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**THE
VOICE
OF THE
WORKER**

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



THE BOTTOM DOG AIMS HIGH



THE PARK DANES



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Literature and Politics

It is often said that literature is a very personal matter. Generally the people who say this are timid types and cannot see that what they write could be of public interest. To say that literature is personal is only to excuse one's own hesitancy not to generalise about all literature. It is a wonder that people will use words and then say that they write for themselves. Surely communication is at the centre of any use of words, oral or written.

For a socialist, the nature of this communication poses problems. If he is what C. Wright Mills calls a Vulgar Marxist, he will single out, as a reader, only those works which have influenced society politically, or those which make a concerned attempt. Or he may consider that anything written before Marx was prehistoric and see literature as beginning with Dickens and Zola. The busier socialist, working with his people, may possibly ignore this question altogether.

But the aspirations of socialism are for more than bread and butter. In the socialist society bread and butter would be taken for granted or assured. If we concern ourselves with freedom and creativity, we must recognise that the artistic concern for order and perfection will play a part in the future as it has in the past.

The brutal demand made by early socialists — that literature advance the revolution of the proletariat — must be re-evaluated or else practised, whichever way you understand the dictum. If one takes the examples of Proust and Joyce, two writers who abhorred didacticism and who were indifferent to the "public world", one will recognise that writing which is not politically motivated one way or the other can be of immense political and social significance. Literature which probes deep into the consciousness of a generation or a people, exposing the multiplicity of hidden meanings beneath simplistic slogans and pretended beliefs, is often the most dangerous to an order, the most subversive. What written records of past societies exist that are more informative, more detailed than those provided by literature? Imagine the joy of an archaeologist if he were to find a manuscript from 14th century Ireland written in the style of James Joyce's *Ulysses*.

It is rash to demand that traditional writers share all your concerns. If you cast off every work that does not tackle social concerns as you understand them, you will be left with few tomes on your shelves. This letter is an attempt to persuade you to keep them.

In today's society, where material values have greatly replaced spiritual ones, the most subversive art form may be that which re-asserts the spiritual dignity of man. I use the word spiritual in a secular, humanist sense. Think of *Emma Bovary*, *Hedda Gabler*, *Anna Karenina*, three towering figures who defied the timidity and compromise of normal living. Their values, extreme and temperamental, if only on paper, were a grave affront to the societies of their time. When people object to such figures on a moral basis, it is not because they are offended by the example of sin and immorality, but because a system of values has been presented to them which is different to their own. It is fine if a person sins and calls it a sin, but when he says to the people that what he has done is not a sin at all he must be silenced or dealt with somehow.

George Bernard Shaw baptised himself as a writer who was deeply committed to social reform, and, sure enough, he meant well. But when Shaw presented prostitution to his audience in *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, the theme was clothed in the traditional decency of the English stage. Shaw was not a revolutionary because he thought that the old gentlemanly virtues of decency and commonsense could suffice to change

society. Shaw gives us new images and new people, but nowhere does he suggest new values. His characters are no more eccentric than any we have known. Shaw, in his book on Ibsen, made the mistake of thinking that Ibsen abhorred *Hedda Gabler* as much as he did. He called her an idealistic, aristocratic young woman who killed herself out of cowardice. Ironically enough, Shaw visited a cinema later in his life and was shocked by the "pornography" portrayed there and excused his plays by saying that they were never as bad as that. Bernard Shaw subverted perhaps taste, perhaps custom, but not values.

Herbert Marcuse has said that artistic culture as a whole can be seen as evidence of alienation. Even the towering Gothic cathedral attests to a desire on the part of the designed to escape or deny the little lives that move about beneath it. However, with Keronac, Sarte and Eliot in this century the word alienation has taken on a more self-conscious thrust. The writers see that ordered society is impoverished, materialistic, sick, and their writings variously protest against it. But in this area we have the most powerful voices attacking society becoming just as powerless to change anything. And this is not for want of being read! Sarte, who called every Frenchman a "salaud" (bastard), was offered the Legion of Honour and a position in the Academic Francaise but refused both distinctions. How many copies of *Nausea* are to be found in the parlours of the French bourgeoisie?

