

# LIMERICK SOCIALIST

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THE  
VOICE  
OF THE  
WORKER

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

## A BOOKIE'S RUNNER



## ONE FOR THE BOOK!



**Dermot McEvoy**

## SOVIET RUSSIA

by Tom Morris



A LIMERICK CAPITALIST  
LOOKS EAST

# ONE FOR THE BOOK!

BY DERMOT McEVOY

THE PEOPLE of Limerick have spoken, the non-stop Rosaries at St. Alphonsus's have been answered and the City of the Broken Treaty has a new Sarsfield in the person of "Thady" Coughlan. Only one churl abstained in the "election" for Mayor. Doesn't he know it was Buggins's turn, that it was from the Bible itself, not the *Sporting Chronicle*. Handicap Book, that strong, silent (in the Dail anyhow) and stainless, well almost-stainless, Steve chose the name to carry on the dynasty? All Thady, or Thaddeus, has to do now — even if he's married already — is to coalesce with a girl called Kennedy, call their first son Coughlan-Kennedy and the mayoralty can go round and round. Will it make any difference to the poor and unemployed, indeed the poor and employed, people of Limerick? No: they'll be as poor. Would it make any difference if the Councillors picked a Clement (named after a Pope not noted for his clemency to those who disagreed with him)? Not a bit of it. But this, you protest, is a counsel of despair. Not so. You have a remedy. You use your vote to kick the whole gang out. Anybody would be better. A City like Limerick deserves better than a bookie's runner.

Don't tell me it's hopeless. If Gallileo turned it in, if Wilberforce turned it in ... and, nearer home, if Kemmy turned it in, there wouldn't be voice of protest left. There'd be none to expose the dirty tricks; the CIA would parade as Knights of the Holy Grail and de Valera we'd be fighting to decide whether he should be God instead of just a sub-God. Don't you think I get fed up, that the Limerick Socialist Organisation has its moments of despair? Of course. What then drives us on? The hope that the victims of all these buffoons and bastard placemen will one day — and soon — forget their republican rainbows and chuck their tormentors into the Shannon. All I want out of it, a modest proposal I hope you'll agree, is to be on Bishop O'Dwyer Bridge with a bottle of champagne, preferably looted; in my fist. Meanwhile, I am content to work in the only way I know for The Day. Do likewise.

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Just like yourself I had some questions to put to Finance Minister Richie Ryan (blood-brother to Forecourt Dan). For one reason or another they were not reached in the RTE phone — in about his latest Budget proposals. I asked, for instance, what steps he had in mind to freeze the prices of pharmaceutical goods, fruit, vegetables, fish and meat — where the wholesale prices are much, much lower than the prices in the shops. I put a similar question about the price of the pint, lemonade, ice cream and cups of coffee (the real stuff, not the bottled rubbish that's on sale at Limerick railway station buffet). I learned afterwards at the Department of Finance that Mr. Ryan planned to do nothing about them; he favours "free market forces"! In other words he's all for the 40p rabbit (has it gone up?) of that Fianna Fail Councillor whose hand went limp in mine as he learned my name during my *ad limina* visit to Limerick. Another question related to the Income Tax rise: when would Mr. Ryan allow the clerk and the carpenter to claim as a necessary expense their bus and train fares to work and so put them on a par with the company-car driver, usually a director or senior manager whose expenses are allowed as a debit in the accounts? The motorist, by the way, uses company petrol (i.e. peyrol paid for by you and me) to take him to the golf course, the Junction races, Kilkee, tea at Lord Harrington's, social evenings at Castletroy, and other essential recreational activities. Answer came: not now. A harassed Income Tax Officer (I used to be hon. sec. of their Association) told me: "You know damn well we can't charge a penny expenses". Nor can they; they are just slaves like the rest of us. Poorly paid ones at that.

Is there nothing then to cheer about? But, of course, there is: we are privileged to be watching the last day of capitalism with the countries of the Golden West Staggering from one economic and financial crisis to another. The £, I am delighted to note, is plummeting just as the German Mark did in the days of the Weimar Republic. Business no longer bucks up when Cosgrave, Ryan, Lynch, Haughey and Uncle Steve Coughlan an' all make soothing noises backed up by subsidies, tax incentives and similar measures to increase profits: the workers pay no heed to exhortations to have regard to the 'national interest' and to stop being greedy. Barbara Wootton, in a lecture at the London School of Economics, points out that in neither case do these remedies still work, that we have disowned our responsibility for our troubles. 'The inflation' is dignified, she says, with the definite article as though it were a natural catastrophe like an earthquake. In all this we must not forget that inflation is man-made AND KEPT GOING BY THOSE WHO PROFIT FROM IT.

Why then should we continue to turn a blind eye to the socialised economies of Russia, China, Hungary and Yugoslavia where there's no unemployment and no hunger? We can adopt their economic collectivism without some of their mistakes and please don't tell me there is no tyranny here. There is the tyranny of poverty, the tyranny that had me reading by candlelight because my mother couldn't afford paraffin for the lamp. (This was at a time when my father was 'doing his bit' in the Great War for Civilisation, a civilisation, I am glad to note, that has made little headway in Ennis — or Garryowen). But you all have your own personal experiences of the capitalist system of smash-and-grab and the inequities that scar from the cradle to the grave. An 'incomes policy' in the hands of the Richie Ryans and the Haugheys is a euphemism for a policy concerned only with wage restrictions. Let me quote Barbara Wootton: "No incomes policy deserves its name unless it controls all incomes from whatever sources they may be derived, for only so can it both defeat inflation and promote social justice".

