The Clarion Call of Saor Eire

WHY IRELAND'S WORKERS AND WORKING FARMERS MUST ORGANISE TO UNDO THE CONQUEST

The Proclamation of 1916, asserting once again the inalienable sovereignty of this nation, challenged British rule in Ireland and stated its challenge and its call.

On that Proclamation we take our stand and we call to the "incorruptible custodians of the tradition and struggle" to collect around committees of themselves so that we may move solidly forward to our battle-ground.

James Connolly, defining the goal towards which he was struggling, wrote: "An Irish Republic based upon the public ownership by the people of the land and instruments of production, distribution and exchange." In 1913 *Irish Freedom* reacting to the class content of the rising revolutionary struggle wrote: "The primary evil is the English occupation and the cleansing of Ireland from British Imperialism will involve the abolition of the inhuman and degrading social system."

The development of the post-1916 policy was the triumph of the Arthur Griffith school, which aimed at achieving, not the abolition of the inhuman and degrading social system, but at separation from England as a means towards building a native Irish capitalist economy and a policy representing the aims of the Irish middle class.

The extent of this triumph was revealed in the Dail Eireann of 1919 which set its face against all tendency towards direct action by the masses to recapture their inheritance. It did worse, for while public utterances were full of fine revolutionary phrases as gestures towards the splendid militancy of the masses, the practices of the Government were in conflict with these phrases. The small farmers and landless men demanded the restoration of the ranches, they demanded relief from rent, and in these vital issues the Government betrayed them.

Sensing the danger of openly resisting the demand for restoration of the land the Republican Government created a department to effect the purchases of the ranches and their distribution among the small farmers and landless who would be saddled with the burden of repayment. Landlordism was enforced and we had the extraordinary spectacle of a country where the mass of the people had repudiated foreign rule, where British courts were boycotted, where police were being attacked and guerilla warfare against British troops was continuous, paying to the Exchequer of the British Government rents amounting to four millions yearly forced from the Irish farming community. At the same time we had envoys in America begging funds for the support of the Irish revolutionary fighters.

Republican courts came into existence and they became a machine for enforcing the demands of banks, insurers, landlords; and so the State machine that grew up within the revolution was used, on the one hand, to attack the forces of British Imperialism, and, on the other, to achieve the domination of Irish Capitalism over the lives of the masses of the people. And the Republican Government was conscious of its rôle. We read: "Terrified landowners flocked to Dublin to beseech protection from Dail Eireann." "There seemed a moment when nothing could prevent the wholesale expropriation (of the ranches and estates), but the crisis was surmounted." — (Constructive Work, Dail Eireann No. 1.) Dail Eireann became, not the leadership of the revolutionary masses which were out for freedom, but the champion of native exploiting interests which were out to use the courage and sacrifice of the I.R.A. to wring concessions for themselves from British Imperialism. The Treaty of 1921 embodied these concessions. The struggle against the Treaty represented the instinctive nationalist revolt aganist inclusion in the British Empire and against the betrayal of the promises of social reconstruction popularised in the 'Tan days. But the new leadership that arose in 1922 was still unable to state the betrayal sharply and to develop struggles by which treachery could be effectively exposed and resisted so that the demagogues of the Empire were able to spread confusion into the very ranks of the militant fighters. In this treacherous misrepresentation of the values in the Treaty it should be put on record that the Irish Hierarchy played a part of special viciousness in their attacks on Republicans and that by their abuse of their sacred office they rallied masses of the Irish people temporarily on the side of the British Empire.

The burdens the Treaty imposed were disastrous. Besides over five millions annually to be paid into the British Exchequer, it imposed the cost of two Government machines, one in Belfast and one in Dublin. In the Twenty-Six Counties it brought forward a new ruling class with special powers for exploitation, and the standard of living of small farmers and industrial workers worsens steadily, as the following analysis will reveal.

Present Outlook

Shortly after the end of the Imperialist World War the period of temporary agricultural prosperity ended and a period of continuuos depression set in.

The agricultural community found itself faced with a continuous fall in the price of agricultural products while the cost of living remained relatively high. On top of this farmers had borrowed heavily from the banks (which at the time encouraged speculation in land) during a period of inflation to meet the expansion of tillage during the war years and now found themselves heavily in debt, compelled to meet interest and repay loans in face of a falling market. It is estimated that the total volume of farming indebtedness up to the year 1930 and excluding land purchase advances is £30,000,000—(League of Nations Economic Committee.)