This lamentable situation shows how modern society can absorb almost any form of revolt, but especially literary revolt. The reasons for this are vast but it seems that when there are no fixed moralities in a society then it becomes difficult to attack its values. Also, by mass production of the images of revolt you institutionalise it. This is a huge question which Marcuse has magnificently elucidated in *One Dimensional Man*.

If there are any creative writers among my readers who consider themselves socialists one could say to them that their artistic responsibility is firstly to themselves and then to the lives of others. This is not to say that other people are not important, but that all the artist can know is his own experience. By expressing your own concerns in your works, you allow other people an opportunity to express themselves. The novel or the poem for the reader is like a musical script. The reader plays the score; he gives it meaning in terms of himself; the work becomes alive to him as an expression of himself, the reader, not as an expression of the artist. When you read a love poem and enjoy it, it is your experience of love that informs and fills the words, not the artist's love. Thus the artist, by speaking of his own world, gives the reader a grid or a framework of words which he fills from his experience. For the reader, the artist does not exist; he has vanished, and he re-makes the work every time he reads.

By this one wishes to express some doubts about those bourgeois writers who feel guilty because they were not born into the working class. The proletariat has a lot of time to make up for and a long way to go to gain its rightful place in society. But human consciousness has a validity of its own; it suffers, often in private, and has a right to speak in its own voice. If the most profound event in your life is the death of your mother or the loss of a love, then that is what you must speak of, not the return of Fianna Fail to office, not the Russian revolution, not the survival of capitalism. Political questions are important, the most important in society, but there must always be a place for personal and intellectual freedom in all societies, including socialist ones.

EAMONN O'BRIEN.

THE BLOOD BANK

The National Blood Transfusion Board, Pelican House, 52 Lower Leeson Street, Dublin 2, incorporating the Cork Blood Transfusion Service, 21 Leitrim Street, now controls all blood transfusions in 24 of the Twenty-six Counties. The remaining two, Limerick and Clare, combined, still continue under the aegis of the Limerick Blood Bank, which is run as a private concern by Doctor Dan Kelleher, in a suite of rooms, forming part of St. John's Hospital.

Again, this year, the venture has proved an outstanding success in the blood business, yielding a net profit of upwards of £20,000 for the doc., while his wife, Doctor Sheila Moriarty, draws a big salary at Barrington's Hospital at the same time.

A decade ago, as the result of a survey in these pages, a local scandal was exposed concerning the goings on in the Limerick Blood Bank: Donor Attendants were being paid the miserable sum of £8 a week, plus £3 overtime whenever they travelled to Kilrush, in West Clare, returning round one o'clock the following morning.

The lady technician, who was also co-founder with the late Dr. Honan of the "Bank" in the 'thirties, had the misfortune to break her hip some few years back, and as the direct result spent several months in Croom Hospital, was told on reporting for duty (part-time) that her services were no longer required, notwithstanding the accident took place during working hours.

Further, she was given dismissal notice, and did not receive as much as one penny reward or even pension for long and devoted service.

When this woman mentioned her plight, being a widow, she was told by the doctor she hadn't a leg to stand on (no pun), but should she be willing to avoid the vexed ques-

The third figure that stood before me was that of St. John the Evangelist. He stood erect at the Gospel side of the altar, and at an angle with the figure of the Blessed Virgin, so that his back was not turned to the altar nor to the Mother of God. His right arm was at an angle with a line drawn across from St. Joseph to where Our Blessed Lady appeared to be standing. St. John was dressed like a bishop preaching. He wore a small mitre on his head; he held a Mass Book, or a Book of Gospels, in his left hand; the right hand was raised to the elevation of the head; while he kept the index finger and the middle finger of the righthand raised, the other three fingers of the same hand were shut; he appeared as if he were preaching, but I heard no voice; I came so near that I looked into the book; I saw the lines and the letters. St. John wore no sandals; his left hand was turned towards the altar that was behind him; the altar was a plain one like any ordinary altar; without any ornaments. On the altar stood a lamb, the size of a lamb eight weeks old - the face of the lamb was fronting the west and looking in the direction of the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph; behind the lamb a large cross was placed erect or perpendicular on the altar; around the lamb I saw angels hovering during the whole time for the space of one hour and a half or longer; I saw their wings fluttering but I did not perceive their heads or faces, which were not turned towards me. For the space of an hour and a half we were under the pouring rain; at this time I was very wet, I noticed that the rain did not wet the figures which appeared before me, although I was very wet myself. I went away then.