How far the Ryan Package has hit Charlie Haughey, front Opposition colleague of your own Des O'Malley, may be gauged from the *Irish Times* announcement that he was the first to plank down his money for a £100-a-head champagne beano in the Dr. Zhivago night club in Dublin. A taxi-driver tells me the club provides hostesses to soothe all business cares away. I do not have personal knowledge of whether their caresses are covered by the £100 entrance but, if you are not able to send a representative from Garryowen or Corbally, I have no doubt Charlie will tell Des about this great oireachtas and Des will tell you next time he's looking for your vote, on peeping through your curtains. Ask Des, too, if he thinks Charlie paid for it out of the £100,000 of the taxpayers' money he is still unable to account for in the Public Accounts Committee.

Girls, of course, are necessary to businessmen of the new dispensation. Barney ('Do-you-sincerely-want-to-be-rich?') Cornfeld, lately of Investors Overseas Services, had everything in his town house at Lac Lemman, Switzerland, including wall-to-wall girls. Seeing all this, the economist, Prof. J.K. Galbraith, asked, "Where are the customers' girls?" — an adaptation of the 1920s Wall Street Joke about the visiting dignitary who, on being shown the yachts belonging to the stockbrokers, inquired, "But where are the customers' yachts?". Where, you may ask of the Zhivago, are the taxpayers' girls? Where indeed, Charlie boy.

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In all this where is the voice of the worker? Muffled, I'd say. At the last meeting of the newly-reformed Dublin Regional Council of the Irish Labour Party to which I was a delegate the discussion was not about wages, workers' rights,

widows' pensions, bus fares, or bread and butter. Virtually the entire evening was devoted to personal attacks on the delegates from Clontarf for their 'crime' of having Conor Cruise O'Brien as their T.D. and on Dunlaoghaire, my constituency, because I was a 'West Briton' and, presumably because I pronounce my 'ths', did not speak for the working class. Our most grievous fault, however, was that we felt that gunmen were quite properly locked up by the Minister of Justice, also that we believed in the right of Orangemen to choose their own form of Government or anarchy for that matter — that our businesses should be organising for socialism! It was the last thing in which the Council was interested. The patriots, however, were somewhat mollified when I assured them that 'Big Jim' Larkin had signed me on as a member of a party. The Party, much more radical than the Irish Labour Party, on the stage of the old Tivoli Theatre when working-class Dublin was protesting the judicial murder in the United States of Sacco and Vanzetti, and, that give or take a little, I hadn't changed since. Nor have I. Call me a Red? I am.

I supposed there was justice in Ireland until I read the other week that a solicitor who stole £300,000 — and admitted it — will not be going to jail to mix with law-class bank robbers. His sentence was suspended. It seems that after he was found out he sought shelter in St. John of God's where, a psychiatrist swore, he suffered from severe nervous tension. In the same circumstances I'd be bag of nerves wondering how long I'd be in Port Laoise, what the grub was like, would I be able to finish the *Summa Theologica* of St. Thomas Aquinas (indeed would it do me any good?), would a girl-friend sacrifice her maidenly modesty to take me in a stick of gelignite wrapped in a *caput Anglais* and stuck up her you-know-what. That Irish judge, obviously a good Catholic, saved the solicitor such embarrassment. The solicitor will be remembered — especially by investors in Midas Investment Trust whose money has gone missing. By the way, where can I lay my hands on £300,000? I'd be three times as good a fellow with it as Charlie Haughey; there would be tables for all Limerick at the Zhivago and wall-to-wall girls, a Kennedy girl, perhaps Jackie, for Mayor Thady or his old man. Justice? — that's for the birds.

# GROUND RENT PROTEST

A significant struggle against the ground rents system is currently being mounted by the residents of Ballinacurra Gardens. Eight residents of the four year old private estate built by local firm, Portland Estates Ltd., agreed to contest the civil bills issued by Estate Agent, J.C. Field, of Cork, for non-payment of ground rents and were backed up by the local Residents' Association. At a district court hearing on the 16th June, presided over by Justice M. de Burca, the cases against the eight residents of Ballinacurra Gardens were adjourned, on the application of the plaintiffs, until the 7th July.

The campaign began about six months ago when J.C. Field was appointed by Portland Estates as their new estate agent. The previous agent was G.J. Fitzgerald, solicitor, father of Mrs. Mirette Hanley, who took over after the death of her husband Sean Hanley, the firm's managing director. Mr. Field immediately launched into a vigorous campaign in an attempt to collect outstanding ground rents, and demands for arrears issued to many residents of Ballinacurra Gardens. This was followed up in February by the issuing of final demands to all residents in arrears, with a warning to the effect that civil bills would be issued if the arrears were not cleared off.

