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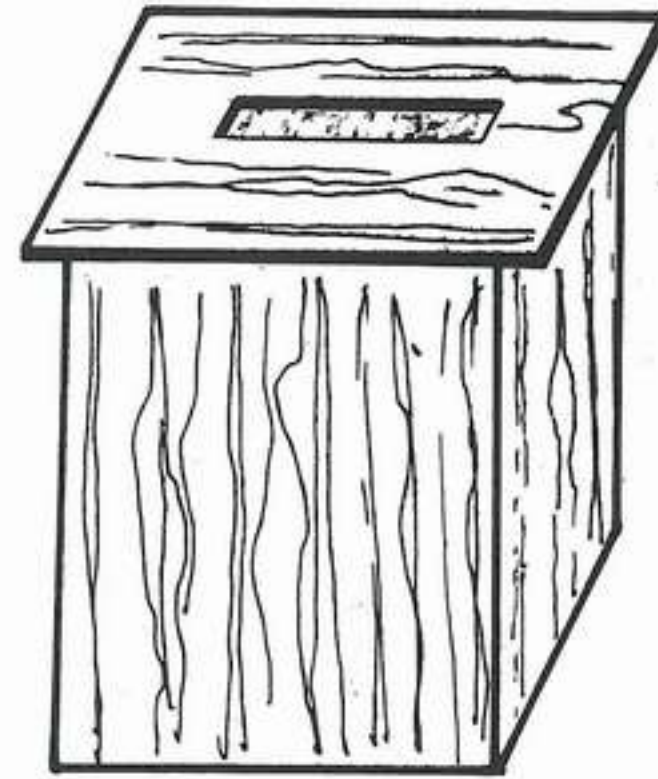
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'That which is good for the working class I esteem patriotic . . . ' James Connolly

