

LIMERICK SOCIALIST

JUNE, 1975.

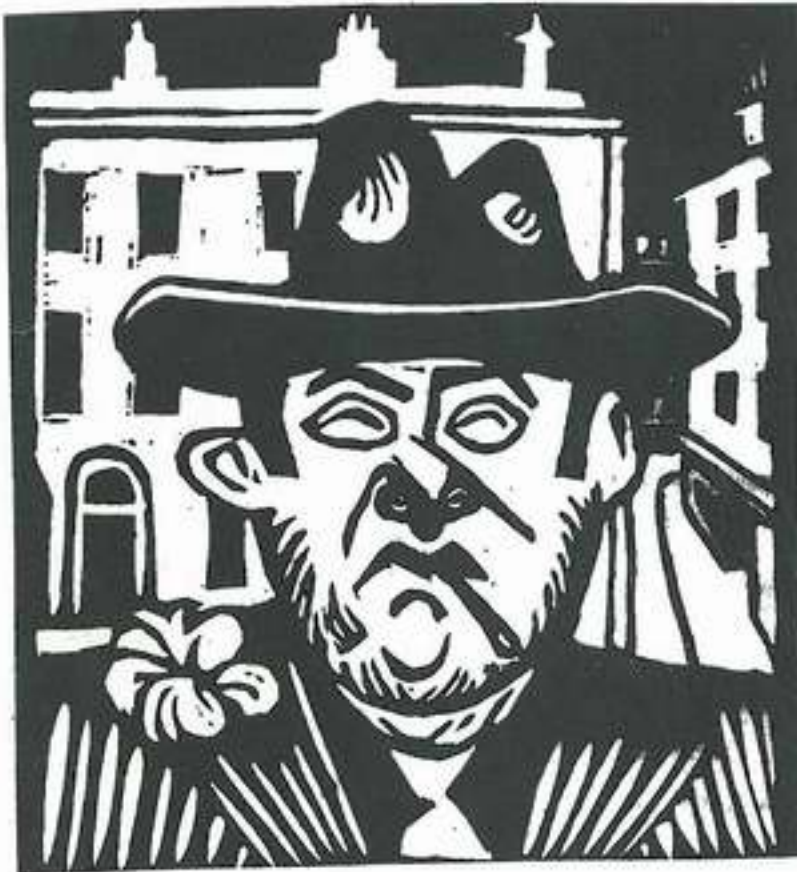
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VOL. 4. NO. 6.

**THE
VOICE
OF THE
WORKER**

'That which is good for the working class I esteem patriotic . . . ' *James Connolly*

