begins with physical force; the civilized man ends with that when force is necessary."²⁵

Since De Leon now in fact accepted the syndicalist proposition that the economic organization played the vanguard role in the revolution, it is understandable why he no longer could speak of the all-round tasks of a vanguard party and could now only give it a 'civilizing' role to play.

The I.W.W. lost nothing by abandoning this concept of political action. More important still, the dropping of the 'political clause' merely meant that its official position was non-political and not anti-political.

In fact, the July 23, 1910 issue of the I.W.W. newspaper *Solidarity* emphasized that the 1908 Convention "applied the knife to the ulcer of political sectarianism", and not to political action itself. The I.W.W. did not intend "to allow the equally fatal ulcer of anti-political sectarianism to develop in its place. And if it does, in our opinion the knife will have to be applied again".²⁶

Although no longer stating 'political action' to be one of its principles, the I.W.W. was to engage in more meaningful political struggles than either of the two socialist parties. These were primarily the "free speech" struggles of the organisation during 1909-14 for the right to hold public meetings.²⁷ I.W.W. leader 'Big Bill' Haywood commented on this aspect in his autobiography:

The history of the I.W.W. has shown the significance of political action. While there are some members who decry legislative and congressional action and who refuse to cast a ballot for any political party, yet the I.W.W. has fought more political battles for the working class than any other organization or political party in America. They have had one battle after another for free speech. They have fought against vagrancy laws, against criminal syndicalism laws, and to establish the right of the workers to organize. They

have gone on strike for men in prison. It is to the ignominy of the Socialist Party and Socialist Labor Party that they have so seldom joined forces with the I.W.W. in these desperate political struggles.²⁸

Connolly was not alone among international Socialists in regarding the I.W.W. as the most class-conscious proletarian organisation of that time in America.

In his 1920 theses for the Second Congress of the Communist International, Lenin criticized the I.W.W. and other left wing organizations for their opposition to proletarian agitation in bourgeois parliaments and reactionary trade unions:

Nevertheless ... the Congress considers it possible and desirable that those of the above-mentioned organisations which have not yet officially affiliated to the Communist International do so immediately; for in the present instance, particularly as regards the Industrial Workers of the World ... we are dealing with a profoundly proletarian and mass movement, which in all essentials actually stands by the basic principles of the Communist International.²⁹

However, a leadership change took place in the I.W.W. in 1920 which put an anarcho-syndicalism element in control which was extremely anti-communist and rejected the hand of friendship extended by Lenin.³⁰

But Haywood himself greeted the Bolshevik Revolution and its principle of a vanguard Party with enthusiasm, and he joined the Communist Party.

In 1921 he said:

I used to say that all we needed was fifty thousand real I.W.W.s, and then about a million members to back them up. Well, isn't that a similar idea? At least I have always realised that the essential thing was to have an organisation of **those who know**.³¹

This formulation by Haywood was, however, incorrect in assigning such a vanguard role to the I.W.W. If the I.W.W. was a vanguard organisation for the revolution, it could not function as an all-

embracing trade union, or vice versa. What this does express, however, is the fact that Haywood was motivated throughout by the same spirit of militant class struggle as were the Bolsheviks.

While these developments showed that the I.W.W. was still the most militant workers organization in America, the events of 1908 also showed that this militancy was not going to find expression in a political party.

The 1908 Presidential elections forced Connolly to make a decision in the light of the absence of an I.W.W. candidate in the field. While still a minority, the left-wing elements in the Socialist Party were beginning to achieve greater cohesion and coherence, and at the Party's 1908 Convention they succeeded in getting the left-wing Eugene Debs accepted as the Party's Presidential candidate, despite the opposition of the right-wing leader Victor Berger.³² Haywood states that 1908 represented the most revolutionary period of the Socialist Party.³³ The growing strength of the left-wing minority in the Party was to be shown in 1910 when its leader Haywood secured the second highest vote of the eight delegates elected to represent the Party at the forthcoming International Socialist Congress. The right-wing Berger achieved the highest vote, but the centrist Hillquit, who was the dominant figure in the Party, only came fourth.³⁴

It was against the background of this growth of the Party's left-wing that Connolly decided to join the Socialist Party. In view of Debs's candidacy he wrote in the *Harp* an appeal to Irish workers in America to vote Socialist in the coming election.³⁵

But Connolly's opposition to reformism remained as militant as ever. He recalled the positions taken by the Irish Socialist Republican Party in relation to the Labour Electoral Associations in Ireland in 1899. When they first appeared to be a spontaneous manifestation of class spirit on the part of Irish workers, the I.S.R.P. supported them, even though these associations were by no means socialistic. When, however, they demonstrated a class-collaborationist approach towards the bourgeois parties and formed alliances with them, the I.S.R.P. was unsparing in its denunciation. Connolly pointed out:

This was no inconsistency. It was in conformity with the duty of the socialist as laid down in the ***Communist Manifesto***,

that we must not be a sect standing apart from the general labor movement, but be instead of a part of that movement, that part which comprehends the whole line of march, in the midst of the interests of the movement takes care of the interests of the whole, and pushes on all other sections of the working class. This requires encouragement where encouragement is desired, and opposition and censure where opposition and censure are deserved.³⁶

It is important to note Connolly's emphasis on the role of a clear cut socialist party, for it contradicts his syndicalist statement made in the same period, which we have discussed in the previous chapter, that since the economic organization was now more important, there no longer existed the same danger in the unclearness of the Party's membership. It is very easy to present Connolly as a syndicalist by careful selections from his writings during 1908-1910, but if an all-round survey of these writings is taken, it can be seen that he was continuously reverting to the Marxist position and was by no means fully convinced even of his own syndicalist utterances.

A similar example can be found in his most syndicalist work, ***Socialism Made Easy***. The correct Marxist theory of revolution was stated in ***The Communist Manifesto***, namely, that the proletariat must seize state power before socialist production can begin.

The first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy.

The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest by degrees, all capital from his bourgeoisie, to centralise all instruments of production in the hands of the State, i.e. the proletariat organised as the ruling class, and to increase the total of productive forces as rapidly as possible.³⁷

The position contradicts Connolly's syndicalist statement - made in ***Socialism Made Easy*** - that "the conquest of political power by the working class waits upon the conquest of economic power".³⁸

But Connolly himself contradicts this statement and reiterates the Marxist position in “Workshop Talks” which forms the first part of ***Socialism Made Easy***. Connolly stated:

Every public question is a political question. The men who tell us that Labor questions, for instance, having nothing to do with politics, understand neither the one nor the other. The Labor question cannot be settled except by measures which necessitate a revision of the whole system of society, which, of course, implies political warfare to secure the power to effect such revision

To effect its emancipation Labor must reorganize society on the basis of labor; this cannot be done while the forces of government are in the hands of the rich, therefore the governing power must be wrested from the hands of the rich peaceably, if possible, forcibly if necessary.³⁹

This refutation of the syndicalist position was included in the 1909 American edition of ***Socialism Made Easy***, but was excluded from the 1916 edition published by the Scottish Socialist Labour Party after Connolly’s death, along with other sections from “Workshop Talks”.

Connolly’s attacks on reformism and opportunism generally, were also to be directed against the Socialist Party of which he was now a member. When a correspondent wrote to ask him ‘as a practical man’ what measures the Socialist Party would pass and repeal in the city of St. Louis, the State of Missouri and in the Senate and Congress if they got the victory, Connolly referred him to the respective party programs. Connolly added:

He tells me he wants it answered in the *Harp*, but I desire him to understand that the *Harp* desires only to treat of the general principles of socialism as a revolutionary movement, and not with any patching up of the old social order.⁴⁰

In August 1909 he had occasion to complain of the Socialist Party leadership’s refusal to endorse industrial unionism, and their statements that “it is none of our duty to tell them how to organise on the economic field”.

Connolly felt that those who were most reticent about the proper manner of organizing the workers were those who were most dogmatic in introducing diversionary issues into the movement:

In the Socialist movement of to-day, the tendency, in America I mean, seems to be largely away from the labor movement. The whole field of activity is being usurped by Christians and Free-thinkers, and Philosophers and Scientists.⁴¹

One of the bitterest opponents of industrial unionism was the Bernstein Revisionist and Socialist Party right-wing leader, Victor Berger who was to outdo Vandervelde in his diversionary freethinking attacks on the Catholic Church, which he described in 1904 as “that black coated army of reaction ... the dark hosts of fanaticism, of ignorance and corruption.” Berger added that men had struggled for centuries against the Catholic Church and that “the Red International of the workingmen ... will prove stronger than the Black International of the priests.”⁴²

This was yet another right-wing attempt to disrupt the working-class’s struggle to overthrow capitalism.

Connolly, then, although a member of the Socialist Party, was clearly allied with its growing left-wing minority, and remained unalterably opposed to the opportunist policies of the Party leadership.

Greaves gives a totally different impression, by stating that Connolly’s political career in America was one of embracing “the dogmatic ultra-leftism of De Leon” from which he later recoiled.⁴³

On the contrary, we have shown in the first three chapters of this thesis, that Connolly joined the S.L.P. when it was leading the struggle in America against right-wing opportunism, and that both Connolly’s own position and that of De Leon were then upholding the traditions of Karl Marx’s unremitting struggle to overthrow capitalism.