The prices of agricultural products have fallen from 287.8 in 1920 to 124.8 in 1930 (100 in 1914), while the cost of living fell only from 191 in 1922 to 166 in January, 1931. Between 1929 and 1930 the position has taken on the nature of a crisis. The index figure for that period declined by 14½ points, which is equivalent to an average decrease of 10 per cent.

The Land Act of 1923 and the whole policy of the Free State Government presses upon the small farmer. The Act of 1923, in effect, confirmed their ownership in the ranches to the graziers and big farmer element. The "big farmer" policy and the rationalisation of agriculture in his favour is squeezing out and impoverishing the small man. Consolidation of farms is in progress, leading up to a new widespread landlordism and an accentuation of rural poverty.

In 1911 the number of separate holdings under thirty acres was 400,000. In 1926 the number was 292,000, and figures will show that almost three-quarters of the agricultural land in Ireland is held by something over a fifth of the occupiers.

Distribution of Agricultural Workers

The Census of 1926 shows that in the Twenty-Six Counties 672,129 persons were engaged in agriculture. Of these, 284,468 lived on holdings under thirty acres while 136,739 lived on holdings under fifteen acres and 126,409 were agricultural labourers.

Out of a total of 302,744 holdings in the Free State, 167,218 or 44.1 per cent. of the total were under 15 acres, constituting only 6.4 per cent. of the total area, while 2597,092, or 63.4 per cent. of the total holdings were under 30 acres, constituting only 20 per cent. of the total area. In other words 64.3 per cent. of the total holdings took 20 per cent. of the land, while 35.7 took 80 per cent., which means that two-thirds of the total agricultural workers (excluding farm labourers) lived on one-fifth of the land.

In the Six Counties, holdings of under 15 acres, while constituting 42 per cent. of the total number of holdings, represent only 11.7 per cent. of the total area, while holdings of over 200 acres though representing only 0.9 per cent of the total number of holdings account for 12.6 per cent. of the total acreage.

The analysis does not give the real position, for a very large percentage of the small holdings are situate in the poorest and least productive parts of the country.

If we consider in relation to this the position of the 126,400 agricultural labourers in the Twenty-Six Counties and the 40,000 in the Six Counties we see to what a pitch of exploitation the system has brought the agricultural community and get a glimpse of the failure of the various Land Acts to deal with the situation.

Agricultural Production

Concurrently with a progressive decline in population has gone a decrease in the volume of agricultural production—the volume of exports having fallen considerably below pre-war figures. Vast quantities of land have gone to grass from cultivation while the quantity of live stock has not increased.

The following figures show decrease in the production of some of the principal crops since 1871:

	1871	1911	1929	1930
Potatoes	796,000	425,000	363,000	347,000
Turnips	264,000	212,000	188,000	179,000
Mangolds	30,000	75,000	83,000	80,000
Cabbage	31,000	35,000	30,000	24,000
Oats	1,133,000	702,000	666,000	644,000
Barley	219,000	156,000	118,000	166,000
Wheat	184,000	36,000	29,000	27,000
Flax	53,000	12,000	6,000	4,000

In the Free State the area of ploughed land has decreased from 2,772,000 acres in 1871 to 1,458,000 in 1930 while the area under hay has increased in the same period from 1,499,000 to 2,296,000 acres. The decrease has been progressive, for in 1911 the area of ploughed land was 1,697,000 acres, while in 1928 it was 1,251,000 acres. Since the establishment of the Free State 350,000 acres have gone to grass from cultivation. The total area under cultivation in the Six Counties has declined between the years 1914 and 1928 by 78,599 acres, showing a decrease of 45,000 acres between the four years 1924-28.

With the decrease in tillage and the consequent increase in pasturage there has not gone any increase in the numbers of live stock. The number of milch cows is almost at the same level as 1871 and shows a progressive decrease since 1921. Other cattle in the Free State show an even greater decrease since 1921, while the numbers of sheep and pigs are considerably below the figures for sixty years ago.