THE MAFIA'S MUSICAL RIDE

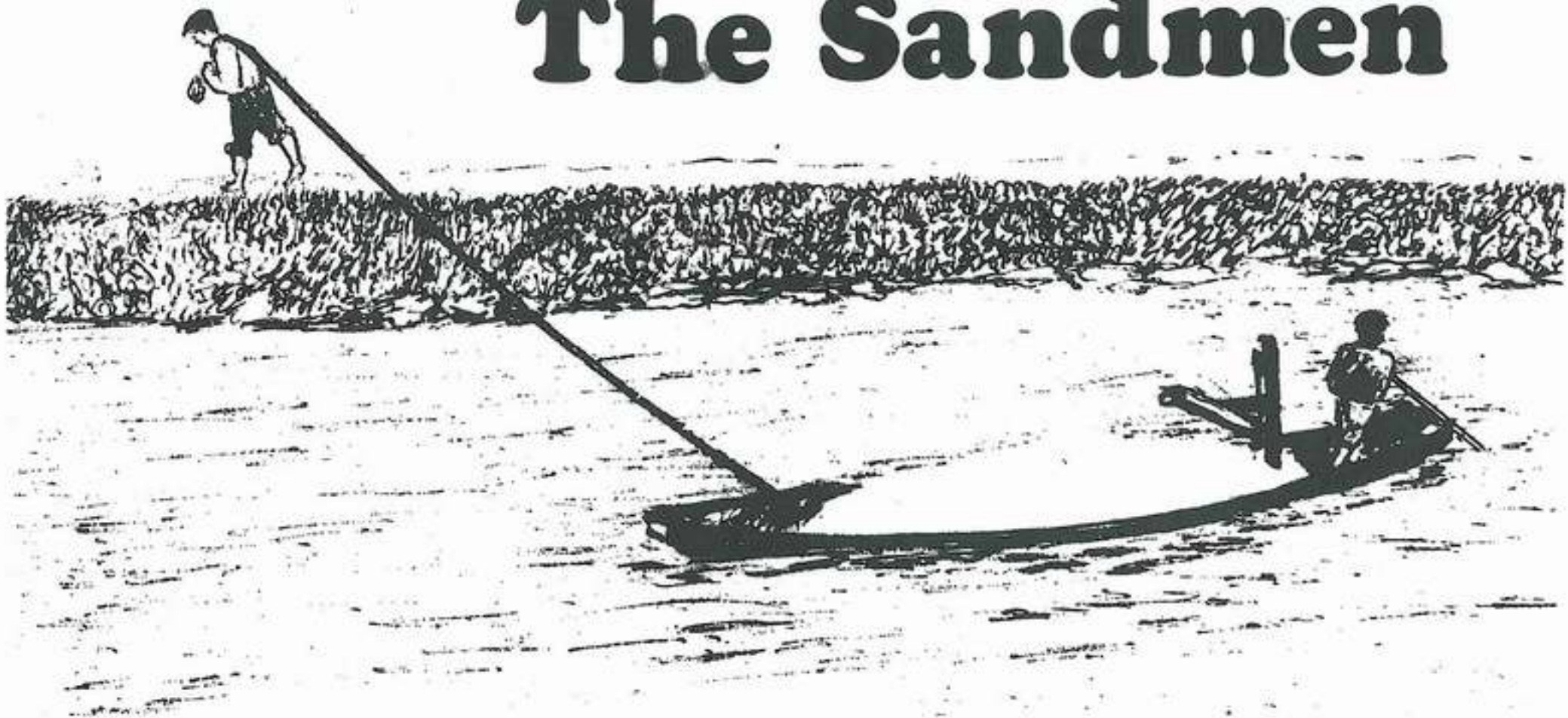


THE FOURTH SIEGE OF LIMERICK



Patrick Pearse

THE PARISH PUMP The Sandmen



MAD ABOUT MONEY

BY DERMOT McEVOY

AS THE old song has it: It's the rich wot gets the pleasure/it's the poor wot gets the blame/it's the same the 'ole world over/isn't it a blooming shame? But have you ever paused to consider why rich people tend to remain rich and the poor, who do all the work, stay poor? According to *Mensa*, the society for people with high IQs, the rich suffer from a psychosis indentified as greed obsession which, when measured against a poor person's psychological norm, makes them definitely immoral. Specifically, the rich are able to bribe or frighten officials, lie expansively, rationalise all their actions and are as completely unable to delay any gratification as they are to conceive the plight of the poor. The rich, this research finds and don't we all know it, are fatalistically convinced that they control man's destiny. For these sufferers from what I call the King Midas syndrome, education or upbringing in any of the recognised Christian religions is only of marginal help; a Wealth Tax that really bites is more likely to effect a permanent cure. It could, for instance, have stopped that County Meath farmer-bless the mark! — from amassing £5 million or so to squander on Aintree racecourse in the hope that he'll win the Grand National. Now, if he'd given the money to Limerick not only would it have done more good I feel sure the burgesses would have been happy to name a bridge or some other public convenience after him.

Which brings me to the point that the poor — and there are lots of them including the harassed salaried man — have votes and should use them on behalf of candidates for the Dail and the Councils who favour the curbing of all these Irish Mister Greedy Guts. In Limerick, city and county, the poor people should not feel obliged to cast their votes for Fine Gael, the ranchers' party, or for Fianna Fail, the gangsters' party, or even for a bookmaker who all too often lays you evens what should be a 2 to 1 shot, never mind the party label he wears — and dishonours. So let's hope you'll have a candidate next time round who measures up to your minimum requirements. Not that it can be expected that decent people, white collar and blue, should remain passive until then. Not that I want them to take to the streets and do anything that might frighten the horses; the boycott, the cold shoulder can often be effective.

Only a Utopian supposes that justice and freedom can be achieved overnight but they could begin to happen tomorrow if enough people were made aware of the appalling alternative. Anyway, who wouldn't rather go down in a ship on which an attempt was being made to live a sensible and decent life than in a ship which has kept its traditional follies, privileges and injustices to the very end. Our ship now is wallowing in a sea of inflation and unemployment with a captain and officers reeling about on the bridge as we're bound for the Rio Grande Illusion. The people huddled below should take the helm before we hit the rocks.

OUR OLD friend Gulf Oil, the U.S. octopus that Jack Lynch and Partners allowed into Bantry for peanuts, is in the news again. Its chairman Bob Dorsey has admitted to the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission that two former Presidents of Bolivia were the principal beneficiaries of a £1.8 million backhander by way of "political contributions". Something equally nasty happened in Peru and the Peruvian Government has now kicked Gulf out, a sort of kick up the transom. There is, of course, no chance that Gulf contributed anything to Fianna Fail but it could do nothing but good if some leading members of Fianna Fail who have handsome estates in north County Dublin were submitted to what a Limerick Inspector of Taxes would describe as a "capital investigation". The result *could* put an end to smears, including mine, that the Fianna Fail were activated by something less than the national interest when they virtually gave away Bantry and its wealth potential (remember the *Sunday Independent* investigation, the continued howls of Cork Harbour Board?). Of course, while you have a front-bencher of the same Fianna Fail still refusing to answer

Public Accounts Committee questions about the disposition of that arms deal £100,000, the exercise may not do any good. But it's worth a try. After all, it wasn't his money; it was yours and mine.

I SEE that Brother Doohan of Adare has been denouncing the Department of Education's "sinister and subtle" moves to drive the Brothers out after 121 years. It would, he says, be the end of the road for the Order unless the Department grants full secondary school status to St. Joseph's CBS in Adare. He has the backing of villagers and parents. I wish him well and hope he has better luck than my father had at the turn of the century when in every issue of the *Limerick Leader* he fought for the Brothers who'd been ejected from Bruff for offering free secondary education to the children of the poor. The fight then was not against a British Board of Education it was against Bishop O'Dwyer who saw the Brothers' activities in the field of education as likely to hit the revenues of his diocesan schools, especially St. Munchin's, and reduce his control. *As for the children of the poor, they were as unimportant then as they, apparently, are today.* I look forward to a *Leader* campaign "Scandal at Adare" until Brother Doohan gets the backing he deserves. I wonder if Brother Doohan can rely for support on Dr. Newman ...

For all their selective teaching of Irish history it is sad to see the Brothers in decline. I owe them much, especially a life-long interest in Latin, French and ornithology. I remember one Brother in Ennis who showed his "politics" when marking an essay of mine on the Spanish Armada. I had concluded my piece as a 12-year-old by asserting that but for the storm that scattered the Armada the whole course of history might have been changed and I still see in my mind's eye Brother Egan's written side note "Agus is mor an truagh e"! I shared Brother Egan as a teacher with Dr. Conor Cruise O'Brien's private secretary who told me, as we reminisced, that the same Brother used to give his pupils in Monaghan Easter Lilies to wear — on Poppy Day! I'll have Brothers any day in preference to Bishops. Fight on, Brother Doohan!