The Residents' Association, faced with an upsurge of opinion against the steam-rolling tactics of the estate agent, organised a public meeting in the Shannon Arms Hotel which was well attended by a wide cross-section of the residents of Ballinacurra Gardens. At this meeting it was unanimously decided that the policy of the Association would be to resist the demands for arrears of ground rent.

At the end of May, just before the Whit weekend, civil processes were delivered on some twenty to thirty residents of the estate, indicating that if a form of consent were not signed within ten days admitting the arrears, the residents would have to appear in court on the 16th June to defend themselves. These shock tactics, together with the very short notice of the court hearing given, caused many of the residents to panic and some of them paid some or all of their outstanding arrears. However, a sizeable number of those served with the civil bills refused to be intimidated and agreed to contest the bills.

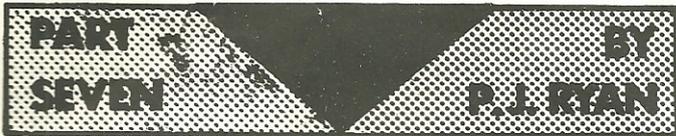
The Residents Association organised in the short time available two meetings within the space of a week—the first in the Cecil Hotel and the second in the Holy Child School, Rosbrien Rd. At this latter meeting the general strategy for

opposing the civil processes was adopted and it was evident from the very good attendance that there was widespread support in Ballinacurra Gardens for the eight people who courageously indicated their profound opposition to ground rents in their preparedness to go to court in defence of their principles.

On the morning of the court hearing the Residents' Association manned a picket outside the offices of Portland Estates, the ground landlords, which picket was timed to coincide with the court proceedings. The picket was also well supported by residents of Ballinacurra Gardens. After the adjournment, those who had been to court joined in the picket, which evoked considerable interest among passers by (the offices of Portland are in O'Connell St.). The first stage of the residents' struggle had been successful.

Apart from the moral issue (ground rents are simply a form of legalised extortion), the residents have many individual and general grievances against the builders of the estate, and it is this which has largely fuelled the anger of the residents of Ballinacurra Gardens. It is only since publicity began to focus on the residents' struggle that a long-standing grievance of many residents—the fact that roads were never laid down throughout the newer portion of the estate—it is only since then that proper roads have been completed. Other matters—the lack of play areas in the estate (despite the fact that provision was made for this in the original plans)—and the difficulty of getting maintenance work carried out, despite the fact that the building agreements signed by the house purchasers provide for this—these too have made relations between the residents and the builders unsatisfactory. Wandering horses are also much in evidence in the estate, and many residents do not feel that Portland Estates have adequately fenced off adjoining lands on which horses roam. The damage to gardens and the considerable danger to young children are but two of the problems caused by the horses.

The Residents' Association are to be commended on their resolute action in this, Limerick's first court case to arise out of recent agitation against ground rents, but more particularly, the example set by the eight people who have had the courage of their convictions and have not been intimidated by the legal processes instituted against them is deserving of the support of all of the people of Limerick.



## THE AUBE

ON Thursday, 20th April 1916, three days before the rebellion in Dublin, a party of volunteers left Limerick in two cars. They travelled south towards Cahirciveen in Co. Kerry. The purpose of their journey was to seize an amateur's wireless transmitting set and so make radio contact with the German ship Aube. (AUBE). This boat was due in Tralee Bay with an arsenal of arms for the rebellion.

So the volunteers journeyed south the thought may have occurred to them that the British in Ballymullen Barracks, Tralee, in the wireless and cable stations at Waterville and on Valencia Island, as well as British naval ships off the South West Irish coast, would receive all messages sent on the air.

This would have been most helpful to the British who like to be kept informed on all such matters.

This fiasco did not occur nor was their journey necessary, as the British were well informed concerning the projected arms landing.

In their haste to carry out their task a car crashed over a pier and two lives were lost. One man alone escaped from drowning. These were the first casualties in the 1916 rebellion. It is true that the Volunteers could have broadcast in code to the Aube. The British, who had broken the most secret and confidential codes of the Germans, could in a few minutes break any code devised by mere amateurs. They would be quick to act on any information transmitted to the Aube.

The staff at the cable and wireless station at Waterville, at a distance of twenty feet from the reception rooms, could hear and decode any message on the machines without interrupting their conversations. Any message sent to the Aube would receive priority treatment from them.

Both Waterville and Valencia stations were heavily guarded by the military on land and by the navy at sea. They were a vital part of the lifeline of Empire. No ship (enemy) could approach them within shelling distance at sea. No commando-type party could approach them by land. Two companies of infantry were in huts on the perimeter of Waterville station. The Irish and the Germans should have been aware of all this information which was so easy to obtain. There is no evidence that either party gave any thought to these matters.

The Germans know and believe that the British are stupid. This belief is part of their literature. All their acts of war against the British are based on this great untruth. Their total defeat in two world wars by British diplomacy and small arms has taught them nothing. When the Aube entered Tralee bay she was halted and boarded by a boarding party consisting of twelve men. The boarding party searched the Aube. When British naval ratings search a ship they enjoy the break from the routine duties on their own boat, when they have finished their search it can be said: "That boat has been searched".