The agricultural statistics for the Free State for the year June, 1929, to June, 1930, show a decrease of 4.1 per cent., in the total area of ploughed land on the preceding year, while for the same period the total area under corn, root and green crops for the whole of Ireland decreased by 91,210 acres. North and South, the conditions point to an even further decrease in live stock, because the farmer must sell his stock to meet his obligations, and to the poorer farmers who are already understocked it will mean that the reserve annually required for the necessary increase in stock cannot be made owing to the larger share of the product being required to meet rents, annuities, and bank debts, and the adverse balance in agriculture shown in the contradiction between agricultural prices and the cost of living. For the rancher and big farmer relying mainly on cattle-raising, affairs have been satisfactory up to recently, for the price of his product held while costs and charges had not greatly increased. Cattle accounted for 21 per cent. of the total value of the gross output of Free State agriculture in 1926-27, and in 1930 the exports of live stock represented 48 per cent. or nearly half the value of the total exports.

The Census of Production for 1926 showed a total of over £88,000,000, of which £64,750,000 represented agricultural production. Of this £88,000,000 the total amount paid to wage-earners in both agriculture and industry amounted to about £20,000,000. If we assume an average income of 25/- per week for each member of the 285,000 persons constituting the total working farmer population living on holdings of 30 acres and under, we get a total income of approximately £18,500,000. The total share, then, of the wage-earning classes and the working farmers was about £38,500,000. Write off the £8,500,000 for taxation (it was more) and this leaves £30,000,000. The other £58,000,000 went to the big employing farmer, to the commercial, industrial and financial profits, in annuities, taxes, rents, and was generally dispersed among the exploiting interests.

The British and Irish bond-holders in annuities (interest on land loans) take £3,250,000 surplus value annually from agriculture. Add to this £1,500,000 rents on unpurchased land and we get a total of almost £5,000,000 from the Twenty-Six Counties alone. Since the establishment of the Free State close upon £26,000,000 has been dragged from the workers and working farmers of the Twenty-Six Counties by the bond-holders.

Of the loans issued under the various Land Acts the total amount still outstanding is approximately £100,000,000.

In the collection of these annuities the Free State Government acts as agent for the bond-holder. In the year ended the 31st March the total of annuity payers in the Free State was 298,539 and the total amount collectible for that year, adding arrears

POBLACHT NA H EIREANN.

THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT OF THE IRISH REPUBLIC TO THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND.

IRISHMEN AND IRISHWOMEN: In the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom.

Having organised and trained her manhood through her secret revolutionary organisation, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and through her open military organisations, the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army, having patiently perfected her discipline, having resolutely waited for the right moment to reveal itself, she now seizes that moment, and, supported by her exiled children in America and by gallant allies in Europe, but relying in the first on her own strength, she strikes in full confidence of victory

We declare the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland, and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies, to be sovereign and indefeasible. The long usurpation of that right by a foreign people and government has not extinguished the right, nor can it ever be extinguished except by the destruction of the Irish people. In every generation the Irish people have asserted their right to national freedom and sovereignty: six times during the past three hundred years they have asserted it in arms. Standing on that fundamental right and again asserting it in arms in the face of the world, we hereby proclaim the Irish Republic as a Sovereign Independent State, and we pledge our lives and the lives of our comrades-in-arms to the cause of its freedom, of its welfare, and of its exaltation among the nations.

The Irish Republic is entitled to, and hereby claims, the allegiance of every Irishman and Irishwoman. The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens, and declares its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts, cherishing all the children of the nation equally, and oblivious of the differences carefully fostered by an alien government, which have divided a minority from the majority in the past.

Until our arms have brought the opportune moment for the establishment of a permanent National Government, representative of the whole people of Ireland and elected by the suffrages of all her men and women, the Provisional Government, hereby constituted, will administer the civil and military affairs of the Republic in trust for the people.

We place the cause of the Irish Republic under the protection of the Most High God, Whose blessing we invoke upon our arms, and we pray that no one who serves that cause will dishonour it by cowardice, inhumanity, or rapine. In this supreme hour the Irish nation must, by its valour and discipline and by the readiness of its children to sacrifice themselves for the common good, prove itself worthy of the august destiny to which it is called.

Signed on Behalf of the Provisional Government,

THOMAS J. CLARKE.
SEAN Mac DIARMADA. THOMAS MacDONAGH.
P. H. PEARSE. EAMONN CEANNT.
JAMES CONNOLLY. JOSEPH PLUNKETT.

DOWN WITH UNEMPLOYMENT! DOWN WITH WAGE CUTS!