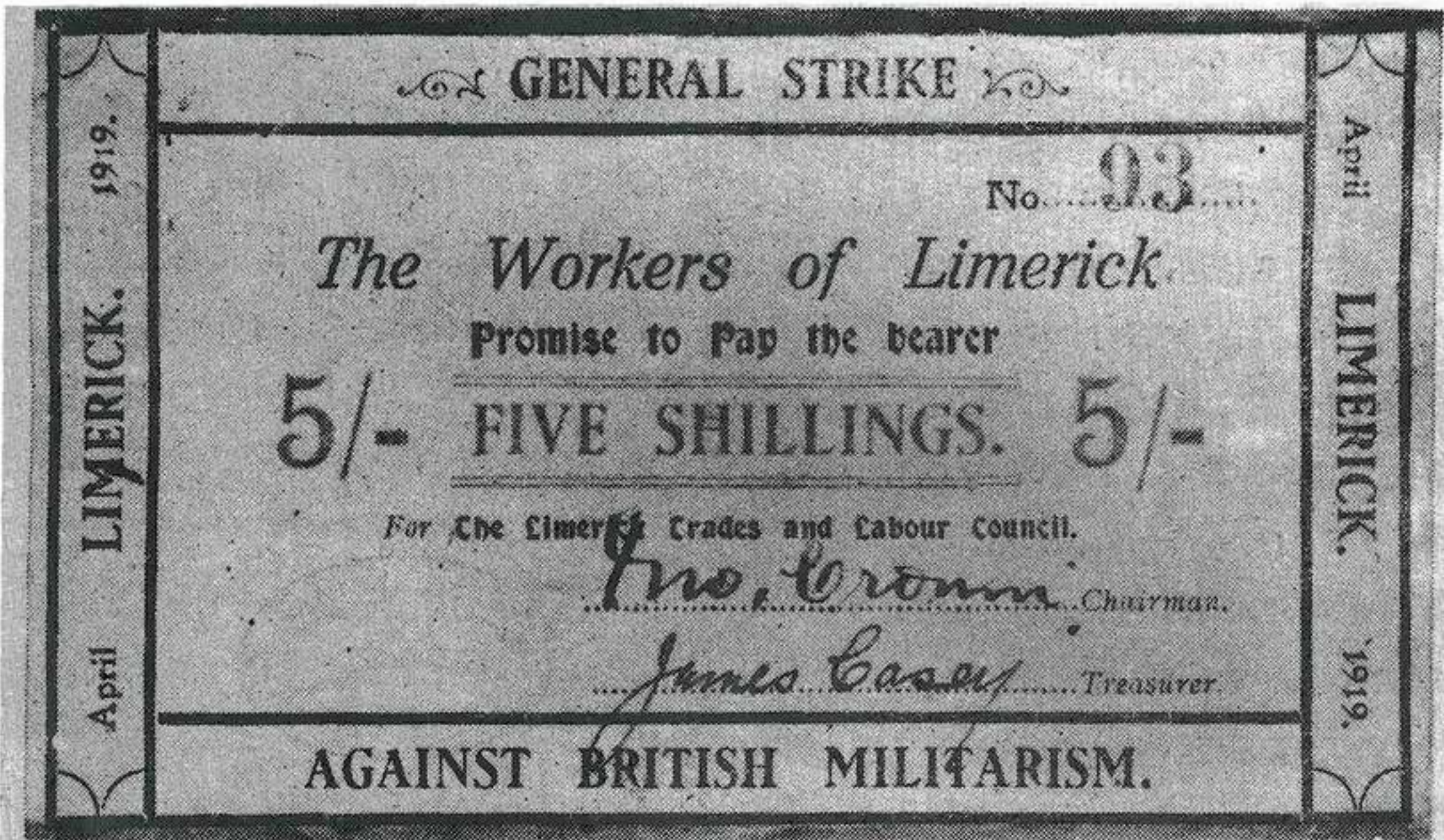
**THE
VOICE
OF THE
WORKER**

THE LOCAL ELECTIONS

JIM KEMMY
Stands on his record



Women and the Limerick Soviet



A DUFFLE-COAT

This is a story of a boy, and a duffle-coat and a Dublin street so impervious to change that in the twenty years since the boy and the duffle-coat found each other the street has hardly changed at all. The boy has long since gone beyond his boyhood and the duffle coat has gone wherever it is that duffle-coats go to when the seams lose their cloth and they become so devoid of wool that they will hardly do as an extra blanket in a severe winter.

Gardiner Street comes down in a stretch from Mountjoy Square and to look at its gap-toothed sweep now is to get a sense of the grandeur it must have had.

A man is standing at the corner of Talbot Street and Gardiner Street and looking up towards Mountjoy Square. He is remembering the boy who came up from the country to work as potboy in one of the hotels not far along on the left.

In the hotel the boy had a room in the basement which must have been like it was when first built, even to the plaster on the thick walls. He had a candle for light and a bed with springs and iron legs and a horsehair mattress. It was explained to him that he would wash-up pots in the kitchen and wash the vegetables for lunch and for dinner; he would rise in time to put on the porridge for the guests for breakfast and having washed pots and vegetables through the meals, would wait in the evenings to open the front door for the guests who were late. He would be paid two pounds and sixteen shillings a week. And of course his food and his iron bed in the basement, the basement with the thick walls. He should regard himself as lucky.

He did. Oh, he did. The man remembers how the boy tucked himself up in his very own bed with the springs and iron legs and looked about at the walls and looked at his candle, before blowing it out. And the man remembers the sense of excitement which the boy had, tucking himself into sleep in his very own bed which he never had before.

The man who owned the hotel had a bad leg. The leg swung around him when he moved so that he lurched out after it, as if it might fall away from under him, Hoppity-hop, thought the boy.

Naturally enough, the boy didn't see much of the street, what with being on call twenty hours a day. For that reason and from working in confined proximity to it he had a more profound sense of the street than most of those who went up and down it many times a week. His sense of the street became enhanced on the times he would stand on the flagged top of the steps at the hotel entrance and look up its length. The square at the top was with trees. That is one of the sensations the man retains of the boy—the boy looking up the length of street, towards where the square was with trees.

The owner of the hotel did not like to find the boy on the flagged top of the steps, looking up the street. He would call him indoors if seeing the figure of the boy through the glass door which had diagonally on it, in script, the name of the hotel and also diagonally a metal bar across the door, below the script. To call him in, Hoppity-hop would rap once, sharply on the glass. The boy would turn and seeing the owner's face behind the script would continue in the direction of which his gently startled face had turned at the rap. As he entered, Hoppity-hop would open the door for him by the brass handle, as if the boy were a guest. Among the boy's jobs during the day was to keep smoothly polished the brass handle which the owner now smudged in the act of holding open the door for the boy. Once inside the glass door, and as he made his way downstairs, the boy would hear rasped in his ear a number of tasks requiring immediate acquittal.

by KEVIN O'CONNOR

Downstairs was where he lived, or, more correctly, slept. Mostly he slept about four hours, from three after midnight until seven in the morning. Why from three after midnight until seven? Because it was also among his duties to wait up to let in the late guests. He was potboy and night-porter and brass-rubber. He would wait up to let in the late guests who, for whatever reasons, would not be offered keys by the owner.

Many years later the man used to say, when re-counting that time, that it was a useful education in the ways of the world. He would use the phrase "a useful education in the ways of the world", before going on to tell of the boy's waiting up for the last guests. Of how the boy had waited all night, for a last guest who never arrived in as the light seeped brighter from three after midnight until seven in the mornin. And of how he went back down the stairs at seven to put on the cauldron of heavy porridge and the big iron kettle over the stove plate. The boy later complained, in innocent indignation, to the guest who had stayed out. "Ah, I didn't stay out at all. You must have missed me coming in."

He was one of those men for whom a rowdy laugh and ruddy face eased the passage of social encounter. He was also the kind of man distrusted by those of accurate sensibilities. "I'm sure you didn't come in", said the boy, "that's why I waited-up." "Ah, not at all, not all - huh", said the guest wandering off. Then Hoppity-hop came from the landing where he had been listening and, putting his befuddled face to the boy's remarked that when a guest said he was in, he was in. If a guest said he was out, then he was out.