ALDERMAN Patrick Kennedy, the Mayor of Limerick, is a split personality. He condemns the "twisted mentality" of those who planted the hotel bombs and praised the prompt action that prevented "what could have been a major tragedy". Yet he is the same Mayor who refused to accept a motion sympathy with the victims of the Birmingham pub bombs, describing it as "political". In his view, putting Limerick lives at hazard is less political than the blowing to bits of the two sons of an Irish mother in Birmingham. In all this Kennedy is contemptible and shown to be when Limerick Council of Trades Unions, speaking I'm sure for everyone in the country, denounced the people or organisations responsible for the Limerick outrages in the same unequivocal terms as it had the Birmingham bombs. What a ghastly Chief Citizen! What a twisted mentality! There's a Mayor who shouldn't get another term—even as a Councillor. I see he's had the gall to commemorate himself on the newly-repaired Sarsfield Bridge which was damaged by a storm last year. Perhaps he commands the winds and this is his shy way of putting himself in the picture for posterity? Is there no one in Limerick with a chisel who can carve a four-letter word (don't spell it with a 'k', or, alternatively, end it with an 'e') after, or before for that matter, the Kennedy name? It would be a worthwhile contribution to European Architectural Heritage Year.

YOUR own contribution can be a resolve to get rid of the Kennedys and all the other wool merchants. If you don't, our country must face torture on the instalment plan, condemned like Ixion harnessed to his wheel forever to revolve in Hades. Get cracking, Garryowen!

The Plight of the O'Donoghues

WRITING TO the Editor from Cloneen, Gortboy, Newcastle West, Mr. John Cussen states:

Dermot McEvoy's article in your May issue headed 'The Plight of the Earls' touches on an incident in Newcastle West recently when the residents of Assumpta Park issued an ultimatum to a caravan owner who had parked his caravan in a field adjacent to the estate.

Your correspondent has obviously lifted this story from a local paper, probably the Limerick Weekly Echo. One would imagine before venting his righteous indignation he would have checked the facts himself. Firstly, the man who owned the caravan was a Mr. O'Donoghue not a Mr. Joyce. Secondly, Newcastle West has a good record in the housing of itinerants and there are many itinerants resident in Assumpta Park. This incident arose from the fears and frustrations of the Assumpta Park residents and while the threat of taking the law into one's own hands cannot be condoned it should not be condemned as a bourgeois reflex against the underprivileged.

One of the troubles with doctrinaire socialism is that it usually bends the facts to suit its thesis as in this instance. There are never any rights or wrongs in a happening of this kind. Could I presume to recommend your correspondent a course in ethical socialism?

Dermot McEvoy replies: Thank you, Mr. Cussen. So it was the O'Donoghues and not, apparently, the Joyces, who were the victims of the Assumpta Park mob. (There is a lingering doubt for the O'Donoghues could own the caravan the Joyces lived in). Your point is as important as whether it is Newcastle West or Newcastlewest: in the words of Stephen Sondheim's

musical *A Little Night Music*, "Everything's different, nothing's changed ..." — except the name of the victim.

Are you suggesting that if the family's name was Joyce the itinerants would have been allowed to stay, that you would have done your simple Christian duty of calling off the harassment? You don't say, but you do find an excuse for the Assumpta Park residents with your reference to their fears and frustrations. Are these greater than the fears and frustrations of the wretched of our land, O'Donoghues or Joyces? I doubt it.

Indeed, the caravan was parked not on the ground bespoken for the well-scrubbed children of the Assumpta Park Residents' Association but in a field adjacent to the estate. So the itinerants' crime was to overlook their betters! (In London, the back windows of my mews in the Royal Borough of Kensington had to be of frosted glass so that I could not overlook by betters. As the people concerned were middle-class bourgeois I did not feel deprived. But, if I had the ill-fortune to have a mews in Newcastlewest, I'd insist on frosted glass).

And, by the way, Mr. Cussen, stop the obfuscation: if the threat of taking the law into one's own hands "cannot be condoned" (your own soft phrase) why should it not be condemned? It is illegal, isn't it? Or do you want one law for the poor and another for the selective people of Assumpta Park? And what was done in Assumpta Park was inhuman too. But then housing the poor has always been a problem it was, as you know, a problem even in Bethlehem. But they don't seem to know about that in Newcastle West or Newcastlewest, do they, Mr. Cussen?

A 'LIBERAL' IRISH-AMERICAN

10, Rochester Terrace,
London, N.W.1.
16th May, 1975.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

In your May edition of the *Limerick Socialist* I read with interest the article by Con Houlihan reprinted from the 'Kerryman' — A 'Liberal Irish-American' and feel constrained to comment on it.

The derogatory tone of the article is based on an emotional response to Paul O'Dwyer and is less honest than O'Dwyer's response to the situation in the six counties.

There is nothing wrong with 'being a hero among the liberals' especially if one's record includes an anti-war in Vietnam stance, a pro-Berrigan stance and a pro-Jewish stance in relation to the setting up of Palestine. Would that there had been a few more voices raised over Vietnam — Irish voices that is. They could have had the rare distinction for Irish journalism of being proven right as O'Dwyer has been by recent events. And having been right on Vietnam could he not also be right about Ulster?

O'Dwyer has been produced by the same system that has produced Con Houlihan and just because the Provos and their supporters are in danger of upsetting rampant Irish Capitalism it is no use Houlihan squealing because O'Dwyer is living the romantic Nationalist dream. Ireland produced that dream and there is nothing silly about it. What is silly about wanting a country united? The Vietnamese people have sustained such a 'silly' dream for hundreds of years and though it became at times an nightmare in the end the dream came true.