As a result of the search, the Aube was taken prisoner by H.M.S. Bluebell. The Captain of Bluebell Lieut. M.A. Flood ordered the Aube to proceed to Queenstown. Near Queenstown the Aube was scuttled by her crew and sunk. The crew were rescued by Bluebell. With the sinking of the Aube, there was also sunk the evidence that the cargo consisted of antique Russian rifles, captured by the victorious Germans from the Russians in the battle of Tannenberg, Poland in August 1914.

In published accounts and photographs, the boat is called the AUD. The British who captured the boat would surely know the name of their prize, which meant 'prize money' for the officers and crew. The Germans would have some motive in concealing the evidence if the owners of the Aube (Daybreak or Dawn) were collaborating with the Germans.

# The Fourth Siege of Limerick

All the published reports of the attempted landing of guns at Fenit in Tralee Bay, Co. Kerry, clearly display the incompetence, the ignorance, and the bungling ineptitude of those who were responsible for the reception of the guns.

A better organised and most successful importation of guns was the Howth gun running in July 1914 when over a thousand non-descript guns were successfully landed at Howth and other points. With the guns there was also imported one thousand rounds of ammunition. Some publications claim that ten thousand rounds were imported, but whether one or ten thousand were imported meant that there was but one or ten rounds per gun.

A sportsman out for a days sport shooting wildfowl would be poorly armed with one hundred rounds for his shotgun: clearly then ten rounds per gun meant but poor sport for those Volunteers who were to use those guns.

The whole operation of purchase and importation of those guns was under the sole direction of Major Erskine Childers of British military Intelligence. From the moment of decision to purchase those guns until their landing at Howth and elsewhere, occupied a period of three months. On this account it must be accepted that the gallant Major had three months official leave of absence from his unit.

On completion of his task the Major returned to England with notable haste and, presumably, rejoined his unit.

At the end of the then world war Major Childers was decorated by His Majesty King George V with the Distinguished Service Medal, for distinguished services to King and Country.

Possibly because of his knowledge of things nautical, Major Childers was transferred to British Naval Intelligence; from this post he was 'loaned' to the Treaty delegation to assist the Irish delegates on naval matters in the Treaty.

Following the acceptance of the Treaty by the Dail and the outbreak of the Civil War. Major Childers was arrested by Free State troops in a round-up in Co. Wicklow. The Staters suspected that the Major was a British agent, but as there was no crime on the statute book for being a British agent, a courtmartial found him guilty of being in 'unlawful' possession of arms. The Major was found guilty and received the six A.M. salute from a firing squad. He was one of the bravest Englishmen that ever died for a country.

## THE MARCH TO KILLONAN

On Good Friday 1916 a company of about sixty Volunteers assembled near Pery Square and marched down O'Connell Street through the city, their destination being a field near Killonan railway station, about five miles from the city. They were going on a weekend course of training. Some of the men had wooden guns and some had real rifles with a few rounds of ammunition, while others carried shotguns and antique rifles of rare vintage. With them there marched some boy scouts of sixteen years and less, who played martial music with drums and whistles. It is true that the Company had no cannon but they had the sound of cannon from a big bass drum. As the Company marched past William Street police barrack, they were admired by District Inspectors, Sergeants and Constables of the R.I.C. who may have wondered at the

purpose of the marching men. On passing by the Ordinance Barrack they were objects of interest to the military who crowded outside the gate to see them pass by and wonder at the antique guns carried by some of them. Their route to Killonan carried them past the police barrack at the Pike where the R.I.C. turned out to observe them and possibly count the number of men.

On the long straight road to Ballysimon Cross, a light drizzle of rain was falling. A halt was made at Arahill's pub and the boyscouts were sent home. The march then continued to Killonan. On reaching the field of assembly a quarter mile beyond the railway station, the men took shelter from the steady rain, in a large open hayshed. The field belonged to a Mr. Batt Laffan. Another party of young men pushing a handcart loaded with cooking utensils and food, arrived at the field around one o'clock. When they unloaded the car, it was found that the tea, sugar and butter had been left behind in Limerick. The only food available for cooking was potatoes and meat. Those two items boiled with a head of cabbage would make a light but nourishing soup to go with the loaves of bread. As they had also forgotten to bring salt, the liquid could rightly be called 'Beef Tea' which was highly recommended by the Medical profession for convalescent patients and people of delicate constitution. As the rain continued to fall, a fire could not be lighted in the open nor could the hayshed be used because of the hay in the shed and the fact that the men were sheltering there.

An army marches on its stomach. These men had looked forward to a good dinner, but now, disillusioned by the absence of food, without even a cup of nourishing beef tea, they had little strength for marching; they gradually dispersed to their homes. The last to leave were the men pushing the handcart in the evening, in the rain. The most eloquent tongue could not persuade those men to go again on a route march during that weekend, nor would the parents of the children permit them to get another wetting. The giving of fancy names such as Fianna to those boyscouts does not excuse the indoctrination of children and the abuse of their innocent minds. All the modern dictators followed the same reprehensible practice with other such titles.