Is it a mere coincidence that the testimony of the youngest witness, Hill, was the most complete evidence given to the commission?

(To be continued)

tion of the Workman's Compensation Act (of which she wasn't aware), he promised to pay her the sum of £500 in final settlement.

To this she agreed. (Like the story of the gold medal which Dr. Kelleher promised W.W. Gleeson, when he donated his one hundredth pint of blood on October 1, 1968, she is still waiting, and will continue waiting, like Mrs. Heman's boy hero, Casabianca, in the school story book!).

Now, it may not be generally known, that donors registered with the National Blood Transfusion Board headquarters, Dublin and who may not have donated more than one pint will, if still on the list, receive all the blood if needs be, while a patient in any hospital; it also applies to the husband's wife and children, as the case may be, though, at the same time, not necessarily donors.

In Limerick, much to the loss of the donor, things are very much different; in fact, the opposite is the case.

For example, a man or woman, should he or she be a voluntary donor, is rushed to hospital and, pending an operation, needs blood. For every pint infused the recipient will pay dearly through the nose - or rather, through the pocket.

Hereunder is a brief list of people who have been "bled":

- Frank, an old-age pensioner, two pints, £20.
- Jack, also a pensioner, two pints, £30.
- David (donor of 53 pints), two pints, £30.
- Mrs. McG., three pints, £39.
- Mrs. R., two pints, £40.
- Jimmy, old-age pensioner, two pints, £20.
- Willie (donor of 116 pints), no blood given; at the same time charged £24.01 by Doctor Dan for having his blood matched.

Then there was the case of the County Limerick clergyman who was almost bled white as the result of hospital and blood charges. He is out of danger, but now very much in the red.

Finally, Mrs. R. from Tipperary, who smiled as she said: "I can tell you Limerick people that having babies is a costly item nowadays. My 8 lbs. 2 ozs. baby was well worth all I had to go through even though the transfusion cost me a small fortune!"

Now, the crucial test has come. Will those good-natured people who, over the years, have been regularly donating their blood voluntarily (not seeking any monetary reward), rouse themselves from their slumbers and call a halt to the exploitation of their generous offerings by a doctor whose income annually is believed to be in the region of £20,000 (if reports be correct?).

When will the Departments of Health and Social Welfare put a stop to this activity?

Will the T.D.s and M.E.P.s call for rationalisation at the earliest possible moment?

Now is the time to act!

Last month's poems

The three poems published in our June edition were written by Paul Durcan, whose name was inadvertently omitted during printing.

Up and down the Irishtown

PART FIVE

UNCLE BOBBY

LIFE was great sport then, only for Sunday. There was nothing to do on that ageless day - no money and no movies. Limerick, the last civilized town in Ireland to please picturegoers, its roads full of potholes, the streets bare and empty and stinking dumps proclaiming countless houses without simple sanitation. . . The spalps hanging about outside Collins' pub waiting to be hired, farm labourers of no fixed abode, proteges of poverty, here today, gone tomorrow; ten, fifteen, twenty of them, none wearing a stitch of clothing acceptable in any one of the three Irishtown pawnoffices - this was the dreary Sunday scene in the Limerick of our street.

Blessed was the spalp with a jaw-warmer alight. The transaction seldom varied. A pony and trap would clatter noisily on the cobblestones shattering the Sabbath silence before pulling up at the kerb. The bulky, red-faced farmer, having surveyed the lot, would call over one of farm labourers and the questions would start. After a bout of haggling and bickering, the farmer would reject or accept as he saw fit - often the hiring hinged on whether the spalp choose to sleep in a byre or barn.

The faces were familiar. Year after year the labourers came to be jobbed in the Irishtown and never seemed to rise a penny above a beggar.