As to the question of what is a settler or who qualifies as 'native' — Irish history gives us the answer. All those people who came to the country in whatever guise and stayed without constantly looking over their shoulders to a mythical London became Irish. Though the Orangemen have been on the island

The Limerick Socialist Organisation supports a two-nations solution to the Northern Ireland problem. The Organisation, therefore, does not agree with the contents of the letter published below. The "Limerick Socialist" has invited Con Houlihan to reply to Shane Connaughton's letter in its next edition.

a long time London is their spiritual home and their bigoted air of superiority to the native population has been sustained by that dream of 'the Queen across the water'. As long as they carry on with that dream they will never be accepted by those who suffer the lash of their bigotry. Of course the south has its share of Roman Catholic bigots. I hope Con Houlihan is ever active through the columns of his paper against them. Ireland is suffering from the moment from a beautifully balanced sehizophrenia — a system of education and religion producing the nationalist dream and a new found meretriciousness interested only in the quick buck the later of course in the short term under threat from the former. Hence madness and unclear thinking.

As to Con Houlihan's remark about --- 'why if they love this country so much, do they not come and live here ---' he probably doesn't know an awful lot of the romantics did. Tried to. But the local capitalist scene hadn't gotten off the ground in those days so they left taking nothing from that barren land save the dream of unification which was all that was given to them. They departed the land of their birth with a suitcase full of nothing save inculcated ideals.

Some of them did well especially in America and indeed some of them became opportunist politicians! As Mr. Houlihan rightly points out. But which is worst opportunist politicians or opportunist journalists? The one that squeals loudest in defence of their particular status quo!! A lot of squealers are gathering around the tumbling apple cart of Irish Capital. Why don't they admit that that is what they are protecting and not Orangemen's sensibilities — the latter commodity being as rare as a frog on the North Pole star.

Shane Connaughton.

THE PARISH PUMP

PART 6

THE SANDMEN

Mention of the word "sand" conjures up pictures of the great deserts, with their picturesque camel trains and fiery sunsets, holiday resorts with their golden beaches, and the sand castles of our childhood. Poets have gone into raptures about it; children cannot resist it; and the barefoot walk on the cool firm carpet of the beach has its own peculiar magic. But for most people in Limerick the word also brings to mind the loaded sand cots, with their gun'les awash, being towed along the canal from Plassey.

Sand has played an important role in the life of Limerick. For centuries it has been the chief constituent of mortar and plaster — and, more recently, of concrete. Indeed it can be said that the city has been held together by it almost from its foundation.

Up to the time of the Shannon "Scheme" almost all the sand used in the building trades came from the Shannon, where the deposits were continually replenished by the Mulcair floods. Abundant supplies were brought along on these occasions from the sandy hills stretching along its catchment area between Rearcross and Brittas, supplemented by further supplies from the Newport and Clare rivers, and the many smaller streams along its course. During the floods the sand, clay and gravel give the water a rich creamy colour as it thunders over the rocks and heights along its channel, and falls to the bottom in the quieter waters of the deep stretches, where the carrying stream is arrested in its mad rush. The first great settling occurs at the point where the Mulcaire meets the Shannon. Here a huge delta has been formed by the accumulation of sand and clay. Numerous black sallys, white willows, and red alders, give the place a wooded appearance, while the luxuriant vegetation all round makes it almost impossible to negotiate a passage through it. The next fall takes place in the sluggish deep below Plassey Bridge. The great current of pre-Shannon Scheme days carried the sand further downstream to the head of the estuary and deposited great quantities in the stretch between the Island Point and the Lax Weir.

Sand was dredged from the river by the "sandmen", a hardy breed who came from a number of old Limerick families in the heart of the "Parish", and were engaged in the work for centuries. The Irish as a race have been conservative in habit and slow to move out of the beaten track. — phlegmatic is the term often used by their continental critics—and the sandmen never changed their methods of work but sallied forth, to the very last, with the gear bequeathed to them by their great grandfathers.

Conservatism implies contentment with what is, and despite the hard work and meagre earnings, the sandmen appeared content with their labouring lot. While their hardiness could be attributed to the physical fitness demanded and maintained by their active lives, their contentment was bolstered by their dietary, which was spiced with regular *souchets* of that *bonne-bouche* of the pint-drinking epicure, packet and tripe, and to their generous partiality for the pint itself, which has long been the elixir and sustenance of many of those in energetic occupations.

The sand barge, or cot, as it was more commonly known, was the ugly duckling of all small river craft. Simple in structure, it was about thirty feet long and five feet in the beam. Squared and sloped fore and aft, it had a small jib and hand-winch astern for raising the loaded dredge after it had been pushed into the river bed by the single operator standing on the gun'le. There were several anchors and grapnels, plenty of rope, and, of course, the wooden bailer, or "skeef", which

was a *sine qua non*. Power and steering were provided by a heavy sweep set in a socket over the stern. When circumstances permitted the craft was bow-hauled by one of the two-man crew. It was altogether a lubberly and ungainly vessel, yielding to control only with the greatest apparent reluctance, and exerting the crews energies to the full. The labour of loading and hauling the sand was increased considerably by the need for almost constant bailing out of water draining from the load. Circumstances often so combined as to make it imperative for the winch-man to bail with one hand and raise the dredge with the other at the same time.

Up to about seventy years ago, all sand was taken from the stretch between the Lax Weir and the Island Point. Unloading took place at the appropriately named Sand Mall. Breaches, or gaps, along the river wall facilitated the work; these had gates which were closed at night for the protection of children and others. It is recorded that a certain well known "character", having imbibed not wisely, but too well, at an adjacent groggery, opened one of these gates thinking that he was at home, and walked into the sobering stream of the Abbey River. Fortunately he was rescued by a number of fishermen coming from Quilligan's Bar. The Mall was characterised almost from its foundation by the heaps of wet sand along the roadway, and the general activity of the sandmen and carters.