On Easter Saturday morning around 11 a.m. a horse drawn breadvan from Daly's bakery travelled out the Tipperary road to the field of assembly at Killonan, about five miles from the city. On arrival, Pat Carey the driver, expected to be met by enough men to unload the van. He searched the fields around but saw no one. On returning to his van he saw that the doors were open and found that two loaves of bread were stolen. This unpatriotic act of petty larceny deserves the strongest condemnation. Naturally annoyed at the waste of his time the driver climbed up to his high perch on the top of the van. The horse turned around, and without a 'giddup' from the driver, headed for home. The driver now had inside information straight from the horse's mouth: there was to be no rebellion.

That vanload of bread is the most remarkable item in the financial history of 1916. It is the only recorded case in which members of the Volunteers were offered or received something without having to pay for it. Everything which a Volunteer possessed from his bootlaces to the cap on his head, was paid for out of his own pocket. He bought his uniform and sweated for the price of it. If he possessed one of the obsolete Howth rifles and a few rounds of ammunition, it was sold to him for a hard earned sovereign. A Volunteer could buy a cheap shotgun for six shillings and cartridges at two shillings a dozen, but, six shillings was two days wages for some of them. When the Volunteers went on a route march or on training, they were told to bring a day's ration of food. The Volunteers did not cost the central authority anything, yet, an estimate of almost a quarter of a million American dollars were safely landed in Dublin between 1913 and 1916 for the purchase of arms. A glowing tribute is due to the American subscribers of the Almighty Dollars which, like faith, can move mountains, yet not one Irish publication mentions the divine mission of the American dollars.

(to be continued).

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

I am beginning to slowly realise the need for socialism. Now I see how capitalists have broken me and my kind. I am a qualified carpenter who for the past seven months has been idle, apart from the odd job. I get £13.25 social assistance. Out of this I have to pay only £5.90 rent. This leaves me with £7.35 for the week. We never have food on Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday mornings.

Now my wife has just delivered our baby daughter and I am getting a rise of something like £2.60 per week. I would be dead but for the generosity of my father, whom I now owe a small fortune. My wife and I have taken to going to bed on Tuesdays, getting up on Thursdays to what we now call our feast day.

I have worn out shoes looking for a steady job with the Corporation, Aer Rianta etc, alas, to no avail.

I ask you how can I think Christian when a priest passes me in his damn Audi, puffing his expensive cigarettes and with a paunch like a stuffed elephant?

I said to my wife last week: "I think I'll go out and steal some food".

I could always say to the judge: "I was hungry your honour".

Would be let me free for taking my rights? No way. And yet there are lots like me who go by unnoticed day by day. I too have clean clothes and shiny shoes. But only through the cleanliness and dedication of my wife.

If I want a house, whose palm takes the thirty pieces of silver? But it's there staring us right in the face. Stories in Limerick have foundations.

Ask those Judges in the City Council have they ever tried to flog two lemonage bottles for the price of the milk just to keep the milk flowing to feed their babies. I have!

How often I have said to myself: "It's out there, take it", only to find it snatched away by others who do well because they grease the palms. How many Limerick people are idle? Thousands! How many from the surrounding counties? And who are giving them the jobs. Not our own big boys whose life long ambition was to have slaves. They have them.

You may say where or what are you getting to. Just keep trying to clean up this God-damn city, Editor. Fight for us the workers who are only temporarily idle.

John Downes.

### PA'S BRASS NECK

During Mayor Pa Kennedy's outgoing address to the City Council on June 30th, he described the carving of his name on the stone plaque at Sarsfield Bridge by the use of a Latin phrase which in translation meant: "I have carved myself a monument more lasting than bronze". Many people thought that Pa was alluding to his own brass neck which is harder than either bronze or stones — even a jockey's ones.

### AN (IMMACULATE?) COURAGEOUS CONCEPTION!

*Don't let us forget his father's courage in conceiving Thady Coughlan.*

(Ald. M. Lipper during the mayoral election).

### HELD OVER

We regret that owing to pressure of space the concluding part of "The Limerick Press and Chicago" and part seven of "The Parish Pump" have been held over to next month.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

# PERKS AND PRIVILEGE IN SOVIET RUSSIA

Newspapers and Periodicals controlled by the "hated" capitalists provide plenty of space for Socialists to air their views. However, I seldom see capitalist propaganda published in the Socialist Press.

Some comments on society in the Socialist State of Russia may interest your readers if you would care to publish them.

For instance nobody, except the Soviet Communist party's accountants, knows what Mr. Brezhnev or other Government Ministers or officials earn. In the Western world the Prime Minister's and other salaries are known to the man in the street.

There is an elite in Soviet Russia although that word is banned from all discussions there. An editor of a republican newspaper there is paid about £300 a month and has extras, including Royalties!

Dr. Mervyn Matthews, a Surrey University Specialist in Soviet Affairs, has this to say:— "High salaries are not the main reward for the elite because there are limits to what a man can do with the money in a country where speculation is a crime and investment in valuable commodities like real estate, jewellery and antiques nearly impossible. Of far greater value are the privileges which the elite enjoys".

These start with the payment of "gold roubles" which entitles the recipient to shop in special stores stocking luxury imports or high quality foods not available in ordinary shops. A lot of people in both party and Government get the "Kremlin ration". Some favoured organisations, like Pravda, even have such shops on their premises.