About this time a series of suicides caught the attention of the British public. The suicides, it was claimed, followed the publication of this poem in a Sunday newspaper:

Gloomy Sunday, rain coming down,
On silent street in this strange town.
Nothing to do, nothing to see,
Nowhere to go - what's life to me?

My mother dead, my father wed.
No love to warm my life, my bed.
No friend, no home, no hope I see.
Gloomy Sunday - what's death to me?

If a man hadn't drink to ease his mind, there was plenty of religion for the taking but the Irish suicide rate never climbed high enough to upset pulpit or platform.

Then there were the hospital-goers, Sunday dressed, boots blackened, faces Sunlight soap shining, little newspaper-wrapped parcels tucked under their wings or dangling from thick brown string.

How's himself today, Janey?

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Name.....
Address.....

by John Bennis

I'm only going over now, that's why I dropped into you.
Could you spare the loan of your shawl?

I hope and trust in God, Janey, ye find him better.

With the help of God and His Blessed Mother, Mrs. Mack.

Several hours later Janey returned.

Well Janey, how d'ye find him?

Yerra, only poorly. He's very down in himself today.

Wisha, God spoke first. 'Twont be long and he'll be out and about, but tell me what did they do for him?

They stuck hot plates up to his side where he had the pain and the pain is worse now.

The hot plates is good, Janey. D'you know, some doctors do be sayin now that this pendix thing should be cut out altogether.

Ah, for heaven's sake, don't I know it. Some of them doctors are worse than bloody porkbutchers; all they think about is the knife.

'Tis true for you, but what did they do for his poor eyes?

There's a great improvement. All the blotchy stuff is gone. The nurse told me they used the leeches; one of them, she said, went into his right eye, but not to mind, he'll come out again.

Ah, sure I wouldn't mind a little thing like that. Oh God, Janey, I never noticed till now: you're expecting again. When?

In the New Year, please God.

Well now, isn't that grand. Sure God never shut one door but he opened another.

God bless you Mrs. Mack for sayin that. 'Tis yourself . . . always the good word.

Sunday came round again. Mother urged: "Hurry up and eat your dinner or we'll be late for the hospital".

"The hospital, Mother? Who's sick?"

"Your Uncle Bobby. Hurry up can't you".

I wasn't pleased. I didn't want to go. I hated hospitals. I was afraid of my memories of them. Going home from the convent school one day a boy pushed me under a carriage. The wheel went over my leg. The carriage took me to Barrington's Hospital. Doctor Dundon said: "What's he bawling for? There's shag-all wrong with his leg".

Getting out of the Sally Grove another day in a hurry, with Hawky Redeye after me, I stood on a broken bottle. I ran all the way from the canal to Barrington's, where I sat on a long bench with a high top, waiting. My toes became hot and sticky with the pumping blood. The toes of my good leg felt cold on the stone flags. The surgery door opened and a strong rush of ether suffused my nostrils. That was enough. I turned tail and ran home.

And there was the time Peter Fitzgerald kicked me in the forehead, right in the middle between the eyes. He couldn't help it. He was standing on his hands against O'Loughlin's garden wall. A horseshoe nail fell out of his pocket. The nail was destined for a new life, for a horseshoe nail made a fine dart when stuck through a cork and three feathers. The feathers helped the dart to go straight to the bullseye.



CAMPBELL'S BOW

I stooped to pick up the horseshoe nail. Peter Fitz's boot came down; it had an iron tip on the heel. After the impact of the tip on my forehead, I was wearing an "All-Ireland Cap" and going regularly to St. John's Hospital. The second day I took the bandage off myself as I waited outside the surgery. Sister Ackwell would have it off scab and all. Pain inflicted by myself was the lesser of the two pains.

Then there was that trick I had been doing hanging from the garden wall by my heels. The trick didn't work and I fell on my face. Mother took me to the hospital. She made Sister Ackwell laugh: "His beauty is spoilt. No-one but his mother would love him now!"