After the abandonment of dredging in the Island Point area, all work was carried out at the deep below Plassey Bridge, and cargo was unloaded at the old canal harbour, close to the Lock Mills. This venue was less hazardous than the former one, and permitted the use of much larger cots. Only small loads of four or five tons at a time were taken in the Island Point area.

Different types and grades of sand and gravel lodged in certain areas along the watercourse and were known intimately to the sandmen, who anchored their cots directly over the sand deposits as if by intuitive perception. Gravel was raised principally in the winter time when the seasonal dearth in building activity cut back the demand for sand. Most of this gravel was used in the surfacing of driveways and garden paths of the 'big houses' in and around the city, where it was considered a rare delight to walk on the crunchy, multicoloured carpets from the shores of Clouncaree, or the mouth of the Clare Blackwater.

The Shannon Scheme would seem to have been the turning point in the fortunes of the sandmen. Sand was required in such unprecedented quantities for this great engineering feat that only the opening up of a number of pits in Limerick and Clare could supply the needs. River sand was still in demand, however, and the ancient trade was carried on until the mid-fifties, when the last load was brought to the old sand quay by Mike Shanahan.

For a long number of years before the finale, the comparative advantages of river and pit sand were argued in the locals around the "Parish", and outside it. Many of the older plasterers, masons, and other such craftsmen believed that the river variety was by far superior to that which was excavated in the pit. But it is difficult to believe that these convictions went very deep as no evidence exists of any move to prolong the life of the Limerick Sandmen's Association, which died because the demand for its once indispensable product disappeared. However, blame cannot be attached to the tradesmen or the sandmen themselves for this change. Simple economics and modern machinery and transport called the tune, and the curious and legendary trade had to come to

THE MAFIA'S MUSICAL

AFTER the representatives of the Galanti firm of International Piano Industries had "flown" and it became known among the workers in its Shannon factory that only 70 pianos remained on the premises, Frank Prendergast, secretary of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Branch, contacted the Receiver. He told the Receiver that if the thirty workers wanted to keep the pianos to dispose of them as they wished they should be allowed to do so. The Receiver agreed to this course.

Prendergast later told a meeting of the Limerick Council of Trade Unions that there were several reasons for this decision, the main one being to prevent the pianos being sold at rockbottom prices, out of which the workers would only get a fraction of what was due to them. The workers' suspicions that Galanti would make some attempt to keep a live interest in the pianos were quickly confirmed when an "independent" agent offered to buy the pianos. Under questioning, this agent admitted that he was working for Galanti.

The majority of workers opted to take a piano each. It was also agreed that the other workers would be paid the money due to them from the proceeds of the sale of the rest of the pianos.

But the workers' own plan soon ran into trouble. Paddy McGarvey in his "Sunday Times" article describes what happened:

The aftermath was a shambles. The workers staged a sit-in over their unpaid wages. At one point, two shop stewards, with the Receiver's consent, tried to cross the frontier with a piano to test the customs officers' attitude toward duty. Alas, any hopes of claiming pianos in lieu of wages were dashed when customs demanded £30 per piano. Eventually, the Receiver sold the 70 completed pianos and raised enough money for back wages.

Thus through these means the workers at least received their minimum legal entitlements. But the whole fiasco raises a number of important questions for Irish workers and for the future development of industry in this country. It might well be asked how the company was ever allowed into Ireland in the first place. McGarvey interviewed Paul Quigley, general manager of the Shannon Free Airport Development Company and raised this point. Quigley replied:

Our assessment showed that the Italian firm had been

an end, just like the nailers of 'Change Lane, and the chair makers of the Irishtown. The sandmen had made contribution to the local scene just like the others. The end was silent, if not altogether painless, and another era was closed.

Some of the sandmen emigrated and others found employment in the building industry. It is certain that the work in their new jobs was not as tough or as dangerous as their old occupation — and they were certainly better paid.

Despite the rigours of the trade most of the sandmen were healthy and long lived. They were highly respected in the community in which they lived, and many excelled in different branches of sports and athletics. The record of the great athlete, Rory Frawley, in winning five Munster Senior Cup medals while playing with Garryowen calls for special mention.

The Crowes, the Frawleys, and the Shanahans are no longer summoned to their daily labour by the hoarse cry of the early morning crane, and the riverside bird chorus is lost in the clear air. There is a strange loneliness since the sandmen left — strange to those who remember the shadowy figures and their long hours of back-breaking work delving the golden store.

(To be continued).

RIDE

PART TWO

established for more than 100 years, had other substantial subsidiaries, had ready markets for the output from the Shannon plant, and was, to our knowledge, a reputable company.

With the advantage of hindsight, it is now obvious that the Development Company's assessment of the Galanti firm was far from thorough and that it stopped short once that firm established itself at Shannon. How else can one explain the long period during its Irish operations during which the Galanti firm managed to avoid paying income tax, social welfare and insurance debts?

When it came to providing the answer to this question Paddy McGarvey was as unsuccessful as Paul Quigley. The "Sunday Times" article concluded:

Efforts to obtain the Galanti side of the story have not been entirely successful. A telex to Mondaino elicited a telephone call from George Simpson in Baldock, Hertfordshire, who said Matteo Galanti was travelling in the U.S. and could not be reached. Simpson, who works for Galanti's English operation, was fairly vague about what happened in Ireland, though he was critical of Irish workmanship. Meanwhile, Shannon Developments are seething helplessly. And about all the factory's former workers have is hope.