Connolly’s break with the S.L.P. came, not because De Leon was “ultra-left”, but because he began to manifest right-wing deviations of his own. His anti-Catholic ideological alliance with right-wing socialists like Vandervelde, whom he had previously denounced,

served to divide the working class along religious lines and to prevent their unity in attacking capitalism. His anti-Marxist theory of wages was also a right-wing deviation, since it fed a practice of social pacifism in the trade union struggle.

In this chapter we have shown that Connolly moved further to the left, than when he had been in the S.L.P. and was now applying dialectical materialism to analyse religion, and thereby to effectively undermine it. His opposition to reformism and other forms of opportunism remained as strong as it had been when he was in the S.L.P.

The one weakness which had developed in Connolly's position – his syndicalist statements that clear-cut party was no longer of the same importance, was contradicted by himself often enough and, in any case, was not a reaction against De Leonism but was in fact carrying the post-1905 De Leonist teachings of the primacy of the economic organization to their logical conclusion.

Greaves's attempt - to give the impression that Connolly moved from an "ultra-leftist" to some sort of a Greavesite position - fails. Connolly was moving leftwards, despite some DeLeonist deviations which undermined the clear-cut nature of the party.

Connolly was to apply this Marxist position of his to analyse the problems of Irish National Liberation. He did not confine his attacks on Irish bourgeois parties to the Home Rule Party which was seeking to win over a majority of the British parliament to the idea of giving Ireland Home Rule and a parliament of its own. Connolly extended his attacks to cover the most radical bourgeois party – Sinn Féin (Ourselves Alone). This party was more daring in its methods and advocated the abandonment of attempts to influence the British parliament from within. It proposed that Irish members of parliament should withdraw instead from London and set up an Irish parliament in Dublin.

Sinn Féin also advocated a return to the Irish Parliament which existed from 1782 to 1800 when the Act of Union between Great Britain and Ireland abolished it. Connolly pointed out that the 1782 Act of Renunciation, by which the English Parliament renounced the right to make laws binding on Ireland, left untouched the power of political and economic oppression. He added:

The flight which ended with the Act of Union in 1800 was a fight to decide whether the English governing classes or the Irish governing classes should have the biggest share of the plunder of the Irish worker. Whichever side won made no difference to the worker; he was skinned, anyway.⁴⁴

The following year Connolly reiterated his teaching on the necessity for working class leadership in the struggle for Irish freedom. He stated his argument:

That the oppression of Ireland keeps labor plentiful and cheap, that the Irish capitalist wants labor plentiful and cheap, and that therefore the Irish capitalist is interested in maintaining this oppression in fact, although he may wish to change the form of that oppression

An Irish Republic, the only purely political change in Ireland worth crossing the street for, will never be realized except by a revolutionary party that proceeds upon the premise that the capitalist and landlord classes ... in Ireland are *particeps criminis* (criminal accomplices) with the British government in the enslavement ... of the nation.

Such a revolutionary party must be Socialist, and from Socialism alone can the salvation of Ireland come ...
Property relations are at the bottom of all political fights.⁴⁵

Towards the end of 1910 Connolly's book ***Labour in Irish History*** was published. This had first been serialised in the *Harp* and it gave a Marxist analysis of the historical role played by the working class in the struggle for Irish freedom.

In the introduction Connolly pointed to the inability of the middle class to any longer lead the struggle for Irish freedom:

The middle class, growing up in the midst of the national struggle, and at one time, as in 1798, through the stress of the economic rivalry of England almost forced into the position of revolutionary leaders against the political despotism of their industrial competitors ... (now) have a thousand economic strings in the shape of economic investments binding them to English capitalism, as against every sentimental or historic attachment drawing them

towards Irish patriotism; only the working class remain as the incorruptible inheritors of the fight for freedom in Ireland.⁴⁶

That same year, 1910, Connolly returned home to Ireland where six years later he was to put into practice this principle of working class leadership, by his own leadership role in the 1916 uprising against British imperialism. His struggles in America against revisionism's attempt to divert and undermine the working-class movement greatly fortified him in his firm belief in Marxism. It was only because he held this belief that he was able to play the role he did in 1916.

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EPILOGUE

The syndicalist influence which led Connolly to underestimate the importance of a clear cut Marxist Party was to be the one weakness of his otherwise more developed socialist position of 1910-1916.

While he was in America, the Socialist Party of Ireland had been set up with an essentially Marxian position. In 1909, however, it united with Independent Labour Party elements, and while retaining the same name, it adopted a broader platform. After Connolly's return to Ireland in 1910, he joined the Party and that same year it issued an official statement of aims and objects based on the previous unity platform. This contained a number of Fabian formulations, such as the Party's aims "to gradually transfer the political power of the state" into the hands of socialists by securing control of one local government authority after another. Such a formulation was totally alien to Connolly's anti-Fabian position, yet Connolly apparently felt it unwise to rock the boat at this stage as the party had just made a great expansion.¹

When, however, a fusion took place in 1912 with other I.L.P. elements to form the Independent Labour Party of Ireland - I.L.P. (I) - Connolly ensured the removal of this gradualist position from the program, but substituted instead a mixture of a socialist and syndicalist positions, which saw the necessity to master all the public powers of the State to achieve Socialism, but also spoke of the industrial organization conquering industrial power as the necessary preliminary to industrial freedom.²

Connolly did not indicate, however, if he saw the negative effects of broadening the Party to include non-Marxist elements such as Fabians and I.L.P.s. His failure to do so, which followed from his semi-syndicalist downgrading of the vanguard role of the Party, was to revenge itself upon him in 1914 when the Imperialist War broke out. The Belfast branch of the Party proved unwilling to engage in anti-war propaganda, and Connolly was compelled to tell a hostile crowd at a Belfast meeting that in opposing the war, he was speaking for himself alone, and not for the I.L.P. (I).³ A Party of that nature was capable of performing little more than an

educational and propaganda function, and the Party as such played no role in the 1916 Uprising in Dublin.

While Connolly, then, did not struggle for a weeding out of opportunist elements from the Party, as an individual he still held a militant socialist position in opposition to opportunism. In 1913 he commented on the “democratic reform” of the capitalist state through “welfare” schemes, etc.:

The state must be made completely our instrument, or else all the legislative results of our activity will inevitably grow into fresh and more perfect chains for our enslavement.⁴

His opposition to the political activity of the Catholic Church remained as strong as ever also. In the Scottish Socialist newspaper *Forward* he pointed out in 1914 that the trade unions organised by the Catholic Church on the European Continent for the most part had acted the part of blacklegs and strike-breakers in every great conflict. He stated his vigorous opposition to “attempts in Ireland to introduce this evil spirit of religious discussion into the labour movement.”⁵

In 1914 he began to notice opportunism in an area where he previously had thought it ought to be absent - industrial unionism. With the growth of industrial unions in Britain through amalgamations, he felt he also notice a lessening in solidarity among the ranks of labor. There was developing a growing bureaucracy that might in fact make the Greater Unionism serve to load the working class with greater fetters. While Connolly felt that the industrial form of unionism was certainly preferable to the antiquated craft form, he was against making a fetish of the form alone: “I believe that the development of the fighting spirit is of more importance than the creation of the theoretically perfect organisation.”⁶

In the following years Connolly was to also become increasingly dissatisfied with the vanguard role assigned to the trade union movement by syndicalism, and its panacea of a general strike. The general strike retained great importance for Connolly’s strategy of revolution, but it was no longer sufficient unto itself, as it had been in his October 1909 article in *The International Socialist Review*. These developments in Connolly’s thinking came as a result of the impact of the 1914-18 Imperialist War, which also led him to adopt

the policy of turning the imperialist war into a civil war against the bourgeoisie, such as Lenin advocated and implemented with the Russian Revolution.

On August 15, 1914 he condemned the failure of Social-Democracy to prevent his mass slaughter of the European working class who were now fighting in their respective national armies, he hoped that before long they might read of:

The paralysing of the internal transport service on the continent, even should the act of paralysing necessitate the erection of socialist barricades and acts of rioting by socialist soldiers and sailors, as happened in Russia in 1905. Even an unsuccessful attempt at social revolution by force of arms, following the paralysis of the economic life of militarism, would be less disastrous to the socialist cause than the act of socialists allowing themselves to be used in the slaughter of their brothers in the cause.⁷

Here, then, Connolly was beginning to free himself from the syndicalist concept of trade union revolution. The general strike was not sufficient but would have to be supported by an armed uprising. The War had forcefully impressed upon Connolly the strength of bourgeois state power which could no longer be ignored or underestimated in a syndicalist fashion.

