

# LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF '*SINN FÉIN.*'

By Éamonn Ceannt.

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A Dhuine Choir –

Permit me as an individual Sinn Féiner to disassociate myself from the general tone of your recent pronouncements on the Wexford labour trouble and most emphatically from the humbug written by some anonymous hero calling himself Boyesen of Kollund dealing with the Railway Strike.

You appear to see Larkin at the bottom of all the trouble. You do not condescend to analyse any of the principles for which Larkin professes to stand. Sufficient for you that Larkin is an agitator causing trouble between employer and employed. In similar manner, the English Tory and his Irish allies described Irish politicians as vile Agitators, who caused trouble between the good, kind landlords and their willing slaves, the tenant farmers of Ireland. But the tenant farmers of Ireland were not deceived. True, trade was upset, industries languished, and 'outrages' were reported daily in the Press. Still, notwithstanding misrepresentation and abuse, the Agitators held on. To-day the land of Ireland is to an ever-increasing extent vested in the farmers of Ireland. Industries are beginning to flourish, and the fat years bid fair to follow the lean.

No one has now the hardihood to deny that the hardships and miseries of the land agitation were justified. No one asserts that the tenant farmers were wrong in giving prominence to their class interests. And yet it cannot be denied that the farmers were only a class after all. It is an open secret that Parnell, who was an aristocrat, had no desire to tack on a land agitation to his political programme. But Davitt and Kettle induced him to do so. They saw that the interests of any large class of the community could not be overlooked. Parnell's political sagacity was acquired in the hard school of practice,

not in the easy-chair of theory. Would it not be wise to take a leaf out of Parnell's book, if you will not take it out of Larkin's book, as gravely suggested by Padraig Mac Piarais to the Gaelic League on Language Sunday.

When King James was returning from the Battle of the Boyne, he passed an old man sitting by the roadside breaking stones. You know the story. The old man accosted the King, asking him who had won the day. 'What does it matter to you, poor man,' quoth the King, 'who has won the day. You will still be breaking stones.' The moral of this story should be evident to any man having a grain of political wisdom in his composition. No political party can now afford to ignore the claims of the so-called lowest class in the social scale, the unskilled workers. Those claims were heretofore overlooked simply because the men were not organised. I see no reason why 'Sinn Féin' should not help to organise them rather than give them the cold shoulder.

More serious than your cold-shouldering of the Wexford men is your practical denial to them of the right to join a particular trade union. Do you seriously hold that the employers of Wexford have the right to dictate whether their men shall or shall not join a particular union? That appears to be the point at issue. Taking that to be the cause, my sympathies go out unreservedly to the men. The right of free speech, of public meeting, and of organising for a lawful purpose ought to be unquestioned and unquestionable. The particular brand of union which the men shall join, be it a Social Union, a Political Union, or a Trade Union is a matter entirely for the men themselves. Neither the editor of 'Sinn Féin' nor the employers have the right to dictate to them on the point.

Now to come to your objection to what you call Mr. Larkin's organisation. Mr. Larkin is an Irishman who has founded in Ireland an Irish union governed by Irishmen. The organisers appear to include one Englishman who went to jail recently for uncomplimentary references to King George V; Mr. P. T. Daly, ex-prominent Sinn Féiner, still presumably a Nationalist; James Connolly, whom you know to be a Nationalist of long standing, and who spoke at the Independence demonstration on June 22<sup>nd</sup>; Mr. Larkin, a newcomer, whose son learns Irish at Scoil Ite.

All four appear to have been associated with labour all their lives. There is no reason to doubt their bona fides. Their methods may seem strange to those who are up in the clouds and give not half a thought to the cause of the labour volcanoes that are bursting forth all over the Continent of Europe. But practical politics cannot afford to wait while these dreamers are awakened to their new, their startingly new, surroundings. It is the business of 'Sinn Féin' to use the grievances of the various classes in this country as a whip with which to lash the English tyrant out of Ireland. I fail to see how this can be secured by lecturing them on their failings while they are engaged in a combat with the ring of employers who are trying to control the Wexford labour market. By the way, have you no condemnation of the Employers' Federation, or is there one law for them and another for the servants.

Mise,  
ÉΔMONN CEΔNNΤ.