The McGarvey article did not touch on the amount of tax-free profits made by Galanti from its Irish operation but this figure would make interesting reading in the unlikely event of it ever emerging. But one of the main lessons to be learned from the affair has been the failure of the various Government departments and the S.F.A.D.Co to monitor the progress of Galanti and its expenditure of public money. Where State grants and tax exemption on profits are availed of there is clearly a need for some kind of public control and responsibility. This move would be a deterrent to "fly-by-night" foreigners but would not interfere with other outside firms wishing to invest here.

The debacle points up the need for industrial democracy at all levels of decision-making not only at individual factories but also at such semi-State bodies such as the Shannon Free Airport Development Company. The time is ripe for greater participation by workers-not merely on a consultative basis — in the affairs of the S.F.A.D.Co and other similar bodies. Workers have a democratic right to contribute at every stage of the decision-making process. For too long they have been denied this right to have a say in the making of policies concerning the welfare of themselves and their families. These demands will only be met when the united strength of the trade union movement is brought behind them.

(Concluded).

HELD OVER

We regret that owing to pressure of space the concluding part of "The Limerick Press and Chicago" and a letter from Tom Morris, president of the Limerick Chamber of Commerce, have been held over until next month.

FAMILY PLANNING – IRISH STYLE

A LOCK ON THE DOOR

BY KATHLEEN HOULIHAN

Jesus -- Moan -- Theresa -- glug glug. A figure silhouetted by a bedside light, enshrined by screens. A rosary beads held aloft -- Jesus -- Theresa -- Moan -- glug glug --

What a way to wake up. This scene was before me in Bedford Row Maternity Hospital.

I watched her for some time before I spoke.

"Are you alright?"

The beads were lowered. I repeated my question.

"Sure I'm grand girl -- are you over it?"

"Yes, this morning -- My name is Kathleen what's yours?"

"Maureen, listen -- would you ever press the bell there -- It's time for me now". We heard the bell echoing down the corridor. A very friendly nurse came in. I pointed towards Maureen's bed.

"Ah -- its yourself -- how are you -- back again"!

"They are comin' very often now -- I think I'm ready".

After examining her -- the nurse agreed. She helped Maureen into an overcoat and brought her out. Maureen had the bottle in her hand. The other patients stirred but no one woke. I heard the nurse ring the doctor on the telephone. Then the moaning of prayers grew louder and louder. Jesus and Theresa were implored upon endlessly. The doctor arrived, I heard his soft-toned voice consoling her. Then there was a scream -- a most unmerciful scream. I plunged under the bedclothes. I counted my heart beats, anything to get the scream out of my ears. When I emerged, all was quiet again. "Thanks be to Jesus" -- I whispered to the silent room.

When I awoke at breakfast time, Maureen was back in her bed.

She was a tired looking woman. Her straight hair was damp on her head; she had the appearance of one having run ten miles in ten minutes.

"I'll do justice to a good mug of tea".

"What did you have -- a boy or a girl"?

"A little girl, I'm calling her Theresa. Saint Theresa helped me through it. I called them all after saints that I'd prayed to. This one was the hardest -- they seem go get harder all the time -- you wouldn't think that -- would you?"

"How many have you?" I had to ask.

"She's the eleventh -- here's the breakfast, thank God for that".

She ate ravenously.

After breakfast we, in turn, slipped into our slippers and new nightgowns to queue for the bathroom. Maureen walked barefooted wearing a blue faded coat. Later she came to my bedside and sat down.

"I do be ashamed of my life comin' here every nine months -- they all know me, I got married twelve years ago in this very coat. It's the only stitch I have. I'd love a new coat".

She returned to her locker and took a drink from her bottle. I offered her a drink of orange hoping she'd offer me some of her label-less bottle's contents.

"No thanks -- I prefer the Holy Water -- I've great belief in it".

I offered her chocolates, she came across and sat down, eating as she talked.

"These gums of mine are better than any teeth" she laughed.

"Tell me how on earth do you feed and clothe all the children".

"Well it isn't easy. We have our own spuds and cabbage. We have 'pandy' most of the time. They love that. We never have meat. Shoes is an awful problem -- I get wellingtons for them all -- they never complain. Here, I have a photo in me pocket of the family -- I always carry it with me".

I didn't know whether to laugh or swear. There he was, a baby on each knee with the older ones around him. He looked about ninety.

"Oh that's lovely", I lied.

"Of course he's much older than me, he's nearly seventy. But he loves the kids. He washes the napkins every night and cooks dinner most Sundays. When I go home I'm goin' into the eldest girl's room. I'll bring in the babies and I'm puttin' a lock on the door. I suppose he can't help it. A lock on the door is the only cure.

"Have you practiced any form of birth control"? I asked.

"The doctor wouldn't give me the pill. I'd be afraid of it anyway. The other way doesn't work -- I never get the chance to try it" she laughed.

As she described each child in detail I glanced at the other mothers. They wore luxurious nightdresses, their hair was combed and flowers adorned their lockers. There was Maureen talking endlessly and lovingly about her children. Her hair was uncombed. Her open wedding coat exposed a pink faded flannel night dress, it was full of scorch marks. Her legs were full of ugly knots of veins. A green bottle stood on her locker.

All that week she never stopped talking. She was very happy. She had no visitors. She ate everything offered. She mocked us when we pestered the nurses to bring us our babies. "Oh 'tis all ahead of ye, ye poor eejits".

She never asked for her baby; when a nurse asked her would she like to -- she answered:

"I'll see enough of her -- let us enjoy the luxury while we can".

Every night I fell asleep to the sounds of beads rattling, breast thumping and whispered prayers. I could not say one prayer. I think of her often. I wonder did she get a lock on her door.

I wonder did she get a new coat. Has she returned to Bedford Row since ... Most of all I wonder is this the twentieth century.

