

# Tenant Right Meeting in Tipperary

Mr. James. F. Lalor was appointed Secretary to the meeting, and briefly explained the objects for which it was called. He said the principal object for which it was called was to establish in Tipperary the tenant right of Ulster—(*cheers*)—a right which declared that any man who obtained possession of land as occupying tenant should be understood as having the perpetual possession of it so long as he paid the rent—that the rent was not to be fixed by competition for the land by the landlord or agent, or be regulated by the highest bidding, but by the general standard of the country, or by common consent or by arbitration, or by some other equally fair and equitable mode. So long as the rent was paid the tenant right secured the tenant against losing possession of his holding. He might sell it but could not otherwise lose it while he paid his rent. Ejectments were unknown where the tenant right was established—the landlord could not make an entry; but if the rent fell into arrear he might sell the possession, or tenant right in the same way as his own estate might be sold for debt. The tenant right gave the tenant as clear a right to the possession of his holding, while he met his engagement, as the landlord to the fee. The object then of the meeting was to establish the tenant right of Ulster in Tipperary, to secure the tenant perpetuity in the land and enable him to live as the tenant in Ulster lives. He would not detain the meeting longer than with these few observations, but would read to them some resolutions and allow others to speak.

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## LALOR'S RESOLUTIONS

‘That of natural right, on the grant of God, the soil of Ireland belongs to the people of Ireland, who have therefore a clear vested right of property in the soil to the extent of full, comfortable and secure subsistence therefrom, which never could or can be parted with, pass, or perish; and which no power on earth, nor any length of adverse possession can take away, annul, bar, or diminish.

‘That the people of Ireland have for ages been deprived of their natural right of property in their own soil, that their right has been in practical effect utterly defeated and diverted, and that it now requires to be asserted, enforced and established.

‘That the claim of the occupying tenant of the soil to a full and sufficient subsistence out of the crops they have raised, and to a sufficiency of seed for next year’s crops, is prior and superior to every other claim whatsoever.

‘That the subsistence of the people of Ireland is in danger, and requires to be defended, protected and secured.

‘That in defence of our rights of life and property and security of subsistence, we do hereby resolve to constitute ourselves into a public league or association, under the name of the Tipperary Tenant League.’

The sixth resolution:—

‘That the sole and only title that can be pleaded to any right of private property in the substance of the soil is merely and altogether conventional, and in order to be valid must be founded on common consent and agreement—be created by

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compact, and conferred or confirmed by the will and grant of the people, as defined or declared in the form of positive and precise laws; and as it is thus created by the law, the law, therefore, may regulate, restrain, limit or qualify it.’

The eighth resolution:—

‘That the tenant right above referred to is as follows—that is to say, that any person or parties now having or holding the actual possession or occupation of any portion of the soil of this county, shall be deemed and taken to have a permanent and perpetual possession of the same, for and during so long as he shall continue to pay such rent as shall be fixed and determined by the adjudication and award of sworn arbitrators, or other fairly constituted and impartial tribunal, such adjudication and award to be made and given on such principles and in such mode as may hereafter be determined by convention and agreement between the landlord and occupier.’

Other resolutions:—

‘That the landlords of this country are hereby requested and called on to subscribe to and recognise the tenant right as stated in the terms of the previous resolutions, and that all lawful means be used to induce them to do so.

‘That tenant farmers and people throughout the several counties of Ireland, are hereby called on to adopt the declaration of tenant right contained in the foregoing resolution, and join in covenant and agreement with us in asserting and

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establishing by force of public opinion the right and custom therein stated, as the standing law of tenure in Ireland.

‘That provision be made for organising the league now established into divisional or parochial committees.’

MR. LALOR—‘You see we did not come here to make speeches, but to do business. There should be a general committee of management to give effect to the resolutions, and a fund formed to be placed at the disposal of the committee. But the very first thing will be for the committee to endeavour to gain the assent of the landlords, for without their assent the object of the whole will fall to the ground.’

At this point a certain Mr. William Connor claimed permission to address the meeting. He introduced himself as a worker on behalf of the farmers in other counties, and stated that he had come from Dublin to attend the meeting. In a long and spirited address he dwelt on the relative positions of landlord and tenant, arguing that the trump card held by the latter was the unfair competition, from which sprang the two great grievances—exorbitant rents, and insecurity of tenure. This summed up the whole question, he said, and the two remedies he proposed were (1) a fair valuation of the land; (2) a perpetuity to the tenant in his farm. He objected to Mr. Lalor’s resolutions on the ground of their dubious wording.

As the resolutions had been carried, Lalor interposed with an appeal to the Chairman. Hereupon a lively argument ensued, Connor insisting on continuing his speech, Lalor denying his claim to take up the time of the meeting by lengthy harangues. Connor made use of the phrase: ‘The tenant right is to a great

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extent a delusion.’ To this the platform objected, and Connor was not permitted to proceed with his speech. Before he was silenced Connor made a personal attack on Lalor, saying that he and his father had oppressed ‘their tenantry’ (though as a matter of fact they had no tenants) and refused to allow him (Connor) to organise meetings in their district. The Chairman then intervened and Connor retired.

The meeting closed, Lalor summing up as follows:—

‘We are determined to establish the tenant right of Ulster in this county by every means in our power—by all constitutional means—to have effect from this day forward: and the several other counties of Ireland be called on to adopt similar resolutions that a general and powerful effort be made to secure the tenant in the possession of his holding. The landlords should be requested to give their assent to the tenant right, without which the tenant would never be satisfied or the country tranquil. It will be of importance to take measures for the immediate organisation of the various divisional committees, to give effect to the resolutions passed this day. As a fund to defray expenses will also be essential, I move that a fund be raised by voluntary subscriptions.’

(The motion was adopted.)