As Gardiner Street was long and brown and grey, nearby Talbot Street was shorter and bright with shops. In one of those shops he saw the duffle-coat, on a day when he had sneaked out to invigorate his senses with sensations other than those of the hotel. The coat was dark navy, like the ones sailors had in films. He looked at it for so long that he had to go into the shop. When he shyly fingered the wooden toggles instead of buttons, he had a build-up of excitement and blurted out the question of price. Then he explained his position to the man in the shop. The man said if he could put a pound down and pay ten shillings a week, the coat would be his.

The two girls from Co. Leitrim were sisters, one more trim than the other, and were given to quiet sessions of garbled talk and laughter. The conspiracy of their amusement sometimes made the boy uneasy. They were near him in the preparation of meals, he at the sink and stove, they at the long table on which the prepared foods were laid out. The girls could hoist the food upstairs with more strength than their size might indicate, their black skirts pulling against their nylon stockings. Sometimes they had sessions together about things which separated them from the boy, and he from them. And they went out some evenings in the week. Hoppity-hop would ask them where they had been and had they met fellas.

On the day he pledged for the duffle-coat something of its prospective purchase glowed in his face. As he was afterwards by the sink cleaning lettuce, the trim sister came nearer to him than before: she had laughter in her voice. She asked him where he had been? "Out". Out? Out where? Out. "Ah go on," getting nearer to him. "You've been up to something, we can tell by the look of you". The lettuce in the sink swirled under the perpendicular jet tap. Though staring into the sink the boy's vision saw the buttocks, saw the sense of them more strongly in his mind's sensations than his vision could actually

see. As he daren't look at her, the lettuce swirled in his optical vision, while the sense of her trim, black-skirted buttocks suffused him. "You've been up to something. Oh, is that your hankerchief in you pocket?"

Her laughter pealed upwards, beginning from somewhere near the tranfix of lettuce and hollowing out the space around him, sounding there even after she had returned to her conspiratorial sister by the big table. Upon which table when they had gone, he would lay out leaves of lettuce in mounds of cleaned out ridges: ridges circular and bereft of earth and maggots, wherein there yet lurked the declining peals of girlish laughter.

The time when he might own the coat became so fixed in his mind, like the trees in the square at the top of the street. He had not visited where the trees were: his idea of the trees in the square was that of seeing them from his end of the street. He thought that if he actually went to where the trees were, moved near to them, they mightn't be trees at all! The act of drawing close to them might charge them away. That was the fear he had about the duffle-coat. That when the time came to take it with him, it might have changed from the coat he saw in the window. So he kept the time of its realisation at a distance, and absorbed himself in the mechanical inevitability of his labour, settling to early rising and late bedding, growing a layer of resistance to the laughter of the girls and to the admonitions of the owner. At the centre of his resistance, layered and protected by the dream, lay the

eventual ownership of the coat. the weekly visits to the shop with the ten shilling payments were as a punctuatuon on this growth of upright boyhood.

The time came for him to return from the city, to the place from whence he had come. He would leave the street, would leave the hotel, would leave the room with the iron bed.

He would bring back with him many sensations. He had estimated the final payment to conclude with his final week, then a fortnight before that time, the owner announced the boy should leave sometime next day. The boy maintained he should see out the duration agreed when he had been accepted for the employment. Hoppity-hop maintained thatslackening off in the work available at the end of "the season" did not justiy further the boy's employment. Hoppity-hop was adamant that the boy should leave withing the next few days.

With haste the boy took to the shop on the following day and spoke to the man, explaining the further change in his position. Though he earned two pounds and sixteen shillings a week, two pounds of that went every week by post to his home in the country. He explained he would be an instalment short. The man in the shop went to the mysterious back, among documents and parcels, emerged with the coat with the wooden toggles and the rough navy material. He encouraged the boy to try it on and he in turn was so filled with pleasure he was fearful of looking at himself in the mirror. The man helped him on with it, explained about the hood and showed him the toggles. The boy stole quick glances at himself in the mirror; the mirror was at such a slant as to reflect the patchwork of colours of the shop's other goods. With quickening heart and angled glances he built up with flashes in his mind the patchwork of impressions of how splendid he looked in that rugged dark coat with the wooden toggles and deep pockets.

While thus inhumed in quickening pleasure, the man came around and gently diverting the boy of the coat, proceeded to lay it on the glass top of the counter. There further proceeded the laying of the coat onto strong brown paper, arms folded across its front as in the ceremony of laying out a sacred body. (It is also practical, as the man now knows, in the laying out of a body for coffin or an overcoat for parcel, to fold the arms into the body. The composition makes for a practical parcel in either case).