The following January he again emphasised that both industrial and military struggle would have to be used:

The force available to the working class is two-fold, industrial and political, which latter includes military organisation to protect political and industrial rights ... The working class of Ireland may be called upon to face the stern necessity of taking the sword (or rifle) against the class whose rule has brought upon them and upon the world the hellish horror of the present European war.⁸

That March, Connolly did re-emphasize the importance of the general strike and how it may have prevented mobilization for the war by calling out the entire transport service. But that was the most that Connolly credited the general strike's ability to accomplish unaided. The actual socialist revolution would have to

be accomplished by force of arms and Connolly again stated that this should have been attempted as soon as the War broke out:

The signal of war ought also to have been the signal for rebellion ... When the bugles sounded the first note for actual war, their notes should have been the tocsin for social revolution ... Such a civil war would not ... have resulted in such a loss of socialist life as this international war has entailed.⁹

This was not mere rhetoric on Connolly's part. He was to implement these principles in practice, and the means of their implementation was to be the Irish Citizen Army. This workers' army had been founded in 1913 as a defensive force for strikers during the Great Dublin Strike of that year, conducted by the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. This industrial union had been founded in 1909 by its General Secretary Jim Larkin. Connolly acted as Larkin's lieutenant in that strike. Once it was over and the Citizen Army began to show signs of decline, Connolly reorganized it as an offensive force in 1914.¹⁰

The constitution of this proletarian army pledged its members to work for an Irish Republic, and for the emancipation of labor. Thus it was intended to be an agent of both the national and socialist revolutions. As far as the national revolution went its policy was one of a united front, as explained by Connolly:

The Irish Citizen Army will only cooperate in a forward movement. The moment that forward movement ceases it reserves to itself the right to step out of the alignment, and advance by itself if needs be, in an effort to plant the banner of freedom one reach further towards its goal.¹¹

The vanguard role for revolution, then, was no longer ascribed by Connolly to the trade union. It was now to be assumed by the workers' army. This was a major step forward by Connolly, both theoretically and practically. The syndicalist position of assigning such a role to the union either could not work out in practice, due to the fact that a well-organized union organizes all workers for the economic struggle, irrespective of their degree of class-consciousness, or if a union did play a clear vanguard role, it would probably be at the expense of recruitment for the day-to-day economic struggle.

With Connolly abandoning the syndicalist position, therefore, the Irish Transport & General Workers' Union, of which he was now acting general secretary, due to Larkin's departure for the United States in 1914, could develop as an effect trade union. Meanwhile the more class-conscious workers joined the Irish Citizen Army.

This position of Connolly's was not yet Lenin's of course, which assigned the vanguard role to a Party of a new type based on clearcut Marxist principles and having a democratic centralist structure.¹² Connolly's position was still unsatisfactory in that regard. An army was hardly the best type of organization for doing the necessary theoretical work for the revolution. Similarly, while being less inclusive than a trade union, it was more so than a Bolshevik Party, since it recruited people who had a militant class-conscious spirit, but who might not have an adequate grasp of Marxist theory. Nevertheless, this development by Connolly was an abandonment of his previous syndicalist position and was moving closer to that of Lenin.

Connolly's position on the State also began to depart from syndicalism.

In his pamphlet *The Reconquest of Ireland* (1915) he still expressed the syndicalist position on trade union administration of society.¹³ This was also the case in his March 1915 article in *The International Socialist Review*.

In early 1916, however, he departed from this view when he wrote of what measures a popular-democratic government would take in the first stage of the Irish revolution:

All the material of distribution – the railways, the Canals, and all the land stolen from the Irish people in the past ... ought at once to be confiscated and made the property of the Irish State ... All factories and workshops owned by people who do not yield allegiance to the Irish Government immediately on its proclamation should at once be confiscated and their productive powers applied to the service of the community loyal to Ireland, and to the army at its service.¹⁴

The role of State power after revolution was now being re-emphasized – and accordingly the necessity to seize it:

Recognising that the proper utilisation of the nation's energies requires control of political power, we propose to conquer that political power through a working class political party.¹⁵

Connolly was to implement his united front policy for the national revolution by forming an alliance with the most revolutionary section of the petit-bourgeois Irish Volunteers. Under pressure from him, preparations were made for a National Uprising against British imperialism, set for Easter 1916.¹⁶

The fact that the all-embracing trade union could **not** be the vanguard organisation was hammered home to Connolly two weeks before the rising.

He had announced that there would be a ceremonial hoisting of the Irish National flag over Liberty Hall, headquarters of the Irish Transport Workers' Union, of which Connolly himself was acting general secretary. Connolly also made use of the Hall as headquarters of his Irish Citizen Army. But, in response to this announcement, a Union Executive Committee meeting was held to protest against Connolly's action. He made it clear that if any objections were raised to the ceremony, he would sever his connections with the union. The Executive Committee only gave permission when Connolly promised that the Citizen Army would shortly leave Liberty Hall, and "probably never return"¹⁷ The distinction between vanguard and union had now made itself painfully obvious to him.

The vanguard was also to maintain its independent working-class position in this united front for the national-democratic stage of the revolution. Connolly's position was one of unity with, and struggle against, the bourgeois nationalists, since he knew that the class allies in the national revolution would be the class enemies in the socialist revolution. Therefore, a week before the Rising he warned the Citizen Army:

In the event of victory, hold on to your rifles, as those with whom we are fighting may stop before our goal is reached. We are out for economic as well as political liberty.¹⁸

The Rising failed to be a country-wide one, due to the sabotage of it by the figure-head leader of the Irish Volunteers. But it was decided by Connolly and the more revolutionary Volunteers' leaders to proceed with it anyhow in Dublin and a few other places in the country. So, on Easter Monday, April 24, 1916, the setting up of an Irish Republic was announced, and its Provisional Government, which included Connolly, issued a Proclamation to that effect. Connolly held the most important military position – that of Commandant-General of the Republican forces in Dublin.¹⁹

Connolly had now reached the close of his political activities and of his life itself. His position had been that of a militant Marxist throughout. He had formulated his theory of working-class leadership of the united front for the national revolution before leaving Ireland for America, and had also struggled against both right-wing revisionism - and its centrist Kautskyite form - by this time.

It was this struggle that had drawn him to the S.L.P. in America, when the latter was initially performing the same task. At this time Connolly was to give expression to a concept of the vanguard role of the Party which only needed slight development to be essentially a Leninist one.

In America Connolly continuously attacked the right-wing revisionism which dominated the Socialist Party, even after he had joined it in 1908 to work with its growing left-wing. In 1904, and from 1907 on, he was also to struggle against another form of right-wing revisionism – that of the S.L.P. leader Daniel De Leon.

But De Leon was to sidetrack Connolly's thinking for some time from its development along lines similar to Leninism. De Leon appeared to give Marxist legitimacy to the syndicalist conception of the vanguard role of the trade union and the consequent downgrading of the importance of the party. This viewpoint was to prevent Connolly giving organizational expression to his developing all-round Marxist position – which he was now also extending to analyse religion.

But Connolly was never happy with syndicalist solutions and, even in the same period that he was giving expression to some of them, he very often reiterated the Marxist position which contradicted them.

After his return home to Ireland we have shown how he gradually shed many of these syndicalist views which he had acquired in America. He was back on his original path of development again, and now saw the need for a vanguard organisation distinct from the trade union.

Connolly had certainly not arrived at a Leninist position by 1916. The existence of Lenin's writings remained unknown to Western Europe and the United States until after the 1917 Russian Revolution. Connolly's Citizen Army did not conform to Lenin's Bolshevik Party. But Connolly had progressed further towards the Leninist vanguard position than any socialist in America who had shared the same syndicalist experiences.

Big Bill Haywood, William Z. Foster and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn were to remain leading syndicalists until after the Russian Revolution, while Connolly had abandoned that position, and they then became Communists under its impact. Connolly, independently, had moved closer to what was to become the Communist position, and he needed less development of his own position to arrive fully at it, than most other revolutionary socialists of his time.

The Dublin Rising was crushed by British military might within a week. Its leaders were sentenced to be executed. Connolly had been gravely wounded in the fighting and many believed that this fact might spare his life. But the *Irish Catholic* and *Irish Independent* newspapers hoped otherwise. These were owned by Connolly's bitter foe - William Martin Murphy, Chairman of the Dublin Employers' Federation. These newspapers heaped abuse on the Rising and its leaders. When, on May 10, Connolly and McDermott were the only condemned leaders who had not yet been executed, the *Irish Independent* clamored: "Let the worst of the ringleaders be singled out and dealt with as they deserve."

On May 12 it further demanded:

Certain of the leaders remain undealt with, and the part they played was worse than that of some of those who have paid the extreme penalty ... We think ... that no special leniency should be extended to some of the

worst of the leaders whose cases have not yet been disposed of.²⁰

The same day Connolly was executed by firing squad, propped up in a chair because his wounds did not permit him to stand. Under pressure from Dublin employers like Murphy, he had been shot by British troops responsible to a British Government in which sat Arthur Henderson, a leader of the British Labour Party. British Imperialism, Irish Capitalism, and labor reformism – these were Connolly's greatest foes. He literally had fought them to the death.

Notes to the Epilogue

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A 1988 POSTSCRIPT:

Connolly Socialism and the Jewish Worker

The establishment of an Irish Jewish Museum in Dublin in 1985 has ensured the preservation of much valuable historical material which might otherwise have been lost. One such item was brought to the attention of this writer in late 1986, by the Irish Jewish Museum's archivist Asher Benson. It is a roughly-typed document entitled 'The Municipal Elections January 15th 1902' and is addressed to Jewish workers of Dublin by the 'East London Jewish Branch of the Socialist Federation' (sic) on behalf of James Connolly, 26 Fishamble Street, Dublin. The awkward English of this document reads in part as follows:

'Friends, January 15th the elections are coming on, and you will have to think for whom you will give your vote. But before you come to a decision we want, Jewish Social Democrats to say a few words ... Which of the candidates will you vote for ...? The Home Ruler, the candidate of the bourgeois? No...you can't and must not do it... The bourgeois are those that rise the people against one another with hate for warlike reasons ... The bourgeois is the cause of anti-semitism, they and their press encourage hate and cast all the caluminies (sic) on the Jew to hoodwink and cloak their own faults to the followers... No! you cannot vote for the Home Ruler the bourgeois candidate, who is walking in step with the English Capitalists...