Next come special holiday facilities and rest homes for which senior party workers are given free vouchers worth up to £185 and generous discounts for their families. There are also special medical services run by the Ministry of Health with good conditions and no queues, though curiously, any Soviet citizen can get private medical treatment at special "paid polyclinics" of which there are nine in Moscow alone.

On top of all this, the elite are assured of better housing, a car (with chauffeur for the specially favoured) theatre thickets, good schooling and access to the higher echelons!!

How does one get into the elite? Dr. Matthews believes the

This letter, submitted by Tom Morris, president of the Limerick Chamber of Commerce, presents a local capitalist's view of Soviet Russia, seen through the eyes of two anti-communist writers. In its August edition the "Limerick Socialist" will reply to this letter and to another letter written by Shane Connaughton about Paul O'Dwyer and published in last month's edition.

basis of the elite are an estimated 95,000 party officials and 60,000 state Komsomol and trade union officials. After that come the intelligentsia with some 53,000 academics, doctors, lawyers, journalists and artists, with the rest made up of top businessmen and agriculturists, the military and diplomatic service and the K.G.B. which by its very nature is elitist and powerful. This totals one in every thousand Soviet citizens, though since most elite salary earners support a family, the benefits are enjoyed by a lot more people.

The Soviet tax structure favours the elite. Income tax is progressive only up to £61 a month, well below the average, when it reaches, and remains at, 13%. Whereas capitalists, paradoxically, make great use of penal rates.

The fact that most elite children attend the same schools has sown the seeds of an old-boy's network which is being fostered by the elite's strong instinct for self-preservation. The longer the Soviet regime continues without political upheavals, the stronger the elite is likely to get. Already there are signs of elite status being inherited. Children have inherited their father's right to shop in special stores. Low death duties — only 10% make it easy for any family that has accumulated wealth to pass it on, a powerful weapon in the hands of those families who can be sure of lasting political favour.

Even in Russia — as elsewhere — it seems there are always perks for the privileged.

(The information contained in the above letter was gleaned from a report made by David Lascelles, "Financial Times", East European Correspondent).

Tom Morris.

# PASTORAL DISASTER

THE CATHOLIC hierarchy's pastoral letter, "Human Life is Sacred", has appeared at last. Many people who felt concerned about the lack of respect for human life in many parts of the world (not excluding the northern part of this island) welcomed such a letter. With the appearance last Sunday of the concluding quarter of the pastoral, they may well feel like the man in the gospel story who asked his father for bread and was handed a stone. It will be the contention of this article that research-wise the pastoral is defective, that it is theologically jansenistic, and that pastorally it is a disaster.

A pastoral letter based on defective research and out-of-date theology — of which many examples could be given — inevitably tends to be jansenistic when it deals with human sexuality: it tends to return to the anti-sex teaching which originated with the manicheism of Augustine, came to life again in Jansenius in the seventeenth century, and found a congenial home in the Irish Church in the nineteenth century. The pastoral does indeed wax eloquent occasionally about the joys of intercourse, but it reserves its most lyrical passage for the benefits of sexual abstinence in marriage. (Couples whose

enforced celibacy is total and perpetual will find this section fascinating). The thinking here is reminiscent of St. Jerome's passage: "I praise wedlock, I praise marriage, but it is because they produce me virgins", a line of thought improved on later by St. Thomas Aquinas when he said simply: "A marriage without carnal intercourse is holier". This type of jansenism is never far below the surface of the pastoral; frequently it is above it.

There is no more unconvincing section in the whole document than that which deals with what it calls "the contraceptive mentality", a phrase which occurs on a number of occasions. "In contemporary experience", says paragraph 112, "this contraceptive mentality is directly associated with the use of artificial methods of contraception". Now this kind of thinking is simply not logical: by definition, the contraceptive mentality is a mentality which is against conception. This being so, what is the difference in *mentality* between the woman who takes her daily pill and the woman who takes her daily temperature, plots it on a graph, and then uses the graph to avoid conception? They may be using

Every mother wants to have a perfect child. I am no exception. So I was greatly shocked to be told by a nurse at Kileely Clinic that my child seemed to have an eye disorder. She said she would arrange an appointment for him in Barrington's Hospital Out-Patients. Eye disorder ... out patients ... hospital ... I was taken aback. He was two years old and I never noticed anything wrong with him. I suddenly remembered all the falls he had had, all the times he had bumped into poles. I presumed he just didn't look where he was going.

In due course I received a card informing of an appointment for him at the hospital. It was a ten o'clock appointment. I got up at eight in the morning to get ready. After my husband left for work and my brother had gone to school I fed and changed the children. As it was raining I doubly wrapped them and put them in the pram. A sign at the hospital said "No Prams Allowed", so I had to leave it outside in the rain and carry the children in my arms. I produced my card at reception and was directed to the waiting room. It was a large bleak room with benches placed back to back and all around the walls. We sat quietly. After half an hour and no sign of the doctor the children weren't so quiet. I walked around the room jogging the children in each arm.