So, as Gardiner Street was long and brown and grey and Talbot Street was shorter and brighter with shops, so back down that street scampered the boy, moving with excitement. Tucked under his arm, like dear life and for safety, was a parcel in strong brown paper. He restrained himself with calmness approaching the hotel, that he might not furtively scurry downstairs and so, if seen, alert the girls to his excitement. And once there in the shelter of his own room, and with no sounds of activity from the kitchen, he undid the parcel and looked at the coat with awe. And then hearing the clatter of activity start up for the evening meal, the sounds of the hot plates on the big cooker being moved, he restored his purchase to its rough brown paper protection. He place it within his suitcase under the iron bed.

Those are some of the memories revived in the man who now stands by the corner, looking up to Mountjoy Square. The man remembers how the boy undid the parcel again that evening to further savour the texture and flavour of the coat. How he brought it home to the country with him and how it was much admired.

How the boy remembered the girls and their laugh and their farewell to him and how they giggled at his brown suitcase which showed patches the same colour as the paper parcel. How the owner later denied to the social welfare people that the boy had ever worked for him.

The man has come now, as an exercise in self-dialogue and to see whether he is capable of shooting the owner, if it be the same person now in residence. The man doubts whether he is capable of such a simple act, partially because of the other memory of the other man, the man in the shop. And also because he himself is now given to much introspection and to little action.

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WOMEN AND THE LIMERICK SOVIET

A photograph of the Limerick General Strike Committee of April 1919 shows a solemn group of men, dressed in their Sunday best, with not a woman in sight. In the trade union affairs of the day women workers were kept out of sight and, inevitably, out of mind. The picture, therefore, clearly and unconsciously reflected the all-male domination of the movement.

Many other examples from the period can be quoted to show the inferior status accorded to women workers by their fellow male trade unionists. The Limerick working class paper, *The Bottom Dog*, in its edition of 24 November, 1917, tells the sad story of the victimisation of one seventeen-year old girl for standing by her trade union principles:

We have heard that since the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union started organising in Limerick, certain employers are thinking of ways and means to smash the Union. We will give one instance which has come to the B.D.'s ears. Twelve girls employed by George McKern and Sons, Ltd., Printers & Co., joined the Union and at their request a demand was put in for a 5/- increase in their wages, which ranged from 5/- to 11/- for an employee thirteen years with the firm. The Manager, an individual with the very Irish name of Eakins, told the girls that he would give them 2/6 increase each, on condition that they left the Union; that if they did not leave the Union they would not get an increase, and, furthermore, he would dismiss them. Under pressure eleven of the girls agreed and got the 2/6 increase. One young girl named Sarah McGowan — to her everlasting credit, be it said — refused to leave the Transport Union and was therefore dismissed by Eakins. The girls who accepted the bribe to leave the Union are, perhaps, more to be pitied than blamed. They may think that they did the wise thing, but the paltry pieces of copper which they sold themselves for and turned their back on the victimised, self-respected comrade can be taken off in the morning by Eakins, as the girls have no Union now behind them to fight their cause . . .

While Sarah (Sally) McGowan was being victimised for refusing to leave the I.T.G.W.U., the men who were employed by McKern's as printers and who were organised in their own craft union, stood silently by. Not only did the printers not give support to their young fellow printing worker but they issued a statement after Sally McGowan had been dismissed criticising her for her "foolish" action! The printers maintained their attitude despite the fact that one of their officers, Jim Casey was treasurer of the United Trades and Labour Council and one of the activists behind *The Bottom Dog*.

It should be said, however, that the *Bottom Dog*, from its very first edition, kept hammering away at the low wages and bad working conditions of women workers but with little success.

Early in 1918 Sally McGowan started work as a waitress in a restaurant in Catherine Street. About the same time the president of the Trades' Council, John Cronin, introduced Mrs. P. Curran, organiser of the Amalgamated Society of Tailoresses and Miss J. Fowler, organiser of the Women Workers' Federation, to the Council at its meeting on 22 February. "Both ladies received a hearty welcome from delegates and spoke at length on the necessity for better organisation among women workers", the secretary, Ben Dineen, recorded in the Council's minute book.

By the end of November 1917, the I.T.G.W.U. had 600

Limerick workers in its ranks, including 160 women. A few of these women found their way, shortly afterwards, on to the Trades' Council. On 19 August 1918, another but short-lived labour paper, *The Worker*, carried the following news item: "Mr. J. Cronin welcomed the ladies of the I.T.G.W.U. as delegates to the Council and said that by their presence they would contribute towards its dignity as a labour movement in the city".

But dignity alone was a poor weapon for women to bring to the struggle for better wages and working conditions. In its columns *The Bottom Dog* continued the fight to encourage women to join trade unions and to stand together in seeking their rights. But the paper folded in November 1918 with its objectives unrealised.

When the general strike started on 14 April 1919, hundreds of women workers joined in the stoppage. Dan Clancy, a trade union activist, has recalled how, with other members he went around the city's hotels in a spirit of militant enthusiasm urging the female workers to join in the strike and, in some cases, even tipping the girls out of their beds.