No matter how nice the Home Ruler talks, no matter how democratic and friendly they are or how they cry about oppressed Ireland ... they are bourgeois...And you Jews what guarantee have you that one fine day they come your way? ... you have to vote for the Socialist candidate, and only for the socialist candidate. The Socialists are the only ones with the oppressed national minorities ... In conclusion a word to you, Jewish workers of Dublin, on you lies the responsibility to help with all your resources ...The Council of the Irish Socialist Republican Party need you near them. This is in your own interest, the interest for which every right minded worker must campaign ... The Party want to abolish private ownership under which the working class is condemned to slavery, working for the capitalists of the world and the worker himself gets damn all ... Jewish workers how few you are you can do a lot ...

*Work hand in hand with your Irish brothers ... go canvassing and talk to others and your friends to vote on the 15th January for the Irish Socialist candidate James Connolly.*¹

From the language style of the above it seemed likely that this document had been translated from Yiddish by a member of Dublin's Jewish community whose own *mama-loshen* (mother-tongue) was Yiddish and who was still experiencing some difficulty in wrestling with the English language. Had the translation been provided by the author of the original document he would correctly have named the issuing body as the East London Jewish Branch of the Social Democratic Federation and not the 'Socialist Federation'. But where is the original Yiddish document to be found, and who had authored it and why had Connolly issued it?

No such document exists in the archives of the Irish Jewish Museum itself. An investigation of the catalogue of the William O'Brien Papers in the National Library of Ireland, however, revealed an entry entitled 'James Connolly Election Manifesto (in Hebrew?)'. This turned out to be a photo-copy of a partially-torn election leaflet on behalf of Connolly². Asher Benson of the Irish Jewish Museum subsequently confirmed that the language was not Hebrew but Yiddish –the German-related *lingua franca* of Russian and Polish Jews which is written with the Hebrew alphabet. In turn, Sid Resnick of the Yiddish-language American socialist newspaper, *Morgn Freiheit*, provided this writer with the modern English-language translation of the leaflet which is carried at the end of this article.³

If Jewish workers of Dublin were being asked to vote for James Connolly in January 1902, where had he himself stood on Jewish issues? A few years previously Connolly had published an article in the *Workers' Republic* favourable to Zionism which he himself introduced as 'the political ideal of that section of the Jewish race who are at present advocating the establishment of an Israelitish nation in Palestine'.⁴ On the other hand, during the course of the Boer War he had also reprinted an article from the *Brisbane Worker* which had rhetorically asked: 'What would you do in the same position as the Boers? Supposing your country was invaded by a mob of Jew and foreign exploiters ... What would you do?'⁵

Connolly's associate in the pro-Boer solidarity campaign in Ireland, Arthur Griffith, had infused his *United Irishman* propaganda with rabid anti-semitism.⁶ But the fact that Connolly himself had reprinted the passing anti-semitic remark quoted above was an uncharacteristic lapse

on his part. Nothing similar occurred in any other issue of the *Workers' Republic*, in stark contrast with the anti-semitism with which the pro-Boer propaganda in *Justice*, organ of Britain's Social Democratic Federation (SDF), had been infected on the commencement of that War.

The question arises as to whether or not in the later years in the United States, when Connolly finally broke with the Socialist Labor Party (SLP) of Daniel de Leon, he had indicated an anti-semitic prejudice. An American authority on de Leon, James A. Stevenson, has said of Connolly, 'As he saw it, the only SLP members to which a personality of de Leon's type could appeal were Jewish'.⁷ The evidence cited was a private letter which Connolly has written to J.C. Matheson, editor of the Scottish SLP newspaper *The Socialist*. Connolly had remarked of de Leon:

'My friend Dan made a grand effort to destroy me at general party meetings here in New York, but he was routed, horse, foot and artillery. As a result he made enemies of nearly all the American, German, Swedish, Irish and British members of the party in New York, and has nobody left he can trust outside of the Jewish elements. The Jews, you know, are still looking for a saviour. The rest of us have had our saviour already, and as he made a mess of it we intend to mistrust saviours in the future.'⁸

But it would be a mistake to read too much into such a casually-made ethnic joke in private correspondence. American socialist organisations at the time were composed of many immigrant groupings and foreign language publications. A political difference between one party section and another could therefore manifest itself as a national difference when, for convenience of language, a party section was centred on a particular national grouping. It was such a development which occasioned Connolly's quip. But, more to the point, one of the issues which had originally attracted Connolly to de Leon's SLP and repelled him from H.M. Hyndman's SDF in Britain had been the latter's resort to anti-semitism in expressing its differences with de Leon. Connolly was to denounce the SDF organ *Justice* for having boasted of 'dealing effectually with those malcontents who are bent upon following the lead of the German-Venezuelan Jew Loeb (or de Leon) to the pit of infamy and disgrace'.⁹ Connolly maintained that this was an example of precisely the type of anti-semitic propaganda that *Justice* had pursued on the outbreak of the Boer War, and he argued:

Justice, instead of grasping the opportunity to demonstrate the unscrupulous and bloodthirsty methods of the capitalist class, strove to divert the wrath of the advanced workers from the capitalists to the Jews; how its readers were nauseated by denunciations of ‘Jewish millionaires’ and ‘Jewish plots’, ‘Jewish-controlled newspapers’, ‘German Jews’, ‘Israelistish schemes’, and all the stock phrases of the lowest anti-semitic papers until the paper became positively unreadable to any fair minded man who recognise the truth, viz. that the war was the child of capitalist greed and inspired by men with whom race or religion were matters of no moment.’¹⁰

Despite the fact that the SDF had its own East London Jewish Branch organised in the middle 1890s, *Justice* had carried an article on the eve of the Boer War by the SDF leader H.M. Hyndman entitled ‘The Jews’ War on the Transvaal’.¹¹ This elicited a vigorous riposte from leading SDF member Theodore Rothstein who reproached *Justice* with preaching from its pulpit rank anti-semitism. Its anti-Jewish propaganda might be dangerous and lead to Jew-baiting if the paper had a wide circulation in the country. ‘Happily for the case, though unhappily for the general cause’, he added, ‘*Justice* is read by a comparatively small section of the community, so that a national anti-Semitic movement is not to be expected.’¹²

Given the coincidence of views between Rothstein and Connolly in deploring *Justice*’s anti-semitism, was it possible that Rothstein might also have authored Connolly’s Yiddish-language election appeal? A query from this writer to the former’s son, Andrew Rothstein, brought a response which suggested a different relative as author:

‘I am inclined to think that my uncle (on my mother’s side) Boris Kahan, may have drafted the appeal. The reason is that he was secretary of the East London Jewish branch of the SDF in 1903 (they held a Paris Commune commemoration meeting in that year at which Lenin spoke), and was a guest at the 5th Congress of the Russian Social Democrats in London in 1907, in the capacity of his secretaryship. The text which you append is much more in his style than my father’s! They were close friends’.¹³

Boris Kahan had been born in Kiev in January 1877 but Tsarist oppression of both Jews and Socialists had driven this particular Jewish socialist into exile like multitudes of others.¹⁴ Having settled in the UK he became Secretary of the SDF’s East London Jewish Branch at a very

young age. Subsequent research among the William O'Brien Papers confirmed Andrew Rothstein's belief that it had been Kahan who had authored the Connolly appeal.

The initial request by the Irish Socialist Republican Party (ISRP) for a Yiddish-language appeal to Dublin's Jewish workers was unfortunately not recorded in the minutes of its executive committee. The minutes for the meeting of 5 October, 1902, however, record that 'it was decided to pay off a/c for the Jewish election literature'. On 14 October it was reported back that 'Jewish a/c for election literature 7s 7d paid as arranged'. A week later the minutes record receipt of correspondence from 'M.Kahn (sic), sec. East London Jewish Branch, SDF ... acknowledging receipt of 7s 7d. in payment of a/c and enclosing 1s. (stamps sent to *WR*).'¹⁵ The ISRP minutes secretary had, of course, misread the signature of Boris Kahan in this letter addressed to Connolly, which is also contained in the O'Brien Papers. Kahan's letter stated how glad he was to receive the *Workers Republic*, asked for it to be sent to him regularly and, in enclosing a shilling subscription, he further requested that 'when money runs short please let me know'.¹⁶

What had occasioned Kahan's leaflet on behalf of Connolly? At the ISRP meeting of 14 November, 1901 it was announced that the United Labourers' Union, with headquarters at 26 Fishamble Street, Dublin, were anxious to run a candidate in the forthcoming municipal elections and that Party Secretary James Connolly would deliver an address to them as a possible candidate. The minutes of 23 November report back that 'James Connolly gave an outline of his own position as the selected candidate for Wood Quay Ward stating that the final understanding was that though he was running as the candidate of the United Labourers, this could not prevent him from giving expression to his views as a socialist during the contest'.¹⁷ Connolly's campaign mainly consisted of open-air meetings, 'the stance favoured being in New Street'.¹⁸ Such public meetings would have brought Connolly into direct contact with Dublin's immigrant Jewish population, since New Street was a direct continuation of Lower Clanbrassil Street, the principal thoroughfare of the South Circular Road area of Dublin which had become known as 'Little Jerusalem'. The Jewish population of Dublin, while remaining relatively small even at its maximum, rapidly grew at the turn of the century as refugees fled from pogroms and persecution in the Russian Empire. Numbering only 352 in 1881, Dublin's Jewish population increased to 1,057 in 1891, to 2,169 in 1901 and to 2,965 in 1911.¹⁹ When the future founder of Sinn Féin and the first President of the Irish Free State, Arthur Griffith, gave full support to the anti-semitic campaign of the