A RARE MIXTURE

During the recent presentation of awards by President O'Dalaigh to donors of 50 pints of blood and over, at the Shelbourne Hotel, Dublin, O'Dalaigh donated his first ever pint of blood. A well-known doctor, looking on, asked the name of the President's blood group. "Oh, I'm positive", replied Willie "Whack" Gleeson, "that his is a very, very rare group". "Such as?", the doctor pressed. Came the quick reply: "A mixture of Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and Labour .. what could be rarer in any democracy?"

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DO SHELL EXPLOIT THEIR SALESMEN?

This statement has been submitted to the "Limerick Socialist" by Michael Fitzpatrick, a salesman, employed by Shell at that company's Corbally Service Station. When this salesman demanded better terms of employment, shorter working hours and greater security from the Shell company, his employment was terminated. There are four more salesmen in Shell stations throughout the country in similar situations.

EXPLOITATION?

THE FACTS:—

- (1) SHELL own this Petrol Station. They do not rent it. If they did I would have a sense of security.
- (2) They employ me "to develop and extend the sale of their products in such manner as the Company shall from time to time direct".
- (3) No Social Welfare cards are stamped for me, and I am destitute if dismissed from employment.
- (4) I pay them a sum of £600 per annum or such larger amount as at their discretion they see fit to charge at the expiration of every year for the "privilege" of selling their products and in addition I must indemnify them against the cost of electric power, heat and light and I must accept to support myself and my family with whatever balance they see fit to allow after fixing their rent charge each year.

- (5) I pay them for all their products immediately on delivery. I do not owe them one penny.
- (6) They require me to work a 52-week year without annual holidays or public holidays.
- (7) They require me to work 99 hours per week for a 7-day week including Sundays with no meal breaks, with no extra remuneration for overtime and no extra remuneration for working on Saturdays or Sundays.
- (8) The agreements which SHELL make with their Salesmen necessitate that the Salesmen are dependant on SHELL for the balance of remuneration which SHELL see fit to leave them after fixing the rent charge each year, and also on the right of SHELL TO DECIDE WHETHER THE Salesmen are to be destitute at the end of any year without employment and without Social Welfare benefits.

I challenge SHELL to dispute the accuracy of any of the above facts.

Do you think it reasonable that a salesman in the above circumstances should have Sundays free and that it should be sufficient to work a 60-hour 6-day week for any employer, without extra overtime pay? That is all I require as "the crumbs which fall from the richman's table". Shell refuse me these crumbs and terminated my employment.

CORBALLY SERVICE STATION,
CORBALLY,
LIMERICK.

POST OFFICE HOLD~UP: No pension

A 76-year-old widow, a pensioner, existing in St. Mary's Park called to collect her pension at Bridge Street Post Office around 5.15 p.m. on Easter Saturday last.

"Sorry mar", said the assistant behind the counter in an apologetic way. "No money came from the G.P.O. today, so you'll only have to call again on Tuesday".

"But what will support me 'till then", came the reply. "I've nothing ... nothing to eat," she sighed; "but with God's help, I suppose I'll survive", as she left the premises sorely disappointed. (It should be said that her plight was shared by many on the occasion).

Almost a year ago, the "Limerick Socialist" gave coverage to the case of a man, living alone in squalor — in the midst of plenty — down "Parish"-way, dying from starvation in the neighbourhood where the "Parish Pump" is published — when such is possible —, — and sold outside the chapel gate.

In this particular case, as if to add insult to injury, the deceased's old age pension book arrived at the local post office on the day after his death — exactly three months late.

For this man's terrible death no one was brought to task. no official enquiry was held; nor did the local press call for an investigation.

However, in the case of the widows plight, the Dublin and Cork newspapers did not turn a blind eye — the story was given the light, one paper going so far as to display in big print: "Post Office Hold-up: No pension; no food!"

In contrast, the Limerick press whose "hot line" news is often a week or ten days late — in anticipation of a Peter "Sham" or Steve "Mack" scoop? — gave a garbled, untrue version: The "Limerick Leader" reported:

PENSIONS DELAYED

Reports that there was not enough money at Bridge St.

No food!!

Post Office, Limerick, on Holy Thursday, to pay out pensions, were described as "misinformed" by the post office this week.

According to a spokesman, the money that day was late in coming, as the person delivering the cash had to wait for a Garda escort. However, there was enough money to pay out pensions, he added.

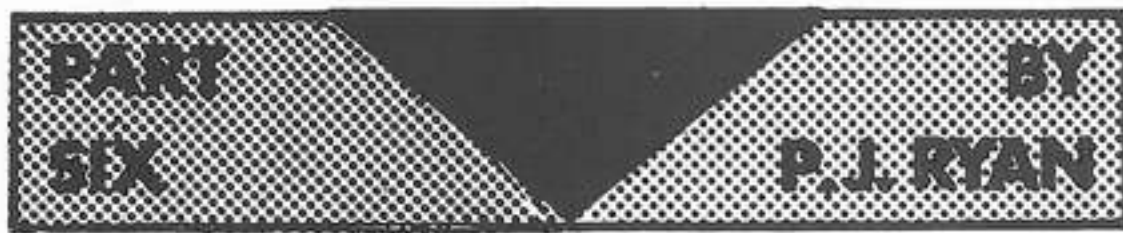
Such was the feeble defence to cover up the indifferent and inscrutable functionaries who rule the roost, at the G.P.O.

The "Parish Pump" magazine is showing signs of drying up — temporarily, we hope — but judging from the amount of hardship inflicted on the old-age pensioners by the delayed payment by the post office over the Easter weekend, there are many stories and scandals lurking within the shadows of the "Parish" walls. There are enough ornaments on the Isle already without adding the "Pump".

CONSERVATION, HOW ARE YOU!

If to Bruges or to Brussels you go,
You won't see either Kemmy or Crowe,
For these perquisites grand,
Are reserved, understand,
For the "Yes-men", or didn't you know?