At eleven people began to file in. I was still pacing the floor trying to console the boredom the infants felt. It was their morning nap time. I began to worry about being home in time to cook the dinner. I was furious for coming out without baby bottles. At twelve noon the room was crowded. My arms were wet and cramped, the children were howling. I brought them out into the corridor so as not to be annoying everyone. At twelve-thirty the long awaited doctor arrived. Relief. We went back in. A nurse appeared with a list in her hand and called a name. It wasn't ours. Many more names were called. Despair. Whimpering, no dinner to-day ... wet bottoms ... hungry children ... I asked a woman beside me about the list.

"It's the system".

"The system? what do you mean?"

"Sure girl I'm comin' for years - has the child a squint?"

Ignoring that word I asked again about the system.

"Well you see - you comes the day before the appointment and gets your name on the list - that's how it's done".

"But my appointment time was for ten o'clock".

"Errah never mind that - no one takes any notice of that - has the child a squint".

I didn't like that word - I was afraid of it.

"I don't know" our name was called. I checked the time - it was one-thirty.

We sat down. I saluted the doctor. He was writing. He did not acknowledge my salute or our presence. He stood up and took off his white coat. The nurse came in and announced that

## MEDICAL TREATMENT ..... ..... AND MONEY

BY KATHLEEN HOULIHAN

the doctor was going to his lunch. I walked towards him. My throat was dry and in a choked voice told him "We are waiting since ten O'clock - we can't wait any longer".

Without looking at me he said:

"I am going to lunch" and closed the door behind him.

From sheer despair I cried. I cried for myself, for the hungry children, for my husband and brother waiting for their dinner. I felt like kicking the door, cursing the system, I hoped his lunch would choke him. I clung my children to me and we went out on to the street. It was still raining. I put them in the pram and the three of us cried all the way home.

So every mother wants to have a perfect child. I wasn't going to give up. I got the name of a reputable eye specialist (Private Eye Specialist?) who had a private practice and rang him to make an appointment. On the day appointed we set out again. I was prepared this time, with a nursery bag of bottles and napkins. We were early. We were shown into a waiting room by a very friendly receptionist.

"The doctor will be with you in a moment, he is with a patient".

It was a beautiful bright room. Carpets, paintings, magazines, comfortable chairs. Before I had time to open a magazine we were called in. The doctor was writing. Here we go again I thought. He stood up, shook my hand warmly and spoke to the children in a very friendly tone. The receptionist stretched out her arms to take the baby. My faith in humanity was restored. I held the afflicted child while the doctor carried out a very thorough examination. Another appointment was arranged. We were treated with the same kindness. It cost twenty pounds for the two visits and for the spectacles which were prescribed. It was expensive but worth it. I was about to ask the doctor could I pay at a later date and as if reading my mind he said there wasn't any hurry in paying.

An eye disorder is a small disablement. What has a mother to go through when a child has a more serious problem and having to depend on the so called "Free Child Care"? Surely it is enough to have the worry and concern of having an afflicted child taken care of without having to suffer degrading treatment as well. But like so many other things in our society, medical treatment is closely related to money, and to the income of doctors and specialists.

techniques of birth control, but the *mentality* which guides both techniques is a contraceptive mentality. From this point of view, all techniques of family limitation (even sexual abstinence) stand or fall together.

The historian who comes to describe the Irish Church in the twentieth century will see a clear-cut pattern. He will see an episcopal obsession with company-keeping and dancing in the first half of the century, and a similar obsession with contraception in the second half. In both cases he will decide that the Catholic layman was about half a century ahead of his bishops in judging the morality of the relevant problem. He will probably wonder why episcopal thinking can get so totally out of touch with pastoral reality twice in the course of a century.

Within a year of the appearance of the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* in 1968, many hierarchies issued pastoral applications which took the sting out of the encyclical though many of them took little trouble to justify their particular loop-hole. Of the small number of hierarchies which issued rigid letter-or-the-law statements at that time, several have recently had second thoughts and have issued liberal clarifications. The Indonesian and Australian are hierarchies which took this line. Cardinal Conway was recently asked if he saw the need for any

such revisionist approach. His answer was an unqualified negative. Clearly, as far as the Irish hierarchy is concerned, contraception is always a mortal sin and that is the end of it. That the majority of national hierarchies all over the Catholic world say, that it is not - this seems to be irrelevant in the Irish situation. That *Humanae Vitae* itself has been modified at the official level by the so-called Washington Document does not seem to have reached the ears of our episcopal research team up to the present time.

In recent years, a large number of Irish Catholics have come to accept a liberal interpretation of *Humanae Vitae*. In this they have been encouraged by an ever-growing number of sympathetic priests, tolerated - if not officially blessed - by some individual members of the hierarchy. Now we find ourselves faced with a harsh, uncompromising document, totally remote from pastoral concern, and couched in terms that are condemnatory to a degree that *Humanae Vitae* itself never was. "Human Life is Sacred" is a totally unpastoral document. In recording the statistics of abortion, it is reflecting the results of the anti-sex pastorals of the past. In repeating that same teaching in other areas, it is sowing disaster for the future.

Fr. James Good.

(Reprinted from "Hibernia").