The strike lasted until 24 April, and most contemporary accounts have concentrated on the activities of the men during the eleven days. After the strike had ended, working class papers in Ireland and Britain endeavoured to list the lessons of the struggle according to their political lights. Only one paper, however, *The Workers' Dreadnought*, gave detailed coverage of the struggle of some of Limerick's women workers. The *Dreadnought* was edited by Sylvia Pankhurst and published in London. The paper displayed a strong feminist line, and it seems likely that its reporter who came to Limerick was a woman. One article, titled *Women Workers of Limerick*, concentrates on the low wages and grim working conditions in the city's biggest shop.

The paper, however, showed an uncharacteristic squeamish trait when it came to giving the name of Todd's store and in the text, it coyly appears as "—s". The reporter, in the *Dreadnought's* edition, of 31st May first takes us into the store's workshops:

In a garret under the rafters a poor little wizened old soul is crouching on the floor amongst the filthy filling of ancient mattresses. The clotted hair, heavily impregnated with dirt, has lost its hairy character: it is broken up into clods of irregular size, which look as much like lumps of earth as of matted hair. The old woman beats the clods with a stake of wood and the dust rises till we can scarcely see her. Having beaten some of the dust from the clod that is highest on the pile, she seizes it, breaks it to pieces, and pulls the hair apart, tearing it with a quick motion of her fingers' and thumbs, whilst the dust rises as thickly as before. When all the hairs have been separated, she tosses them into a fluffy heap, which grows beside her, and on to which fresh dust is of course continually falling. Who could believe that so much dirt could be contained in any mattress?

The reporter then goes on to describe the old woman and her dress:

Her hands are caked with filth as though it were soil, and she a potato picker or other field worker; but this on her hands is not the good brown earth, but loathsome disease — breeding dirt. Her skin is yellowed and withered by age, and under-feeding, and the dirt she works in. Her eyes are sunken and dulled, the water oozes from them and glistens on her cheeks. She has wrapped a sack half round her, either for



The members of the 1919, Limerick general strike committee, dressed in their Sunday best—and not a women in sight.

warmth, or to protect her old clothing.

Molly, a childless widow, explains that she has worked at Todd's for fifteen years. For that period she was paid at the rate of a halfpenny a pound until the previous month when this was raised to three farthings a pound. She answers that her wages range from 8 shillings a week to 5d, 4d, 2d, and sometimes nothing, when there is no work to be done. The visitor compares the big shop with the small wages paid, to the women workers:

It is—'s great store; a magnificent shop in Limerick. No one could guess from its smart exterior and show rooms that anything like old Molly's workshop existed in it! . . . Down some steep steps, and round a corner or two, one comes to the upholstering workshop. Men were working there recently for 30s. a week, but they have now had an increase. An old woman, a gentle, industrious, highly skilled old woman, who has been employed there for 56 years is paid 14s. 10d. per week. She makes the mattress cases and pillows, covers the hoods of babies' perambulators and does all the sewing connected with upholstery. The Transport Workers' Federation applied to have her wage increased to £1 a week: the firm offered an increase of only 2s. 6d.

Next the *Dreadnought* reporter examines the heating system — or, more accurately, the lack of one:

There is no means of heating this workroom. In the winter time one of the women employed here found in a tiny garret where old Molly works, a rude nitch connecting with the chimney, and usually covered by an iron screen. At some time it had been used as a fireplace, but it is forbidden to light fires there now, and no fuel is available. Nevertheless, last winter, when their hands grew so stiff with cold that they could not work, the women would gather together a few rags and waste clippings and burn them up there in the garret, holding their hands close to the fugitive blaze. How is it that the factory inspectors allow the workers to be employed under such conditions? The workers say that they have never seen a woman inspector at the stores; their observations on the subject of the men inspectors were by no means complimentary.

The reporter continues her tour with her own inspection of the carpet workshops:

Downstairs, round about and upstairs, quite a distance,

brings one to the carpet workroom. Women were stitching the strips of carpet together. It is very heavy work: the material is so hard their fingers are often bleeding. A piece of rope tied across the room helps them to support the weight of the carpet whilst they are stitching it. Old, worn and dirty carpets are often sent in to be made smaller, or to have new pieces inserted. Then the work is very unpleasant . . . The women workers at —'s have made up their minds to stand solidly together for an equal wage, for they have reached at a bound, the position towards which the most advanced of the men's organisations are timidly fumbling.

The women stated their case to the reporter: they wanted wage equality with the men, and the pay of all workers to be brought up to £1 a week. They told the *Dreadnought* that they would accept nothing else. "It is indeed little enough to ask", the reporter added.

After this exchange, the reporter made her way to the lace room which adjoined the carpet room. Here the famous fine Limerick lace, "Limerick run" and "Limerick tambour", was being made. The journalist takes up the story:

Speed in lace making is only acquired after years of practice. Women who have been employed for five or six years (and not alone at lace making) are regarded at Messrs—'s as mere "learners". The speed of lacemakers varies a great deal . . . a girl who has been working five years at the trade hopes to finish a handkerchief in the early afternoon. She began it a week ago to-day; she will be paid 8s. for it. An old woman with spectacles is making Limerick tambour. She is embroidering a design on fine white net, under which is placed the pattern she must copy . . . The forewoman who gives out the work, keeps the accounts, mounts the lace on linen or cambric, and supervises the workroom is paid 27s. 6d. per week.