GET THE
LIMERICK SOCIALIST
EVERY MONTH



THE CARNEGIE LIBRARY

Due to the benevolence of Andrew Carnegie, the Scottish millionaire philanthropist, a Carnegie Free Library was established in the city. Other Carnegie Libraries were also set up in many cities and towns throughout the country. The library building was sited in Pery Square. With indecent haste the name of the library was changed to Limerick Free Library. The only part of the library open to the public was a small reading room in which the literate poor could read the daily papers and secure refuge in the warmth of the room from the freezing temperatures in winter. A corridor flanked by a counter was presided over by the Librarian and Assistant Librarian. In winter the library was a dark, dismal gas-lit ghetto of dog-eared volumes. In summer the place was almost deserted. Books could only be borrowed by first perusing a catalogue and then giving the title and number of the selected volume as well as a brass plate with the borrower's number. The borrower was then closely questioned or grilled in order to establish his *bona fides*.

Some of the books dated back to 1836 and earlier. Included in the stock were a half dozen Irish-English dictionaries and Bedel's Bible in Irish (1827). The tenor of many of the books extolled the gloom and horror of the dead past.

The Origin and Use of the Round Towers by George Petrie (1847), Vol. No. 2654, sought to prove a Christian origin for those graceful spires. He claimed that the round towers were belfries in an age when bell founders did not exist, and the only "bells" extant were four scraps of bronze tied together with leather bootlaces. His views were palatable, acceptable and propagated by a grateful clergy. Her majesty Queen Victoria graciously created him Sir George for his wondrous perspicuity. The clergy of all denominations sang his praises while the laity intoned *Deo Gratias*.

The Towers and Temples of Ancient Ireland by Marcus Keane (1867), Vol. No. 4780, claimed that those erect conical-capped towers were pre-Christian temples of phallic worship or the joyous veneration of the penis, near some of which were later built the crude fortress-like early Christian churches in an attempt to usurp and acquire the venerability accorded to those temples dedicated to the oldest of all religions or cults.

The Congregated Trades sent two men who, with the President and Secretary of the Pork Butchers' Society, gave their honest labour in the furtherance of literary endeavour. The Town Clerk, the Secretary of the Library Committee and the Hon. Treasurer, helped by the City Librarian, with the assistance of the Assistant Librarian, made this Library Committee a formidable barrier to progressive thought and inspired writing.

Because of the fame of Gerald Griffin as a playwright and author and Aubrey de Vere of Currachase as a poet, it was felt that the city might possess some rare literary talent which, if discovered, could be developed into the creation of literary masterpiece, to enhance the fame of the city. To this end the Catholic Literary Institute was founded.

The common workman who worked for twelve or more hours each day had little time or energy for literary pursuits. The Bard Of Thomond, Michael Hogan, got no grace or papal blessing from that literary institute, with its thousand volume library of dogma and doggerel.

THE WHIT SUNDAY (1915) MARCH

On the Whit Sunday of 1915, an excursion train arrived from Dublin. It carried the usual holiday crowd whose journey

The Fourth Siege of Limerick

was made easier by the fact that the return fare was but five shillings. Over three hundred Volunteers arrived on that train. They were joined at the railway station by a local company. In all there were nearly five hundred men on parade. They were led by Mr. Patrick Pearse B.L. They marched through the Georgian part of the city without incident.

Having crossed over Thomond Bridge, the parade passed by King John's Castle where British soldiers on the ramparts watched their progress with interest. They were now entering the historic part of the ancient city — The Englishtown. From the Castle onwards and over Baal's Bridge into the Irishtown, the parade was greeted with evidence of hostility.

In that age, parochial hostility towards strangers from the next parish was commonplace all over the country and was particularly strong in country towns, where all strangers from Limerick or other cities were regarded as City slickers. Dubliners were regarded with particular prejudice and suspicion.

Amid growing hostility the Volunteers marched uphill through the Irishtown and Mungret St. Here then was a parade of Dubliners marching like conquerors through the most historic part of "An ancient city studied in the arts of war". Their presence was as offensive as the memory of the Williamite army marching through the city after the siege of 1691, two hundred years earlier. Little as the citizens cared for the presence of the British, they cared less for an armed band of Dubliners swaggering through their city. They could not tolerate the presence of this army of men whose activities could only lead to bloodshed and the loss of innocent lives by violence. As the leader of the parade, Mr. Patrick Pearse, B.L., was a lawyer, the citizens regarded the parade as a deliberate provocation to a breach of the peace by violence.

Angry men and women came swarming from the houses by the city walls, from John's Gate, Garryowen, Palmerstown and Watergate, and converged on the route to the railway terminal. The pressure of the surrounding crowds closing in on the Volunteers forced them closer together and open violence broke out against them. By the time they reached the railway station, they were being attacked along the route by many hundreds of angry citizens. Their ranks were broken and scattered. With the greatest difficulty they reached the security of the railway. In their efforts to get into the station they received great help from the railway porters and staff who formed a cordon around the iron gate into the forecourt. One Volunteer mounted a jarvey car and, like a charioteer, attempted to run down the crowds with the car. He used the jarvey's whip right and left, but the horse was held and he was pulled to the ground. A few Volunteers fired some shots in the air and one was seen taking aim, but the gun was knocked from his hands and broken in pieces. Many wooden guns and real ones were likewise broken. The shots attracted and compelled the attention of the R.I.C. who arrived in large numbers and prevented the crowds from swarming over the iron railings or forcing the gates into the forecourt. The crowds were dispersed and the excursion train returned to Dublin. Any story that over a thousand men marched in that parade is absurd, as such a large number of men could ably defend themselves against any aggression.

(To be continued).