Ever afterwards I hated and feared hospitals. But there was no stopping Mother. She had the kitchen door open and her shawl wrapped around herself ready for takeoff. She muttered to herself: "The ware will have to wait till I get back". She made off out the door in a tearing hurry, giving me all I could do to keep up with her. She swept along, fecking the fellas at the corner. They'll make a stone feck of me now, I silently moaned to myself. Mother raced on through Watergate and Denmark Street and across to Tyler's. "North, south, east and west, Tyler's boots are the best" — no time for that nonsense now. I wanted to stop and look at the boats tied up at Honan's Quay but Mother said: "You're daft. Come on, hurry up or we'll be late."

The big wooden gates hung wide open. People poured into the Poorhouse grounds, mostly women wearing shawls. There was no laughing or coddling the same as there was going into the Market's Field to see a rugby match. Mother said: "Hang on to me shawl". We went in

through a narrow doorway in a crush of bodies coming out. "Stand here now till I look around," she commanded, her eyes sweeping the ward. "Ah, there he is. Come on over here."

It was the House of Doom all right, crowded, noisy, smoky, smelly and gloomy. Uncle Bobby sat up in bed and looked towards the door. He was nothing but a fist of bones. A pair of big brown eyes stared out from a long hollow face. I liked Bobby. He always gave me a "wing" when he came to our house. Once he had a bag and he turned it upside down and a big fish fell out on the floor. It was a salmon, the first salmon I ever saw.

But now Uncle Bobby looked sad and old. With a great effort he poured milk from an enamel jug into an enamel mug. Mother handed the mug to me. "Drink it up love; 'tisent every day you get milk to drink." It wasn't easy to drink the milk. The man in the next bed was hawking his throat and spitting into his mug.

I asked Mother what was wrong with Bobby: "What ailes him?" "Hush child, his throat is sick". Some one slipped him a little bottle of whiskey but he could barely sip the drink. His clay pipe was filled and lit. Bobby refused that too, but smiled weakly when it was puffed and the smoke blown into his face.

Everybody was talking at the same time, telling him, he looked fine. The fishing season was only just around the corner and 'twouldn't be long now and he'd be back on the Shannon in his brucaun with his Abbey fishermen friends. But Bobby was beyond all efforts to cheer him up and would never fish again.

Mother cried all the way home.
(To be continued).

'NEW SOCIETY'S' LIMERICK

LIMERICK GETS UP OFF ITS KNEES

Tom Forester

"That was fantastic, you were really great," said the young priest with an Irish lilt. "And now, let's all sing hymn No. 22 in your book, *Walk in the light*." The organ strikes up, and the packed, sweaty congregation of 2,500 in the cavernous Redemptorist church, Limerick, on the west coast of Ireland, join together and sing a jaunty little number that could have come out of the charts.

Young blokes just off motor bikes, housewives fresh from the sink, and working men in working clothes, crowd the aisle for the ritual of benediction, prayers and heart-rending petitions from those with problems in the family (usually drinking). At the sides of the church, the confession boxes are doing a roaring trade as their red lights flash on and off. ("Don't worry, the priests have got their aftershave on tonight.") For those who arrived late, there is a marquee outside—also packed—which takes 2,000 and more "confession boxes"—a row of brand-new Sprite caravans.

It is a balmy Wednesday night in June, in this smallish grey city of 65,000 astride the Shannon, traditionally the most religious in Ireland. There are no less than twelve services a day during the "Solemn Novena," which comprises nine days of continuous adoration and devotion to Our Holy Mother of Perpetual Succour. Between 25,000 and 40,000 people attended each day this year, a new record and an astonishing turnout for a relatively new event. Father Vincent Kavanagh, the organiser of the Novena, is well pleased with the attendance. Forty thousand a day compares very favourably, someone points out, with the 70,000 who attend the biggest event in the Irish calendar, the All-Ireland Hurling Championships in Dublin.

There are two theories about the Limerick Novena. One—the gospel according to the church and reflected in the Irish mid-west press—is that the popularity of the Novena demonstrates the enduring strength of Catholicism and its uncanny ability to adapt to modern conditions. Indeed, it may indicate a turning back to the church by a people bewildered by social change—change which has been especially rapid in the previously isolated Limerick-Shannon area where modernisation in the form of new industries, new suburbs and "New Money" has descended almost as swiftly as the hordes of American tourists who descend into Shannon airport.