The reporter learns that some of the lace is sold in the-shop underneath and the remainder to wholesale dealers. The cheapest Limerick run handkerchief was priced at 18s. 6d., while a smaller handkerchief, made upstairs for 8s. 6d. was selling in the shop for 27s. 6d.

The article also points up another difference: the complete contrast between the squalor of the room where the lace was made and the attractive manner in which it was presented for sale in the shop below:

A Provo Parade

In Pery Square, in Limerick, a small procession is assembling. There are about twenty people, including children. An ancient embroidered banner says, "Ireland unfree shall never be at peace"

... There are also cardboard placards reminding us of the existence of H Block. One or two of the old men have the veteran-Republican look, which, to my eyes anyway, is very different from the mere old-Gaelic-Leaguer or founder-Fianna Failer look

As they march off in the rain with children holding the streamers of the banner, I reflect that this tiny gathering is the hard core of Provisional support in Limerick and, probably, the surrounding countryside, no more and no less; and that while there is certainly pathos there is also some small smatch of honour in being the last forlorn representatives of the romantic nationalist tradition out of which everybody else has done so well.

Later in O'Connell St., the thin western rain – surely thinner and wetter

around the Shannon estuary than anywhere else – is still falling. The street is decorated with bunting and plastic pigs, elephants and rabbits which can be illuminated at night, for this is civic week and the jolly animals, which were bought as a job lot from the Isle of Man, are put up on the shops whenever Limerick goes en fete.

There is also a bunting-decorated platform which was presumably used as a reviewing stand or vantage point for some mayoral party when the now inevitable bare-kneed majorettes marched by. I note with approval that the H Block people have occupied this.

The faithful and the few have gathered close around a speaker with a hand microphone, but the busy shoppers of a Limerick Saturday afternoon are ignoring him. There isn't even a garda in sight and the speaker is getting, in all, just about as much attention as one of those religious enthusiasts at the corner of Middle Abbey St. As I come closer I realise that it is Daithi O'Connell himself, bare headed in the thin, grey rain.

He correctly reminds us that al-

though special category status has been denied to the men in H Block, everything else about them is special: they were tried by special courts under special rules of evidence, etc. Nobody is listening. He goes on to ask us to do something to demonstrate our support for these men. He says he knows quite well that there is not much anybody can do; but that everybody can do something, demonstrate their support in some small way or other.

Still nobody is listening. I have the uneasy feeling that if he asked us to do something fantastic, brave or outrageous – lie down in front of the traffic, pull down the plastic animals, break a few shop windows – we might, we just might, respond; but the fact is that response to the Provisionals' appeals on any issue whatsoever, H Block included, is really dead in the south. Even if the old civil strife and massacre of the Catholics situation were to come about at last, the south would not respond. A long drawn out hanging or two might of course change the picture, but truly I somehow doubt it.

(Anthony Cronin, "Magill", May, 1979)

The lace is so dainty and fine: one is surprised to find the workroom very dirty. The boarded floor is swept from time to time. one cannot learn that it is ever scrubbed and this, unless it is to be polished, it badly needs. Dirty old boxes and furniture thickly coated with dust are piled at one end of the workroom. Still more surprising is the complete lack of washing facilities. There is no wash basin of any kind, though it is absolutely necessary for the hands of the workers to be clean, since the lace they make must be spotless and may not be washed before it is sold. To remedy the lack, the workers have provided themselves with a jam jar. Water they can attain by two methods: either from the pan of the W.C., or by going downstairs and outside the building to a tap in the stable, a journey not always possible. In hot weather the workers often want a drink of water, but only, by going down to the stable can they get water fit to drink. To make a cup of tea in the afternoon is impossible, as, except in winter, there is no means of heating the water. But cups of tea in the afternoon are unknown at-'s; the workers were astonished when we suggested such a thing!

The dogged reporter finishes her piece with a defiant final flourish:

As we look in at the fine windows of -'s stores we see, not the elegant furniture and the dainty laces, but poor old Molly in the dust cloud in the attic, and we wonder what the workers of Limerick will make of -'s stores when the Soviet reigns permanently in Limerick.

Even if she achieved little else, reporter did a good day's work in focusing the spotlight on the low wages and bad working conditions at Todd's store. In the same edition of 31 May, 1919, *The Workers' Dreadnought*, the organ of the

Workers' Socialist Federation, carried the first part of its history of the April general strike titled, *The Truth about the Limerick Soviet*, and these articles are also a useful contribution to the study of the event.