## A MODERN SEAN 'A SCUAB

## THE BOOKIE'S RUNNER

Legend has it that the first Mayor of Limerick was Sean 'A Scuab, a mountainy man who made and sold brooms. The latest Mayor, twenty-four year old Labour Councillor, Thady Coughlan, is very much in this celebrated tradition. Coughlan is also engaged in the work of cleaning up things and is employed in the plant and machinery department of Welltrade. (This firm carries out labour contracts, usually with non-union workers, in various parts of the world and is owned by Sean Hurley, a millionaire who lives in palatial splendour in a modern mansion at Ballymackeogh, Co. Tipperary).

The election of Coughlan was predictable and the local and national press had already strongly tipped him for the office. In the event, the Coalition pact held and the five Labour and five Fine Gael members united once again in the election. With these ten votes already tied up, the result of the contest was only a formality.

The shadow-boxing about the rotation of the mayoralty by Des O'Malley, the leader of the Fianna Fail party on the City Council, was exposed as a rhetorical sham when he declined to extend his conception of power-sharing to Cllrs. Michael Crowe (Independent) and Jim Kemmy (Socialist).

So at twenty-four years of age, Thady Coughlan claims to be the youngest ever Mayor of Limerick. The question might be asked: how many other young Limerick men will be given the opportunity of starting off their political or industrial lives from such an influential and powerful position?

But then how many of these young men will have a political Godfather to push them into the top jobs?

The election of Coughlan makes nonsense of the concept of democracy at local government level. Coughlan stood as a candidate in the No. 4 Ward in last year's local elections. He polled less than 700 votes and eventually limped home into the third seat on the sixth count. His election was due almost entirely to his father's influence and work during the campaign, as up to then he had been a minus quantity in local political and trade union affairs.

During his year as a member of the City Council, Coughlan has not been impressive. He is not among the hardest working Councillors and his contributions during Council debates have been undistinguished and few and far between. All the members of the Council know this. Why then did nine of them vote for Coughlan? The five Fine Gael men were already committed to supporting the Labour party's nominee, and, despite their private reservations about Coughlan's entitlement, had no other choice but to vote for him.

The reality of how the Fine Gael and Labour Council members saw the nomination was exposed when Steve Coughlan failed to get any of them to second his son's nomination. Coughlan was so desperate to secure the mayoralty for Thady that he was forced to do the job himself.

The election also served to again expose the personal tensions seething under the surface of the Labour party. Its composition and performance make an interesting study. The party's representation on the Council is made up of the two Coughlans, Alderman M. Lipper, Councillor F. Leddin and Councillor F. Prendergast.

Despite the fact that Prendergast had been promised the mayoralty since last year, Frank Leddin found himself cast in a king-making role. For some time past Leddin has let it be known that he is dissatisfied with his job as a telephonist with the Department of Posts and Telegraphs. He has felt that he deserves a more rewarding job, especially now that the Coalition Government is in power. Leddin saw the

opportunity in the mayoral stakes for his personal and financial advancement and made no bones about letting his attitude be known. Steve Coughlan is no slouch in these matters and quickly sized up the situation. He made Leddin an offer he couldn't refuse and, with the promise of a better job tucked away, Leddin agreed to support and propose Thady for Mayor.

With this crucial vote, plus his son's and his own, Coughlan tilted the party scales against Prendergast. Presented with this ready-up, Lipper and Prendergast angrily stormed out of the Labour party meeting at which the nomination was being made. The support of Lipper and Prendergast for Thady was in doubt up to minutes before the mayoral election when Prendergast received a written guarantee that he would be Labour's choice for Mayor in two years' time.

The wrangling and haggling had a profound and visible effect on Prendergast and he remained silent and subdued all through the City Council meeting. Many people were disappointed and disillusioned when he failed to speak out against the trickery and double-dealing behind the scenes.

Lipper's attitude is also worth considering. Despite his walk-out, his well-known hatred of the Coughlans and the charge of hypocrisy made against him by Jim Kemmy, he (in the words of the "Limerick Chronicle") "lavished Councillor Coughlan with praise and assured him that it would be no fault of his (Ald. Lipper) if Councillor Coughlan did not make an outstanding Mayor".

What do the Labour party supporters and Limerick workers generally think of the performance of the Labour Council members? In what way can the words and actions of these politicians be reconciled with the interests of the working class? The attitude of the party over the mayoral election and its record over the years clearly shows that Labour in Limerick is nothing more than a political cover for the intrigues of a divided group of self-seekers and opportunists. The fact that not one of its Council members made any attempt to speak out against the manipulation and hypocrisy is a sad reflection on the level of social democracy within the Labour party and on political life in Limerick.

So Steve Coughlan succeeded in his cynical task of preparing the second step along the way to the transfer of his Dail seat to his son. There is one factor, however, that he has failed to take into full account in his strategy: that is the intelligence of the ordinary Limerick people. Already many of these people have expressed their disgust at his attempt to perpetuate another Limerick political dynasty.

The only positive aspect of the affair is that the next General Election should prove to be the "Last Hurrah" for Coughlan and his son. Despite Thady's lip-service to the unemployment situation, he will never succeed in fooling as many people and in living off the backs of the workers as his father did before him. Jim Kemmy's words of advice to Thady Coughlan to "go as far as you can as Mayor because neither you nor your father will go any further" should prove to be accurate and prophetic.

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