The other theory is that the popularity of the Novena, stimulated by advertisements and even car bumper stickers, stems precisely from the fact that it has become a pop "event": the services are short and the sermons are fairly lightweight, even banal. People go there to be seen. The Novena is popular with the tourists.

The Novena therefore marks a desperate attempt by the church to keep hold of the younger generation tasting the fruits of Ireland's new affluence.

But the church has had to change in Limerick, as in the rest of Ireland, to meet the rapidly changing economic structure and the startling manner in which Ireland has opened itself up to the rest of the world in the past two decades. Television only arrived in Ireland in 1961. Just over 20 years ago, in 1957, the Irish abandoned the go-it-alone industrial policy of De Valera, and gradually opened her borders to free trade. This really started the modernisation process, a process accelerated later by the Anglo-Irish Free Trade Agreement of 1965, EEC membership in 1973, and culminating in the final abolition of all tariffs last year.

Church-dominated Limerick was right in the firing line. Nearby Shannon, already an international stop-over airport, was earmarked for major industrial development and it also became Ireland's first New Town in the early 1960s. Limerick itself, focal point of the mid-west region, was marked down for expansion, and the Dublin government decided to put the new technology-orientated National Institute of Higher Education there in 1972. All kinds of social and cultural changes followed from these changes in the economic base—not least of all, the foundation of the first family planning clinic in the area in 1975 and the opening of a pirate pop-radio station, Big L.

Yet for centuries, Limerick had been a depressed area. The Great Famine of 1846-47 produced a great wave of emigration from its hinterland. The emigrant trade, built on the continuing rural wretchedness and impoverishment of the rural peasants, grew still further in the 1850s. With it grew a local middle class who established opera houses and a tennis club. The Limerick Harbour Commissioners were the local power elite. These few cared little for the many who, like the victims of the County Clare evictions of 1888, faced the choice of emigration or the workhouse.

The Labour movement began to organise around the turn of the century. There was a flourishing of socialist literary and industrial activity, leading to the Limerick soviet which even ran the town for two weeks during 1919.

But the old food-processing and textile industries were in decline. The canal became derelict. The fishing industry died. Despite the temporary uplift provided by the construction of the Ardnacrusha power station just upstream from Limerick in 1928-29, the town's population fell to a new low of 40,000 by 1930.

Today, Limerick is a city of zones. The old city has become an inner city, marked by crumbling Georgian houses, collapsed cottages, derelict plots, rubbish and litter—lots of it.

At the poshest, Castletroy—where Dieter Herema of the Dutch firm, Ferenka, was kidnapped by the IRA in 1975—new "Georgian" detached houses march across

the green fields. (De Valera once suggested that all Georgian houses in Ireland should be torn down: they were a reminder of British rule.) Cratloe, Caherdavin and Castelconnel are also part of the emerging middle class suburban Ireland. They could be Ruislip or Pinner in Betjeman's Middlesex Metroland, with their new nightspots for the young middle class like Panches, Durty Nelly's and Poldark's discotheque. I suppose today you would call them Toyotaland.

Much of Limerick's money comes from the surrounding countryside, where you can see the new agricultural wealth erupting, mainly in the form of hideous and vulgar new bungaloid farmhouses.

16 per cent of Ireland's surface area is bog. In Ireland they not only have bogs in the lowland areas, they have bogs on the hilltops too. 25 per cent of Ireland's electricity comes from peat-powered power stations.

But that is about the only use for bogs, so they are being drained. Everywhere, generous EEC grants are being used to reclaim land—not just bogland, but also the scrubby gorse, which forms a natural washing line for Ireland's many travelling people. Everywhere, new agricultural buildings are going up—and near the towns, out-of-town supermarkets, even new churches, and new car washes for the many new Renaults and Mazdas that flash down the country lanes. Most astonishing of all are the bungalows, with their gaudy coloured bricks and white Spanish arches, often slap bang alongside the old ruined thatched (or more likely, corrugated iron) cottage.