But unfortunately *Dreadnought* and its reporter, like so many others, mis-read the signs. Sixty years afterwards equality of wages has not yet been secured; Irish women have not yet gained their rightful place in the trade union movement and most workers in Limerick still do not have an afternoon cup of tea – not to mention a soviet! It is more than time that the struggle for the first three issues at least, was won. The sixty years wait has been a mighty long time.

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The old men of Plassey

by John Bennis

That old impulse stirs today,
To stroll along by Plassey way,
When after weary weeks of rain
The shy sun appears again.
Impatient steps impel me hither,
To that old spot on the river.
Here, a carefree hour to pass,
I stretch myself upon the grass,
And, drowsy from the sunny rays,
My mind drifts back to other days,
When in Plassey with comrades gay,
We passed long, happy times away,
Recalling memories of olden days,
Before we went our separate ways,
Giving past governments hell,
Knocking recent ones as well,
The country and the way 'twas run,
Being roundly cursed by everyone,
The weather, always a ready topic,
No matter whether snow or tropic,
The sky, the sun, the moon, the stars,
Stalin, Hitler and the scourge of wars,
Anglers and the tales they tell,
Of monsters caught and lost as well,

Balaam and his fabled ass,
What priest said the quickest Mass,
The farmer and his many crops,
The way to cook mutton chops,
Pictures, dances, books and plays,
Queer fashions of the bygone days,
All these, and other subjects, too,
We talked about as men will do,
One subject only would we shirk,
For Plassey was no place for work.

But not every day was spent
Embroidered in friendly argument,
For as the whim or fancy drove,
About the countryside we'd rove,
One day the hills of Clare we'd tramp
The next by Plassey's falls we'd camp,
Sometimes gathering nuts we'd go,
And chance our luck in far Cratloe,
Then boating on the Shannon's tide,
Or climbing old Keeper's side.

Again I feel that surging thrill,
Kindled by memories burning still,
To turn a bend and look along

That winding bank where once a throng
Of well-remembered faces passed,
Up and down — how time has flashed!
Sturdy old men, walking slow,
With measured step and voices low,
Young lads, lively and strong,
Pumping life and swinging along,
But now where are they?
Gone — some dead, some far away,
In foreign cities they live and toil
A right denied on their native soil,
They receive, at least, a toiler's wage,
No longer subject to a miser's rage,
Treated as freemen not as slaves,
With rights and liberties man still craves
Many have fought on land and waves,
And some now rest in far off graves.

Alas, those halcyon days are o'er,
Gone forever with my friends of yore,
Today I gaze with saddened eyes,
Upon these haunts of vanished joys,
Oh, fairyland Plassey, here I cry,
Your magic spell will never die.

JIM KEMMY

JIM KEMMY IS SEEKING RE-ELECTION TO THE LIMERICK CITY COUNCIL ON JUNE 7. PART OF HIS ELECTION MANIFESTO IS PUBLISHED BELOW

STANDS ON HIS RECORD

JIM KEMMY has been a hard-working and consistent City Councillor. His record is unique. Not only has he not missed a scheduled Council meeting in the past five years but he has spoken at every single meeting. Jim Kemmy is also the only member who has attended all the meetings of the two Council Committees — Housing and Cultural and Environmental.

As a Councillor Jim Kemmy has led many deputations to City Hall and Council meetings on a variety of local government issues, including house improvements, roads, playing fields, planning applications, illegal parking, the Shannon banks, the re-opening of the City Museum and other matters. He has also travelled to Dublin on deputations to government ministers to make submissions on such subjects as wandering horses, N.I.H.E. and Posts and Telegraphs.

Jim Kemmy has been a consistent critic of the waste of public money incurred by the holding of costly dinners and receptions following official "opening" ceremonies.

Jim Kemmy stands for the creation of a changed society in which all the people can share in the country's wealth. He stands for a world in which poverty and injustice are replaced by co-operation and equality. He stands opposed to the present system of economic exploitation by which profit and privilege are placed before the interests of the people.

Over the last two decades Jim Kemmy has been involved in many debates and controversies in defence of democracy and in fighting for social justice. As a member of the Limerick City Council he has been a fearless and outspoken champion of people's rights.

Jim Kemmy has also spoken out strongly on a variety of social problems such as unemployment, the housing shortage, income tax, women's rights, ground rents, family planning, multi-channel television, industrial development, and many other issues. He was responsible for the setting up of the Limerick Family Planning Association and has played a major part in the success of its Clinic.

Jim Kemmy is an active supporter of the campaign for the extension of multi-channel television to Limerick and is a member of the Limerick Multi-Channel Campaign Committee. He has played a leading part in the bringing about of more open and tolerant attitudes in the city.

His efforts on behalf of his fellow-citizens culminated in his election to the Limerick City Council in June 1974 on the first count. His record-breaking 1,275 votes was the highest ever recorded by a candidate contesting the local government elections in Limerick for the first time.