Redemptorist Order in Limerick, he would denounce these refugees from Tsarist persecution in the following terms: ‘No thoughtful Irish man or Irish woman can view without apprehension the continuous influx of Jews into Ireland ...[a] strange people, alien to us in thought, alien to us in sympathy, from Russia, Poland ... etc.’²⁰

Such refugees, who hailed mainly from Lithuania, were among the electors of Wood Quay Ward. Connolly’s approach was to reach out to them, particularly to the proletarian and semi-proletarian numbers among them. As the late Louis Hyman noted, ‘Among the Jews of foreign birth in Dublin in the Census of 1901 there were 261 drapers, 233 pedlars and hawkers, 200 students and scholars, 88 commercial travellers, 72 tailors, 66 domestic servants and 64 general dealers’.²¹ In that year two such Jewish immigrant workers, Barnet and Abraham Volkes of Pleasants Street, would become members of the ISRP, having been previously members of the SDF in Salford.²²

During the years 1901 to 1911 Jews came to constitute a majority of the inhabitants in many of the streets in the Wood Quay Ward.²³ The circumstances of the workers among them have been described as follows by Maurice Levitas, the son of one such worker who emigrated to Dublin from the Lithuanian province of Kovno in 1911, but whose circumstances were similar to those of the Jewish workers to whom Connolly had appealed in 1902:

‘I hail from the South Circular Road neighbourhood – and your researches into the Jewish input into trade unions in Ireland reminds me of my father’s part in the Tailor’s and Pressers’ Union ... My father, Harry Levitas, tried a number of ploys when we lived in Dublin in order to gain a living. Like some other Jews in Dublin he tried ‘travelling’ around the countryside, collecting rags and metal etc. for sale to dealers in these salvage commodities. But he was not successful at this. In the main he worked for a wage as a presser in the tailoring trade and, since he was left-wing in his politics, he played a part in his trade union. Indeed the main impression we all have of my father is strong trade union principles. The origin of all this was his association in Lithuania, as a very young man, with the *Poale Zion* (or Labour Zionists) – a kind of Jewish socialist movement’.²⁴

Other Lithuanian Jewish immigrants in Dublin’s ‘Little Jerusalem’ would have been influenced by the ideas of the Jewish Social-Democratic Party known as the Bund which stood for Jewish national autonomy within

Russia, Poland and Lithuania. It was in Vilna, known as ‘the Jerusalem of Lithuania’, that the Bund had been founded in 1897, its full name being ‘The General Jewish Workers’ Union (*Bund*) in Russia and Poland’ (Lithuania was added later). The following year the Bund itself hosted the founding Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Workers Party (RSDWP), of which the Bund became an autonomous member. The Bund seceded from the RSDWP in 1903, rejoined it in 1906, and after the Russian Party irrevocably split between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, the Bund affiliated to the latter in 1912.²⁵

Connolly had been most impressed by the Bund and he greeted its development with particular enthusiasm. He wrote: ‘The Socialist movement is developing at a remarkable rate amongst the Jewish proletariat of the Russian Empire. The organisation known as ‘The Union of Jewish Workmen of Russia and Poland’ actually issues eight journals from its secret printing press – more than any (other socialist) organisation in the Empire’.²⁶

But how was Connolly to relate to those Russian Jewish immigrants who were now among the electors of Wood Quay Ward and how could he draw on the sympathy which they had for the Bundist and other socialist currents which were rapidly developing among their *Machatonnim un Landsleit in der Heim* (relatives and fellow-countrymen in their native provinces of Tsarist Russia)? Language was a major difficulty. At the 1923 Annual Meeting of the Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress, a Jewish tailor representing the Tailors’ and Pressers’ Union, Isaac Baker, had made a brief but eloquent speech against ‘any discrimination between Jew and Gentile, so long as either does his work right’.²⁷

But while the 1911 census form had shown that Isaac Baker could now ‘read and write’, the earlier 1901 census had recorded that at the time of Connolly’s election campaign this Russian-born immigrant worker ‘cannot read’.²⁸ The extent to which this would be a major problem for newly arrived immigrant workers in Dublin was most clearly demonstrated when a new set of rules for the International Tailors’, Machinists’ and Pressers’ Trade Union was registered in 1915. Only the Secretary, Walter Carpenter, and the one non-Jewish executive member were able to sign their own names in English. An ‘X’ had to be entered by each of the five Jewish executive members, with Carpenter certifying on behalf of each that it was ‘his mark’.²⁹ It would be a grave mistake to assume that these Jewish workers were illiterate. The census authorities were only interested in whether one could read or write English or speak

Irish. For example when the *Shamas* (beadle) of Dublin's Lennox Street synagogue asked the census enumerator in 1911 to put down that he himself could 'write and read Hebrew' (and obviously Yiddish as well) and that his wife and daughter could both 'write and read Yiddish', the enumerator's superior crossed out these entries and substituted 'cannot read' in each case.³⁰

A Jewish immigrant worker like Isaac Baker, then, while initially illiterate in his newly-acquired language of English, would have been highly literate in his native language of Yiddish at the time of Connolly's 1902 election campaign. It is precisely for this reason that Boris Kahan drafted a Yiddish-language appeal to the Jewish workers of Dublin asking them to vote for Connolly at their local polling station in New Street School. The purpose of the leaflet was to convey to Kahan's *Brider Yiden* (Jewish brothers) in Dublin the clear political message that the Home Rule candidates only represented the interests of *Balabattim* (bosses), that indeed the principal candidate was a *Balaboss* himself, and that only the Irish Socialist candidate James Connolly was a true *Arbeter Frait* (workers' friend).

But Connolly had more serious obstacles to face than the production of Yiddish-language literature. His principal opponent in the election was the Nationalist publican and patriotic song-writer P.J. McCall, who was the author of such famous songs as 'Boo-lavogue', 'Kelly the Boy from Killane', and 'Follow Me Up to Carlow'. McCall ostentatiously paraded the local Catholic priests on his platform to state that 'no Catholic could vote for a Socialist, nor be a Socialist', while the ISRP itself further claimed:

'On election night Mr. McCall's public house was crowded till a late hour ... Every public house in the ward was a committee room for Mr. McCall and all who were degraded enough to sell their votes could soak themselves in liquor, free of expense. Father Staples, Father O'Brien, and Father McGough, of St. Nicholas of Myra's Chapel in Francis Street, lent their sanction to all debauching of the people by joining the committee responsible for it, and invoking all the terrors of religion against all those who ... voted for Mr. Connolly.'³¹

In such an environment it is not surprising that P.J. McCall of the United Irish League won the seat with 1,434 votes. A rival Home Ruler, W.H. Beardwood, received only 191 votes. A year later Connolly was to recall,

‘Let us remember how the paid canvassers of the capitalist candidate – hired slanderers – gave a different account of Mr. Connolly to every section of the electors. How they said to the Catholics that he was an Orangemen, to the Protestants that he was a Fenian, to the Jews that he was an anti-Semite, to others that he was a Jew.’³²

With prejudices being whipped up in this matter, for Connolly to have come second in the 1902 Wood Quay Ward election, and to have secured 431 votes from both Gentile and Jewish workers in that Ward, was certainly a most creditable performance. Boris Kahan’s Yiddish leaflet had played a prominent part in Connolly’s campaign. The following year, once again in his capacity as Secretary of East London, Jewish Branch of the SDF, Kahan was to the fore in organising a Paris Commune commemorative meeting in Whitechapel on 21 March, 1903, at which Lenin was a speaker. One of only three public meetings which he addressed during his period of exile in London.³³ Kahan was subsequently associated with the Fifth Congress of the Russian Social Democrats which was held in London in 1907 and described as follows by Andrew Rothstein.:

‘There were 105 Bolsheviks (representing 46,000 members), 97 Mensheviks (from 38,000 members), 57 (Jewish Social Democratic) Bundists (25,000 members) 44 Polish Social Democrats (25,000 members), 29 Lettish Social Democrats (13,000 members) and 4 ‘independents’. It was by far the largest Social Democratic Congress ever held by the Russian parties – and it was the last at which all these groups met under a single roof ... It was Lenin who moved the vote of thanks (on May 1907) to ‘the representative of the British Social Democratic Federation for its help in arranging the Congress’. There were among the guests a number of Russian political emigrants who had joined the SDF-Zelda Kahan; ... her brother Boris, secretary of the East London (Jewish) branch of the SDF; ... Theodore Rothstein and his wife Anna (Kahan).³⁴

Zelda Kahan, later to be a founding member of the Communist Party of Great Britain, would marry Kinsale-born W.P. Coates who organised the Irish Transport and General Worker’s Union in the Kilkenny-Waterford area during 1918-19. Coates went on to become Secretary of the ‘Hands Off Russia’ Movement and later of the Anglo-Russian Parliamentary Committee.³⁵ Theodore Rothstein would become a very close associate of Frederick Ryan (founding first Secretary of the reorganised Socialist Party of Ireland in 1909) between the years 1907 and 1913 in vigorously campaigning on behalf of Egyptian independence.³⁶ Rothstein afterwards

became a founding member of the Communist Party of Great Britain in 1920 but was forbidden re-entry to Britain following a visit to Russia that same year and went on to become the first Soviet ambassador to Persia. Boris Kahan also returned to the land of his birth following the Russian Revolution. He died in Moscow in December 1951. His nephew, Andrew Rothstein, writes ‘Boris K ... worked until the end of his life in the Soviet trade machinery ... He never was a victim of repression, but died of a late-treated ‘minor operation’’.³⁷