The nouveaux-riches farmers of Counties Clare, Limerick and Tipperary come into Limerick clutching rolls of punt (pound) notes, to see their bank managers, consult their investment analysts and book their Mexican holidays. This is happening all over Ireland, and it has created enormous tensions. For few farmers pay any tax: only 27,000 out of 170,000 are liable to tax at all, and in 1978 they paid a total of only £8 million, compared with the £524 million contributed by PAYE payers. A modest 2 per cent levy proposed in this year's budget produced an outburst from the farmers, and an even bigger spontaneous outburst—like an instant demo of 150,000—from PAYE people in Dublin. (Irish tax rates are fearsome. Their poverty trap makes ours seem like a great opportunity.)

So the farmers are doing exceptionally well—and you could say "About time, too." Incomes were up 18 per cent in 1978 alone. Productivity increases have been phenomenal since EEC entry in 1973, and there are plenty of loans and grants around for further investment. The potential of Irish agriculture is enormous, with so much wasted land. This reinforces the sense in which Ireland is an under-developed country.

FACTS OF HISTORY

Catholic nationalist propagandists have always maintained that the Northern Ireland state is by its very nature sectarian, and that the Unionist ruling class have waged an unremitting campaign to divide the working class in the north by fostering every sectarian prejudice in the community.

But in the early years of the Northern Ireland state the Unionist ruling class made quite an effort to integrate the Catholic community into the state since they understood, as any intelligent ruling class would, that the stability of the state would be constantly threatened by a disaffected and hostile national minority.

The most obvious way in which the process of integration could be started was in education, and it was here that they concentrated their efforts. In March 1923 a Bill was presented in Stormont which would have had the effect of creating a completely secular education system under popular control. Schools were to be run by education committees made up of former managers, teachers and parents' representatives — and they were to be completely free of all forms of religious control.

A second category, "transferred" schools, would include all former denominational schools which would come under the control of education committees but whose former managers would still retain some influence. Religion was to be excluded from the curriculum during school hours, but clergymen had the right to give religious instruction after school hours. A third category, the "voluntary" schools, described those which did not transfer and which therefore were not entitled to state aid. Later it was agreed that half their expenses should be met — and from this most Catholic schools benefitted, even though they were still privately owned and run.

The Irish National Teachers Organisation hailed the Bill as the most progressive educational development in Europe. However, although the Bill became law it was never really put into practice. Why?

Initially, much of the reaction from the Catholic community, as expressed in the *Irish News*, and by the Catholic teachers, was a very guarded welcome. They hoped that they would not have to transfer, but would still receive state aid; that they later achieved this and still withheld recognition of the state gives the lie to the statement that the Unionists were motivated only by pure bigotry in their treatment of the minority.

On the Protestant side there was grumbling at the lack of Bible instruction in the proposed state schools — but a suggestion that it be introduced was turned down by the government, and the Bill duly became law in June 1923.

However, then came the broadside from the Catholic Hierarchy. In the course of a long statement in which they attacked the drawing of the border and disputed the right of the Northern Ireland state to exist they announced that they would refuse to employ any teacher trained in Stranmillis, the state teacher training college, thus effectively sabotaging the whole purpose of the Act, which was to produce a secularist form of education.

But the most significant thing about the statement of the Catholic Hierarchy was the use they made of the education issue in the general anti-partitionist agitation. They did not oppose the Act on simple Catholic grounds, i.e. that they did not wish to transfer because of the existence of purely secular education, but that they did not recognise the authority of the state in which they found themselves.

The result of this total refusal was that agitation was started by the Protestant churches to get bible instruction introduced into the schools — but the government did not finally relent until 1930 when a Bill was passed allowing Bible instruction in the schools. But it is undoubtedly true that the whole impetus for the scrapping of the universal non-denominational education system under public control sprang from the totally undemocratic attitude of the Catholic hierarchy, who foisted on their own laity a system of segregated education which has failed spectacularly to bridge

the division between the two communities in Northern Ireland.

FOOTNOTE: In recent years the debate on integrated education has started anew. In a debate with the Alliance Party, which is advocating its introduction, Canon Murphy, a prominent Catholic priest, denied that segregated education has contributed to the widening division and asserted that people who demanded integrated education were simply the tools, unwilling or otherwise, of Orange bigotry. The more things change, the more they remain the same.