**JIM KEMMY is a
P.A.Y.E. worker and is
at present campaigning
for major tax reform**

THE LOCAL ELECTIONS

The local elections, to be held on June 7, are certain to bring changes to the composition of the incoming Limerick City Council. The retirement from politics of Alderman Ted Russell, leader of the local Fine Gael party, and the two Coughlans, has considerably weakened the coalition alliance. The decision of Councillor Denis Broderick (Fine Gael) not to contest the elections means that there will be at least four newcomers on the next Council and should two more of the outgoing Councillors fail to hold their seats (as is expected), this would mean that six new members will emerge after June 7.

The resignations of the Coughlans and Russell have caused many problems for Labour and Fine Gael. Lipper, the Labour deputy, has been acting like a besieged man since he won the Dail seat two years ago. He has failed badly to measure up as a T.D. Apart from one badly read speech in the Dail, a few brief interjections and about a dozen parliamentary questions, the rest has been silence.

Even during a long Dail debate on the closure of the Ferenka factory he failed to open his mouth, being content to leave all the probing to Dr. Noel Browne. As an attender at the Dail Lipper's record is also a poor one, and he has not pulled his weight as a member of Labour's parliamentary party. At a local level he has become bogged down with constituency problems and, again here, his work has not been impressive.

Lipper's performance stands in marked contrast to that of his predecessor Alderman Stephen Coughlan. Coughlan was a regular Dail attender, and he was also a frequent speaker, though often unwise and even foolish in his remarks. In Limerick Coughlan worked hard in dealing with the problems of his constituents and was better able to cope with the pressure of the job.

Waiting in the wings to take his call to the centre of the Limerick political stage is Councillor Frank Prendergast. Since he became Mayor two years ago, Prendergast has hungered for a return to the limelight. He has been fortunate in his political career and many events have worked in his favour when they could easily have gone the other way. For instance, five years ago he barely scraped into the fourth and last Council seat in his ward and then only after a re-count involving John Quinn, the Fianna Fail candidate.

Prendergast is nakedly ambitious and has his eyes firmly fixed on a Dail seat and will leave no stone or opponent unturned to get there.

The decision of Alderman Ted Russell to stand down has come at the right time for Prendergast and he seems poised to poll well. These factors have not gone unnoticed by Lipper, who from now on will be looking regularly over his shoulder at the

moves of Prendergast. For long the blue-eyed political boy of the local Jesuits, Prendergast represents the ideal Labour man for the "Jays". Like a well-trained dog he can be counted on to bark and not bite at capitalism and the Church.

So, Lipper sweats it out in his political hot seat. He has to be seen to put on a good show in these elections. He is committed to giving some token help to Eileen Desmond in her quest for a Munster Euro-seat, but he has also been put to the pin of his collar to find local candidates. Labour seems destined to lose certainly one, if not two, of its existing six Council seats.

And what of the other parties and groups contesting the election? The list of Fianna Fail candidates lacks in quality what it makes up in quantity. The party's strategy in putting forward the largest number of candidates could prove to be successful, especially in the transfer of the preference votes of the weaker contestants.

The Limerick branch of the Socialist Labour Party is putting forward its strongest man in Joe Harrington, but he is unlikely to improve on his 122 votes in his general election outing.

The retirement of Russell is bound to weaken the Fine Gael party, especially its leadership. Alderman Pat Kennedy, the aspiring leader has more ambition than talent and in generally disliked even by Fine Gael supporters. He is unlikely to be as skilful or as tactful as Russell in dealing with the Labour Party and in his relationships with his fellow Fine Gael councillors.

Once again ward 2 looks like being the political cockpit of the elections, with 16 candidates contesting the five seats. Almost all the parties and groups are represented, apart from the Socialist Labour Party — but with a Provisional Sinn Fein candidate contesting this ward, what need is there for the S.L.P.? The Provo candidate, Desmond Long, is hardly likely to do much better than his two colleagues, who trailed at the bottom of the poll in ward 3 in 1974.

Sinn Fein the Workers' Party is putting forward Michael Finnin in ward 2 but the dice is heavily loaded against him. Fianna Fail have six candidates, Fine Gael 4, Labour 3 and Jim Kemmy, socialist is also seeking re-election.

The most interesting feature of the election will be the performance of Lipper. He has found it impossible to keep all the promises made before the 1977 general election or to hold together all his disparate supporters.

This failure seems certain to be reflected in his poll. He could also find that the old saying, "Easy come, easy go" could have a political as well as a financial relevance.

STANDS ON HIS RECORD

Vote No. 1 for Jim Kemmy

The Genuine Alternative

Unlike the personal election "manifestos" presented by other candidates, Jim Kemmy has given an unambiguous and comprehensive statement of his

political position. No other candidate in Irish political history has called for the following policies:

- * The deletion of Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution.
- * The democratic settlement of the Northern Ireland conflict, based on the right of the Northern Protestant people to opt for the state of its own choosing and the recognition of the democratic rights of Catholics in the Northern Irish state.
- * The complete separation of Church and state.
- * Full family planning facilities as a basic human and civil right.
- * The democratic control and management of schools and colleges.