The Connolly election address in Yiddish resulted in a legacy of goodwill between his political associates in the ISRP and Dublin’s Jewish community which persisted after his own emigration to the USA in 1903. When Arthur Griffith made his *United Irishman* the political organ of Father Creagh’s 1904 anti-semitic campaign, the only voice of protest in its columns was that of the Dublin socialist Frederick Ryan. He maintained:

‘The Jew has been historically made the scapegoat of Christendom. Anti-Semitism is the refuge of the Continental reactionary parties. It may seem good tactics on the part of corrupt militarists to set the mob at the heels of rich Jews. But the cause of true liberty has nothing to gain by being associated with such tricks ... Let us resolutely shut our eyes to questions of race and creed, which are only raised by the reactionaries to create disorder in the camp of progress.’³⁸

In 1906 one of the ISRP’s successor groupings, the Socialist Party of Ireland (SPI), decided to hold a meeting on Sunday, 21 January, to commemorate the first anniversary of the Bloody Sunday massacre in St. Petersburg which had precipitated the 1905 Russian Revolution. The SPI also decided to seek the support of Jewish refugees from Tsarist Russia and if possible have a number of them speak at this meeting. ‘Comrade Lyng reported that he had seen the Rev. Godansky (sic) who stated he would not be able to address the meeting but promised to give a lecture later on’.³⁹ The SPI minutes further record that they were nonetheless successful in having their Beresford Place meeting addressed by ‘three Russian sympathisers’ from among the Jewish community following the Russian Bloody Sunday commemorative procession through the streets of Dublin.⁴⁰

Meanwhile class organisations were being formed within the Dublin Jewish community itself. Jewish Cabinetmakers’ Unions were periodically established and re-established.⁴¹ The most significant

organisational development was, however, the foundation of the International Tailors', Machinists' and Pressers' Trade Union, in November 1908 by Jewish immigrant clothing workers from the South Circular Road area of Dublin.⁴² The union was formally registered in April 1909 and was engaged in strike action two months later. At a solidarity meeting for the Jewish strikers Walter Carpenter, on behalf of the newly re-organised SPI, declared that 'there were in Dublin two or three Christian firms that did more sweating in a week than the Jewish firms would do in twelve months'.⁴³

The one SPI member who remained unco-operative during this dispute was William O'Brien, because of narrow craft-based objections to the new union from O'Brien's own Amalgamated Society of Tailors. He recorded that a deputation of 'Jewish tailors now out on strike' had approached the Dublin Trades Council 'to ask advice re. dispute with Karmel and Lloyd and Lloyd', but the Executive said they 'would not interfere' without the permission of O'Brien's union. 'One of the deputation, a member of the Socialist Party. Very awkward position for me. *Workers of the World Unite!!!!*'⁴⁴

In July 1910 Connolly returned to Ireland after a seven-year exile in the USA. Connolly now became the SPI's National Organiser after the Party's founder and National Secretary, Frederick Ryan, had ensured that his financial security could be guaranteed through employment with the Irish Transport and General Workers Union.⁴⁵ Walter Carpenter became secretary of the SPI's Dublin branch in February 1911 and over the next few months it was decided that he should speak at SPI public meetings at the Canal Bank, Martin Street.⁴⁶ This was a noteworthy location because, out of 301 residents of that street's artisan dwellings, as many as 195 were Jewish.⁴⁷

At the time of these Canal Bank meetings a number of the tailors in the leadership of what had become known to Dubliners as 'the Jewish Union' were among these living in Martin Street.⁴⁸ Others were living in the adjoining Warren Street.⁴⁹ Links between the 'Connolly Socialists' and the 'Jewish Union' were further developed during 1913 when Walter Carpenter, Tom Kennedy and Tom Lyng of the SPI all spoke a public meeting organised by the International Tailors', Machinists' and Pressers' Trade Union itself.⁵⁰ When the union's founding secretary, Harry Miller, resigned through ill-health in December 1913, it was the Gentile socialist Walter Carpenter who was invited to become 'the Jewish Union's' new General Secretary.⁵¹ At that time the Union's headquarters were at 52 Lr. Camden Street, a house which it shared with the local synagogue.⁵²

Carpenter was to remain secretary of that union until 1925 when he resigned due to terminal illness. In September 1921 he had become Secretary of the SPI with Connolly's son, Roddy, as Party President. The following month the SPI was transformed into the Communist Party of Ireland, with Walter Carpenter and Roddy Connolly continuing on as Secretary and President, respectively. Roddy Connolly also edited the Party newspaper the *Workers' Republic*, and in his coverage of the struggle against those forces trying to crush the Russian Revolution he particularly highlighted the horrific pogromist activities of the Ukrainian nationalists. In January 1922 he reported on a Conference held in London by the Federation of Ukrainian Jews in aid of the Jewish pogrom victims at which the Chief Rabbi spoke of how 'one of the blackest pages in the annals of mankind had been closed. 100,000 human beings at least had been butchered; one community of 1,500 had been wiped out'.⁵³ The *Worker's Republic* also provided advance publicity for the following event held in Dublin's Empire Theatre (now the Olympia Theatre):

'The Dublin Jewish Dramatic Society Presents

(in aid of the Ukrainian Jews' Relief Fund)

the following plays

Special Pleading by Bernard Duffy

Spreading the News by Lady Gregory

Der Doktor (in Yiddish) by Sholom Aleichem

Abigail by David Pinski

on Sunday, April 2, 1922'⁵⁴

Twenty years after James Connolly's election campaign among Dublin's Jewish community, his son Roddy had maintained that link. And since it is a tradition among Jews to mark a birthday with the Yiddish wish to live *biz hundert un tzvantzik!* (for 120 years), it is particularly appropriate to now mark the 120th anniversary of James Connolly's birth in 1868 with a reproduction of his Election Manifesto to the Jewish workers of Dublin in their own Yiddish language.

Manus O'Riordan

Document: A Connolly Address to Dublin Jewish Workers

*Note: The following is the 1902 Yiddish leaflet authored by **Boris Kahan**, Secretary of the East London Jewish branch of the SDF, as translated for **Saothar** by **Sid Resnick**, of the US Yiddish socialist newspaper, **Morgn Freiheit**, on 12 May, 1987, the 71st anniversary of Connolly's execution.*

THE DUBLIN MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS ELECTIONS, 15 JANUARY, 1902

Friends!

On 15th January the Municipal elections will take place and you are asked to consider for whom to cast your vote. But, before you reach your decision, we, Jewish Social Democrats, wish to say a few words.

There are three candidates on the list for Wood Quay Ward: you have here a Home Ruler, another a publican, and one Labour candidate of the Irish Socialist Republican Party, James Connolly, who is supported by Dublin United Labourers' Union.

For which of the candidates will you vote on 15th January? For the Home Ruler, the candidate of the bourgeoisie?

No, you cannot and you ought not to do that! It is the bourgeoisie which always has the bag of gold before its eyes. Everything that stands in its way, everything that does not agree with its gut interests it tramples underfoot no matter how sacred that may be. It is the bourgeoisie that arouses race hatred, incites one people against another and causes wars. The bourgeoisie is the cause of anti-Semitism; with its press it provokes hatred of the Jew and seeks to throw the blame for everything upon the Jew in order to deceive the people and conceal its sins against its own people.

No, you cannot vote for the Home Ruler, the candidate of the bourgeoisie! The Home Rulers speak out against the English capitalists and the English landlords because they want to seize their places so that they themselves can oppress and exploit the people. No matter how nicely and well the Home Rulers talk or how much as friends of man they seek to appear or how much they shout about oppressed Ireland – they are capitalists. In their own homes they show their true colours and cast off

their revolutionary democratic disguise and torment and choke the poor as much as they can. And you, Jews, what assurance do you have that one fine day they will not turn on you?

You ought to vote for the Socialist candidate and only for the Socialist candidate. The Socialists are the only ones who stand always and everywhere against every national oppression. It is the Socialists who went out into the streets of Paris against the wild band of anti-Semites at the time of the Dreyfus case. In Austria and in Germany they conduct a steady struggle against anti-Semitism. And in England, too, the Socialists fight against the reactionary elements who want to shut the doors of England against the poor Jews who were driven to seek a refuge in a strange land by the Russian government's brutality and despotism.

The Socialist candidate is the only one for whom you ought to cast your vote.

In conclusion, a few words to you, Jewish workers of Dublin. Upon you rests the obligation to support the Socialist candidate as much as you can. The aims of the Irish Socialist Republican Party ought to be close to you. These are your own interests, the interests for which every knowledgeable worker must fight. These are the objectives for which every worker must strive. What does this party want? It wishes to abolish that system of private ownership under which the working class is condemned to labour, to create the wealth of the world and enjoy for itself absolutely nothing. It wishes to construct a system in which the workers shall have the right to benefit from his labour and live a free, happy and enlightened life without bosses and rulers over his body and soul.

Jewish Workers! No matter how small your numbers are you can achieve much. Do your duty and work earnestly hand in hand with your Irish brothers. Canvass for votes, vote yourselves and persuade others to vote on the 15th of January for the Socialist candidate, James Connolly.