(Reprinted from the "Two Nations")

THE BOTTOM DOG AIMS HIGH

The "Bottom Dog", the Limerick labour paper, published in the 1917-'18 period, was a lively, well edited journal, especially notable for its sharp sense of humour. The little "Dog" never took itself so seriously that it could not afford to poke fun at even some of its own doings.

When another paper of a mixed Trotskyist/Provo pedigree, also calling itself the Bottom Dog, appeared on the local political scene a few years ago, some people wondered how the new publication would shape up. Alas, apart from the title, there was little else to compare in the two papers. The political line of the new "Dog" was predictably narrow, sectarian and confused; the writing was sloppy; the editing was badly done, and, hardly surprisingly, there was no humour anywhere in its pages.

As the saying goes: it's hard to teach old tricks to a new dog. But, in its edition of September 9, a rare piece of unconscious humour climbed into the paper's columns. Indeed, it could well be said that the new "Dog" is aiming high in setting its political sights on the heights of the Galtee mountains. Perhaps the paper was trying to emulate the expansionist policies of the Provos when it set out to bring Trotsky to the Limerick peasants. The article stated:

- Go climb a mountain. !

The Bottom Dog is organising a climb of Galtymore Mountain in Co Tipperary (sic) on Sunday Sept 17th. (Galtymore, at 3,018 feet is Ireland's 3rd highest peak) No climbing equipment (except a good pair of boots) or previous experience is needed and there is no more enjoyable and healthy way to spend a day.

Transport to the base of the mountain will leave Limerick at 10am sharp on the Sunday morning. The climb, in easy stages, will take about 3 hours. On the summit tea and sandwiches (sic) will be supplied. We will descend by a different rout (sic) and should be back in Limerick by 6pm.

This historic event must not be allowed to pass unnoticed. Perhaps some of our readers might wish to celebrate the occasion with a suitable prose or poetic piece. We could even be persuaded to publish any interesting or original contributions received.

WHERE ...?

You know you are in Limerick

Because

The women walk straight with crusading long thighs
And besides

The name on the sign that stopped the train
said: 'Limerick'.

Moreover

The tall man hunkered by the fading shoe-shop
Stopped and stopped when you said:

'I did it, sir—wrote the book like I said I would'

'Did it? — good gracious?'

'Yes, sir — an' it's in the bookshops an' all . . . Sir!'

Around him atoms of dust-time haloed the sun

The houses down the lane beside him are gone

And behind him the Shannon gleamed, like

The last spent fish in a river bed

As you always imagined it would

And as he moved, he said:

'I must go in and get my shoes'

So you must be in Limerick.

And you must be in Limerick

Because at the Railway Station in Dublin

With the train sighing to pull-out

A crow perched on a black bag of rubbish

And you thought of the Limerick gossips

Pecking at the residue of other people's lives

So you must be in Limerick now, 'cos

The woman in the shop across the way

From where you grew up

Has flecks of black plastic on her tongue.

The young girls in the street

Have a curve on their faces that remind you

Of the chaps you went to school with

And you know that if you stopped one

To brush the smooth back of your hand

On the curve of her face

To feel your own past, incarnate

She would *not* crush your hand to her wheaten cheek

Say: 'Touch, touch me, friend of my father . . .'

Rather

Do you fear to be arrested and beaten chaste

By stout Confraternity Men

Which means you could well be — or unwell be —
in Limerick.

Or

Maybe you are not in Limerick *at all, at all*

For that tall obelisk in the park

is smaller now, than when you were a boy

So,

It's top careered against the sky

Why try now to work out

If the stout gate-keeper is any rotunder

Than the stumpy trees you were chased from,

With sulphur, saltpeter and charcoal burning

Leaves in the Dark of mouldering trees

(That's all that bombs were made for then).

The hollowed-out man in the cardboard suit

Prods a stick at your primal past

And says as he moves like a clockwork man

On a jangled chain from the drinking-fountain

'Hello Michael, Hiya Anne'

Michael Mary Annie and John

Hobby-horse names in a merry can-can

Jingle the benches in the People's Park

Setting you dizzy as you try to remember

Who played with you around that stone God's finger

All that monument time ago

In—where—

When—

How—

In Limerick?

Kevin O'Connor

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