

# The Irish War.

# Workers' Dreadnought

FOR INTERNATIONAL COMMUNISM.

Founded and Edited by  
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## OUR POINT OF VIEW

By SYLVIA PANKHURST.

What is the difference between ourselves and the Communist Party?

Our differences are partly of principle, partly of practical utility.

As to the second, we believe that we can do useful work for Communism by continuing the *Workers' Dreadnought*, and we do not admit the right of anyone to stop us.

Moreover, we desire to remain an independent communist voice. An independent organ is a guard against the corruptions, opportunisms and tyrannies which are apt to attend on Parties, and especially Parties formed, as the Communist Party of Great Britain has been, from groups of conflicting tendencies, brought together by outside pressure and largely composed of persons as yet untried in the political struggle. The doctrine: "My Party, right or wrong," which leads inevitably to the practice of putting party before principle, must be shunned consistently by those who desire to take part in the creation of revolutionary change. The past constantly stretches out its tentacles to draw us back to it; constantly strives to clog our minds with sophistries. A high order of mental courage and independence is necessary to maintain always the hard, steep path of the revolutionary. The comfortable, care-free official position; the members so apt to be amenable and trusting, if only they are not asked to leave their groove, or to worry their minds with new and startling thoughts: all these provide an incentive towards opportunism, against which a constant spur is needed.

The danger of opportunism, from which an independent organ can help to protect a party, is moreover inherent in those compromise tactics for which the Third International declared itself at its Second Congress in Moscow last year, and to which it still remains committed.

We contend that the present policy of the Third International is illogical and unworkable, and either the policy must be changed, or a new force must arise to achieve the workers' revolution outside Russia, and to make Russia herself a Communist country.

Briefly, the present policy of the majority in the Third International is to secure numerous adherents, by striving to combine mutually conflicting policies.

### Parliamentarism.

Thus the Third International declares that Communism will not come by Act of Parliament, that Parliament is part of the machinery of Capitalism, and must be swept away; that the workers must be estranged from it and induced to set up their Soviets as the rival organism that will overthrow and supersede it; that Capitalism will be overthrown, not by a Parliamentary majority, but by actual force, by the industrial and armed power of the workers.

Having laid all this down in the most unmistakable fashion, the Third International goes on to declare that Communists, though they must not work for reforms through Parliament, must yet seek election to Parliament.

The only official reason given for this weak conclusion is that the election contest and Parliament provide effective platforms for Communist oratory, and that the speeches of Communist candidates and Members of Parliament may be widely reported in the capitalist press.

In reply to these arguments we must point out that the Parliamentary speeches of Colonel *...* went unreported after he joined the *...* and the Communist Party, and that it

was only when he was in the dock being tried for his speeches outside Parliament that the Press gave much space to his activities. As for the Communist candidate at Caerphilly his speeches were not even reported in the *Daily Herald*. But the point is of minor importance; the speeches of Lloyd George, Churchill, Asquith and the rest occupy column upon column in the capitalist newspapers: we Communists can never be given anything approaching the great and constant publicity in capitalist organs that is accorded to the idols of capitalist politics.

We must find other means of reaching the popular ear. Yet even were a candidate or Member of Parliament entitled to a verbatim report in the entire press every day, how flimsy a reason this would be for insisting that Communist Parties must, of necessity, take part in the political scramble for seats in Parliament; how miserably insufficient a reason for casting the fighting Communist Labour Party of Germany, and many more!

But there are other reasons, reasons not given in Theses, why the Third International demands Parliamentary action from the Parties affiliated to it. Two deeply opposed policies are represented by the Communist acceptance or refusal of Parliamentary action.

Those of the sincere and intelligent Communists who decide to use Parliamentary action do so because they believe they can thereby obtain sway over unawakened, unconscious masses: they are not content, patiently, to gather a body of thinking workers, but desire to take a short cut by capturing unthinking masses.

An extreme instance of such opportunism is the decision that the Communist Party should seek affiliation to the Labour Party. Our Russian comrades fail to realise that the present Labour leaders cannot always count on the response of the inert masses in their Unions unless the issue be a very simple bread and butter one of hours and wages. If the Communist Party could conceivably capture executive power in the Labour Party, it would have captured a gigantic machine that would not move.

When we, who are against the use of Parliamentary action, argue that it is contradictory and confusing to declare on the one hand that Parliament is useless and must be destroyed, and on the other hand to urge the workers to put us into Parliament, those who have chosen the way of Parliamentary action, reply that great masses of unconscious workers still have faith in Parliament. Quite so, we answer, then we must undermine that faith; but appalled by the magnitude of the task of creating a body of conscious workers strong enough to effect any changes, the Communist opportunists propose to accomplish the revolution with crowds of unconscious workers.