With Socialist greetings,
The East London Jewish Branch of the
Social Democratic Federation.

You must cast your vote at the New Street School
James Connolly, 26 Fishamble Street, Dublin.

NOTES

1. *The Municipal Elections, January 15th, 1902*, Irish Jewish Museum archives.
2. *James Connolly Election Manifesto* (in the Yiddish language), ILB 300 p.11 Item 81, National Library of Ireland (NLI).
3. Sid Resnick to Manus O’Riordan, 12 May, 1987.
4. ‘The Ideal Government of the Jew’, *Workers’ Republic*, 24 September, 1898.
5. *Workers’ Republic*, 30 December, 1899.
6. Manus O’Riordan, ‘Anti-Semitism in Irish Politics - The Sinn Féin Tradition’, *The Irish Jewish Yearbook, 1984-1985*.
7. James A. Stevenson, ‘James Connolly and Daniel de Leon: The Personal Aspects of de Leon’s influence among Irish and British Militants’, 1978 (unpublished thesis).
8. James Connolly to J.C. Matheson, 27 September, 1907, O’Brien Papers, NLI. See also Connolly’s clarification of his position on religion at that time, in his letter to Matheson dated 30 January 1908: “For myself tho’ I have usually posed as a Catholic I have not gone to my duty for 15 years, and have not the slightest tincture of faith left. I only assumed the Catholic pose in order to query the raw freethinker whose ridiculous dogmatism did and does annoy me as much as the dogmatism of the Orthodox. In fact I respect the good Catholic more than the average freethinker.”
9. *The Socialist*, May, 1903.
10. *ibid.*
11. *Justice*, 7 October, 1899. Hyndman subsequently reversed his pro-Boer stand in favour of the British imperialist position.
12. *Justice*, 21 October, 1899. For a detailed account of this controversy see Edmund Silberner, ‘British Socialism and the Jews’, *Historia Judaica*, April 1952.
13. Andrew Rothstein to Manus O’Riordan, 19 February, 1987. Born in 1898, Andrew Rothstein is a foundation member (1920) of the Communist Party of Great Britain. In October 1988 this writer met with 90 year old Rothstein in London, who recalled the visits of Lenin to his childhood home.
14. Walter Kendall, *The Revolutionary Movement in Britain, 1900-21*, (London, 1969), p.332.
15. Irish Socialist Republican Party minutes, October 5, 14 and 21, 1902, NLI.
16. Boris Kahan to James Connolly, 19 October 1902, O’Brien Papers, NLI.

17. ISRP minutes, November 14 and 23, 1902, O'Brien Papers.
18. C. Desmond Greaves, *The Life and Times of James Connolly*, (London, 1961) p.110.
19. Census of Population, 1911.
20. *The United Irishman*, 23 January 1904. Quoted more fully by Manus O'Riordan in *Dublin Jewish News*, March-April 1979 and in *Morgn Freiheit* (New York), 17, February 1980.
21. Louis Hyman, *The Jews of Ireland from Earliest Times to 1910*, (Shannon, 1972). p.161.
22. ISRP minutes, 23 July, 1901, NLI.
23. Census of Population, street returns, 1901 and 1911, Public Records Office.
24. Maurice Levitas to Manus O'Riordan, 25 October, 1986. Included in 'Irish and Jewish Volunteers in the Spanish Anti-Fascist War', a 50th anniversary lecture by Manus O'Riordan with particular reference to the story of an Irish-born Volunteer, Maurice Levitas, delivered at the Irish Jewish Museum, 15 November, 1987. See <http://irelandscw.com/ibvol-MoR1.htm> for lecture text and <http://irelandscw.com/obit-MLevitas.htm> for Levitas obituary.
25. Louis Harrap, 'The Bund Revisited', *Jewish Currents*, (New York), February and April, 1974.
26. *Workers' Republic*, 24 November, 1900.
27. Manus O'Riordan, 'Jewish Trade Unionism in Dublin', in O'Riordan and Pat Feeley, *The Rise and Fall of Irish Anti-Semitism*, (Dublin, 2nd edition, 1985) p.31. For union details see www.siptu.ie/PressRoom/NewsReleases/2002/Name_2578_en.html and also see www.drb.ie/june_citizens.html as well as www.anfearrua.com/story.asp?id=2126 for more on Irish Jewish history by Manus O'Riordan.
28. Census enumerators' returns, 1901 and 1911, Public Records Office.
29. File of the Irish Garment Workers' Trade Union (formerly the International Tailors', Machinists' and Pressers' Trade Union), Registrar of Friendly Societies. The 1915 Executive consisted of Patrick Doyle, Barnet Sigman, Edward Baker, Harris Guttenberg, Barnet Glass, Morris Goldstein and Walter Carpenter, Secretary.
30. Census enumerators' returns, 1911, Public Records Office.
31. *Workers' Republic*, March 1902.
32. Wood Quay Ward Election Address, January, 1903.
33. Andrew Rothstein, *Lenin in Britain*, (London, 1970), p.14.
34. *ibid*, pp. 22 and 350.

35. C. Desmond Greaves, *The Irish Transport and General Workers' Union – The Formative Years*, (Dublin, 1982), pp 203, 239 and 350.
36. Introduction, by Manus O'Riordan (ed.), to Frederick Ryan, *Sinn Féin and Reaction*, (Dublin, 1984), pp. 4 to 8. Also pp. 31 to 35. For a biographical study of Theodore Rothstein, see the essay by David Burke in John Slatter (ed.), *From the Other Shore: Russian Political Emigrants in Britain, 1880-1917*, (London, 1984), pp. 81-97.
37. Andrew Rothstein to Manus O'Riordan, London, 20 April, 1988.
38. *United Irishman*, 28 May, 1904. Reprinted in full in Ryan, *op cit*, pp. 13-14, and in O'Riordan and Feeley, *op.cit*, p.12.
39. SPI minutes, 2, 15 and 22 January, 1906, NLI. Reverend Abraham Gudansky, a native of Lithuania, was the Minister of Dublin's premier synagogue at Adelaide Road. His son, the future District Justice Herman Good, would be a candidate for the Irish Labour Party in the 1944 General Election. Good's election poster is on display in the Irish Jewish Museum, Walworth Road (off Victoria Street) Dublin 8.
40. SPI minutes, 22 January, 1906.
41. O'Riordan, 'Jewish Trade Unionism in Dublin', *op cit*, pp.32-36.
42. Manus O'Riordan, 'The Tailors and Pressers Union', *Dublin Jewish News*, July 1987.
43. *Freeman's Journal*, 8 July, 1909.
44. William O'Brien diaries, 1 and 8 July, 1909, NLI.
45. Introduction, by Manus O'Riordan (ed.), to Frederick Ryan, *Socialism, Democracy and the Church*, (Dublin, 1984), pp. 3 and 4.
46. SPI minutes, 6 February, 6 March, 7 July, 1911, NLI.
47. Census enumerators' returns, 1911, Public Record Office.
48. *ibid*. Isaac Baker, No.11, Abraham Sevitt, No.17, and Morris Taylor, No. 29 Martin Street.
49. *ibid*. Aaron Klein, No. 14, and Harry Guttenberg, No. 30 Warren Street.
50. Leaflet for ITMPTU public meeting on 7 July, 1913, O'Brien Papers, NLI.
51. ITMPTU Returns, 1913, Registrar of Friendly Societies., File 274T.
52. *ibid*, 1912-1915 incl. Also certificate of marriage, at the Camden Street synagogue on 16 August, 1914, between Leah Rick and Harry Levitas, a tailor's presser, of 33 Martin Street, who was a member of the ITMPTU.
53. *Workers' Republic*, 21 January, 1922.

54. *Workers' Republic*, 1 April, 1922.

The above document study by Manus O'Riordan was published in *Saothar 13*, Journal of the Irish Labour History Society, 1988.

A 2002 POSTSCRIPT:

Mike Quill - Kerry Founder of the Transport Workers' Union of America

**an address by Manus O'Riordan, SIPTU Head of Research, at the
Biennial Delegate Conference of the South West Region of SIPTU,
held in Killarney, County Kerry, October 11, 2002**

Comrades and Friends,

It is indeed a great honour on the occasion of this Conference that we have among us this evening a delegation from New York Local 100 of the Transport Workers' Union of America, here to visit the birthplace of that Union - South Kerry!

One of the most abiding TV memories of my school days was in 1966, when the newly-elected Mayor of New York, John Lindsay, responded to media goading and decided he would try to face down the Transport Workers' Union. But he met more than his match when he was confronted by New York's first ever city-wide transit strike. It was then that I first saw and heard on screen the leader of that strike, Michael J. Quill, denounce, with all his Kerry-accented verbal eloquence, both the Mayor and the Judge who was sending him to prison for violating an anti-strike injunction. Quill persevered and led that Union, which he had founded in 1934, to win its greatest contract ever. Tragedy, however, followed victory. On January 28, 1966, three days after speaking at the mass rally called to celebrate the new contract, Mike Quill was dead. Against all medical advice, he had insisted on leading his members in that momentous struggle. He had literally given his life on the picket-line.

Mike Quill's fighting spirit had been nurtured in the very Kerry mountains that surround us here. He was born in Kilgarvan on September 18, 1905. During Ireland's War of Independence, fought from 1919 to 1921, the teenage Mike Quill was a dispatch rider, while his family home served as headquarters of the Kerry no.2 Brigade of the Irish Republican Army. His uncle's house, also in Kilgarvan, was yet another Republican home, so renowned for its revolutionary sympathies, that the British occupying garrison of Black-and-Tans derisively nick-named it "Liberty Hall"!

In the tragic Civil War that followed the Anglo-Irish Treaty, Mike Quill participated in the Republican capture of the town of Kenmare. It was, however, a short-lived victory before the defeat of the side on which he had been fighting. It was during those same years that Mike Quill also had his first experience of industrial struggle, when he and his brother John were fired for staging a sit-in strike in a Kenmare saw-mill. Thereafter, an employment black-list prevailed against Quill, as both a defeated Republican fighter and a sacked industrial activist, leaving him with no other option but emigration. So it was that, on the eve of St. Patrick's Day 1926, Mike Quill first set foot in the New York City he would make his own.

Following a variety of jobs, Quill finally took up employment in 1929 as a ticket agent with the Interboro Rapid Transit Company, or IRT, the largest subway operation in the USA. Working conditions were horrendous, with Mike often required to be in attendance for four hours without pay until work might finally become available, and then condemned to a slave-driving schedule - 12 hours a night, seven nights a week. In 1961 he recalled:

During those twelve hour nights we'd chat about the motormen, conductors, guards etc. whose conditions were even worse. They had to work a 'spread' of 16 hours each day in order to get 10 hours pay. Negro workers could get jobs only as porters. They were subjected to treatment that makes Little Rock and Birmingham seem liberal and respectable by comparison ... I also saw Catholic ticket agents fired by Catholic bosses for going to Mass early in the morning while the porter 'covered' the booth for half an hour. Protestant bosses fired Protestant workers for similar crimes - going to Church. The Jewish workers had no trouble with the subway bosses - Jews were denied employment in the transit lines.

At that time 50 percent of New York's transit workers were Irish. Mike Quill and other politicised immigrants began to associate in the Irish Workers' Clubs that had been established in New York by James Gralton, the only Irishman ever to be deported from his native land because of his political activities. These Irish immigrant workers formed the nucleus of a leadership that would give birth to

a new Union in New York. It was my privilege to have known two of Quill's fellow pioneers in that historic project, Austin Hogan from Cork, who had led the TWU's New York Local 100, and Gerald O'Reilly from Meath, organiser of the TWU's annual Connolly Commemoration in New York. Through the Irish Workers' Clubs, these pioneers learned that James Connolly had not only been an executed leader of the 1916 National Rising. They also learned that he had been an Irish trade union leader and, more significantly, an American union organiser as well. In his 1910 pamphlet ***The Axe to the Root***, Connolly had written in great detail of how craft divisions had ensured the defeat of a recent strike of New York transit workers and how much a new model of industrial unionism was required. Quill and his comrades devoured Connolly's teachings, and a quarter of a century later put them into practice with the foundation of just such a Union on April 12, 1934.

You will note that I have referred to these New York workers as transit and not transport workers. The Irish writer and wit Oscar Wilde once observed that both sides of the Atlantic were divided by a common language. "Transit" is the word used in the "American" language. But why, then, did these transit workers call their new union the Transport Workers' Union of America? Because they wished to honour the name of SIPTU's predecessor, the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union of Larkin and Connolly, whose history had inspired them to go and do likewise.

Time does not allow for a detailed history of that American Union. Beginning with just 400 members, it fought successfully to organise and represent all 14,000 employed by the IRT. In the next largest subway company - the Brooklyn Manhattan Transit, or BMT line - the successful 1937 sit-down strike led to further victories, which soon brought total union membership to 45,000. In the late 1940s membership was further extended to embrace utility and airline workers.

Throughout all this period Quill also remained politically focused. In 1937 he was first elected to the New York City Council on behalf of the American Labor Party. On the final occasion on which he stood for the City Council in 1945, he was elected on the first ballot. Indeed, he was the first candidate to be elected in the entire city. Nor was he afraid to risk the popularity that had come his way when his principles demanded that he should now swim against the tide. In 1969 and 1970, when I was a student in the United

States and was protesting against the Vietnam War, I knew how much we were still a minority viewpoint. And yet as early as 1965, at his last Union Convention, Mike Quill had the courage of his convictions to confront his members with his own forthright opposition to that War.

Three decades earlier Quill had also risked unpopularity with much of his membership by supporting the Spanish Republic and its right to defend itself against Fascist rebellion and aggression. In Christmas 1937, in the wake of his victory in the New York City Council elections, Mike Quill briefly returned to Ireland in order to marry Molly O'Neill of Cahersiveen, County Kerry. And yet he still found time to have a meeting with a 20 year old Cork volunteer about to set out to fight in defence of the Spanish Republic - my own father Micheál O'Riordan. Quill had already seen a neighbour's child from Kilgarvan, Michael Lehane, make that internationalist commitment to Spain. Lehane would subsequently serve in the Norwegian Merchant Navy on the trans-Atlantic convoys of World War Two, and give up his life in the cause of anti-fascism when his ship fell victim to a Nazi U-boat attack in 1943. In 1989 my father unveiled a plaque in honour of his close friend and comrade-in-arms in Spain, opposite Lehane's birthplace at the Morley's Bridge entrance to Kilgarvan. And in 1997 Mick Lehane was posthumously awarded his Second World War Service medal by the Norwegian Government, in a ceremony appropriately held in Kilgarvan's own Michael J. Quill Memorial Centre. [See <http://irelandscw.com/ibvol-Lehane.htm> for Lehane story and http://www.siptu.ie/Resources/SIPTUPublications/ArchivedSIPTUPublications/Name_4047.en.html for O'Riordan]

Mike Quill was a man ahead of his time in so many different ways. Here in Ireland, as we are still struggling to overcome the situation where this country has the worst provision of childcare services in the European Union, it is worth remembering that in 1944 Quill had introduced a bill into the New York City Council to establish free childcare centres for working mothers. And as issues of racism in varying guises now need to be confronted in Ireland, we can also learn from Quill's inspired leadership. An unequivocal and relentless foe of all forms of anti-Semitism, Quill declared at the end of World War Two: "We licked the race haters in Europe, but the millions of Jewish dead cannot be restored to life".

Mike Quill was a Kerryman who was never afraid to court unpopularity by fearlessly tackling any anti-Semitism encountered among his fellow-Irishmen. In the 1930s the anti-Semitism of Father Charles Coughlin's Christian Front, and that of the associated stormtroopers of America's Christian Mobilisers, was finding a sympathetic hearing among significant sections of New York's Irish. Quill took them on head-to-head in June 1939 when he staged a rally against anti-Semitism in a 95 percent Irish district of the South Bronx, and won over the overwhelming majority of the four thousand Irish who came to hear him. He was in the best traditions of James Connolly himself who, in 1902, had issued a Yiddish-language address to Jewish immigrant workers in Dublin.

Throughout his life Quill also fought relentlessly against colour prejudice. In marked contrast to other railroad unions of the 1930s, which either excluded black workers entirely or accorded them only second class status, the Transport Workers' Union from the very outset declared it was open to all workers without regard to colour. Indeed, the African-American IRT porter Clarence King was elected to the very first TWU Executive Board. Here again, Quill was prepared to face down reactionary white racism whenever it raised its ugly head among his own Union membership. In 1944 he successfully brought to an end a boss-inspired wildcat strike of white members in Philadelphia who had been encouraged to rebel against a Union contract which had secured promotion rights to the grade of conductor for eight black porters. In 1961, when Quill received a letter allegedly written by twenty-five TWU airline workers in Tennessee protesting against the Union's support for the Civil Rights desegregation campaign, his immediate response was to invite the Civil Rights leader Martin Luther King to address that year's Union Convention.

Quill introduced the Rev. King with the following prophetic words:

We may very well be making history here, in the presence of the man who is entrusted with the banner of American liberty that was taken from Lincoln when he was shot 95 years ago ... Dr. King was almost stabbed to death, has been shot at, has been arrested more often than anybody in the United States, South and North ... Dr. King's life at this moment is in just as great danger as was Lincoln's. And he has to walk with care if he is to continue to lead this crusade.

Quill's own earlier death in 1966 was to spare him from seeing his prediction of the murder of Martin Luther King come true. It would have devastated him, for one of the proudest displays at the Quill Centre in Kilgarvan is a photograph of those two great leaders united together at that 1961 Union Convention.

As for Quill's own philosophy of life, he summed it up as follows:

I believe in the Corporal Works of Mercy, the Ten Commandments, the American Declaration of Independence and James Connolly's outline of a socialist society ... Most of my life I've been called a lunatic because I believe that I am my brother's keeper. I organize poor and exploited workers, I fight for the civil rights of minorities, and I believe in peace. It appears to have become old-fashioned to make social commitments - to want a world free of war, poverty and disease. This is my religion.

On the occasion of Quill's death one particular leader paid the following tribute:

Mike Quill was a fighter for decent things all his life - Irish Independence, labour organization and racial equality. He spent his life ripping the chains of bondage off his fellow man. This is a man the ages will remember.

That was praise indeed - particularly when we recall that the speaker in question was none other than that outstanding twentieth century beacon of freedom - the Reverend Martin Luther King himself.

At this Conference of SIPTU, being held in Kerry, we can warmly assure our colleagues from the Transport Workers' Union of America that we too are truly proud of that disciple of James Connolly - Michael J. Quill of Kilgarvan and New York. So, let us all salute his memory!

Manus O'Riordan
October 11, 2002