We, who believe that the revolution can only be accomplished by those whose minds are awakened and who are inspired by conscious purpose, have decided to shun the administrative machinery of Capitalism.

We have decided this because of the clear, unmistakable lead to the masses which this refusal gives, a lead, surer and more effective, because it is a lead given by action, not merely by words.

We have so decided also because the refusal to compete for electoral seats means the cutting off from us of those weak and self-seeking opportunists to whom seats in Parliamentary and on

the local government bodies are attractive because of the position they confer upon the holder.

So much for our difference on the Parliamentary question with the Third International, as officially represented in its Theses. Our differences with the Communist Party of Great Britain go still further, for the British Party does not operate the Parliamentary policy in the destructive sense laid down by the Third International.

The British Party has no representatives in Parliament at present; but it has many representatives on local governing bodies: the policy of these representatives is not the policy of the Third International Theses. As we have already pointed out, during the coal strike, when the miners were fighting the concerted attempt of the employing class of this country to reduce the working class standard of living, the representatives of the Communist Party in Poplar were responsible for cutting down wages of brick-layer's labourers, painter's labourers, bakers, sewing machinists and others, as well as reducing the rate of Poor Law Relief to the poor and unemployed. Such examples can be multiplied by anyone who takes the trouble to inquire into the doings of the representatives of the Communist Party of Great Britain on the local Boards and Councils, up and down the country. Where, indeed, are to be found Communist Party representatives on local bodies using their position on the bodies in a revolutionary way? Where are those Communists? Let us hear of them. Echo, answering "where?" has long given the only response to that urgent question.

We do not blame those "Communists" and Labour representatives who do not see eye to eye with us on this matter; we do not accuse them of bad faith or dishonesty. We simply say that they are not operating the policy of the Third International as set forth in its Theses. We exist to point out such facts: we shall continue to do so, and, in so doing, without malice, we shall educate the movement.

In our opinion, the use of Parliamentary action by Communists is illogical, contradictory and bound to lead to the lapses into rank Reformism that we see wherever members of the Communist Party secure election to public bodies. These Communist Party members who have been elected to public bodies, are simply trying, like the Labour Party, to secure reforms; they are taking no step to unhinge the capitalist system. Some of them may be more, some less, effective Reformists than the Labour Members, but they are doing precisely the same sort of work, whilst the Communist Party fulminates against all Reformers.

Let us look the matter squarely in the face. We are for Revolution: we have done with Reform and, leaving it altogether alone, we concentrate our efforts on bringing people to an understanding of Communism and to a determination to bring about the revolution.

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## THE SYSTEM.

You are a worker, rising early each morning with the reluctant pain of rising when the frame is still unrested and the tired eyes shun the light; you dress quickly and carry your scanty breakfast with you, for now you have hardly time to take a bite. You go to the jarring noise of the factory, the overcrowded machinery, the monotonous toil. You would like to be free, but you would rather be chained to the bench as you are, than free, like that brother of yours, an outcast, who wearily tramps in search of work, hungry, with boots that are broken and clothes every day shabbier, that brother who dreads to go home, because they are hungry there.

Your employer has a small, struggling business; his face has lately grown more lined than yours, his eyes more anxious; he wears a black coat, and his hands are cleaner than your hands; but to-day he has less money than you, because he has no money at all; he has less than no money; he owes more than he has: his plant is already mortgaged to others; he has pledged it to get the means to carry on a little longer.

When his business is smashed; when the mortgagees send in the brokers, you will have lost your job, and for 22 weeks you will go to the Labour Exchange and collect the unemployment dole: after that you will plead with the hard-faced Poor Law Guardians, or go round with gangs of other workless people, besieging Boards and Councils. When his business is ruined and all his creditors have rushed in upon him, your employer will borrow a little something from his friends, not much, for they know that he cannot repay them. He will slip down fast, faster even than you. You may meet him soon at Rowton House, or on the Embankment, hoping the police will not move him on.

That is the system: life is hard just now. You and your employer, unless you are working for a big trust, are both feeling these evils acutely. Yet it is not the earth and its fruits that have failed us, only the social system: if there is drought and famine there, elsewhere there are abundant harvests: the sea gives its fish without stint, though the exorbitant freight charges make it unsaleable; the workers with wealth-producing hands are pleading for work, though they are refused the right to produce for the common storehouse.

And yet, fellow worker, you uphold the system; and your employer, the small man, whose lot is even more precarious than yours just now, upholds it with all the fervour of his anxious soul, and reads the *Daily Mail*, and cheers the King and sports his Union Jack on Empire Day, if he can afford to buy one.

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