

All Ireland Review

Irish Industries

Author(s): John H. Parnell

Source: *All Ireland Review*, Vol. 2, No. 17 (May 11, 1901), pp. 128-129

Published by: [All Ireland Review](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20545361>

Accessed: 22/06/2014 13:07

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THE LAND QUESTION.

WHAT TO DO.

As to "What to do"—The first thing to do is to form a workable scheme. Altering the whole land system of a country with due regard paid to all sorts of conflicting interests is not a simple matter like buying a suit of clothes. A conference or mass meeting without some very definite plan to put before it could only lead to a confused debate and no decision arrived at. The expedient of appointing a committee at such a meeting, and directing them to draw up a plan to reconcile all differences, to please everybody, and to be quick about it, is no good. I have seen it tried and fail over and over again in relation to matters far less difficult and complicated than the Land problem. The committee usually do nothing, because they do not know what to do, and find what they have undertaken is beyond their power.

I have tried with the aid of such advice as I could get to sketch the outlines of a plan. What I want now is to have it criticised, its defects pointed out, improvements and alterations suggested, or if it be thought quite unworkable then an alternative plan on better lines put forward.

M.

Dear M.—I think you are quite right; some general and clear understanding having a reasonable degree of precision, but not too precise, should precede the holding of such a conference.

As something for the consideration of yourself and other thinking men I, in the meantime, however tentatively, submit certain these, of which this that here follows is the first. If they seem to you to be too theoretical, meta-political, or meta-physical, I would ask you to remember that however quiet everything seems, we are really in the midst of a great historic revolution; how great will only be perceived in time and in perspective; and which being so a solution of the Land Question is more likely to be enduring and satisfactory when arrived at by those who have gone back to first principles and taken such too into account—and even more serious account than any considerations of temporary ease and fleeting convenience, ease and convenience which might only affect one generation, and that generation too far, perhaps, not more than a decade.

I submit then that according to the intention of Nature as exhibited in the History of Man, and proveable in other ways, Land is not, never was, and never can be property in the sense in which perishable wealth is property; and that as Ireland was not made by Man so it cannot be owned by Man,

and that all lordship and control over it, things quite natural right and salutary in themselves, involve very great, grave, and direct responsibilities which do not attach to the possession of those things that may justly be regarded as property.

How this doctrine may be actually applied in practice I shall consider hereafter.

I incline to think that principle is the very bed-rock of the Land Question; strange as it may seem.

Land cannot be owned as men own horses, and houses, and ships, and other forms of perishable wealth, produced by human agencies.—Ed.

Longhurst, Dunmurry,

Belfast.

It is interesting at least to see a proposal under the head of "What to do" in your issue of April 27th.

If the conference you propose ever takes place may I suggest that the first question to be discussed might well be the complete scheme of Land Purchase, as proposed by its advocates, in all its working details. I have not seen it yet. Previous Land legislation has had as its aim really the protection of the tenant against his own class, since it is the competition of the class that gives the opportunity and *raison d'être* for all the difficulty in the Irish Land Question.

How then is he to be protected against himself in the larger opportunity that will follow complete ownership? What safeguards against consolidation into new estates, under new landlords, perhaps no better than the old; if not worse?

What preventative of sub-division into holdings too small to pay interest at all without starving the occupier?

What means can be devised to collect interest from starving occupiers without the odious threat of evictions and its subsequent infliction? If free sale be allowed what protection from the paying of a rack rent by an incoming tenant in the shape of Government interest plus gombeen man's exaction for purchase money advanced?

In case of a further fall in prices of agricultural produce will the Government interest be reduced as the landlord rents were? If not, why not?

If it be Mr. Russell whom you ask to define these points perhaps you would remind him of his remark at Portadown on April 20th—"They could not devise any Act that the administration of the law in Ireland would not knock into a cocked hat."

J. BROWN.

Thanks for interesting and illuminative letter.

Re the last paragraph—I think the whole body of occupiers, in their own

interest and for their own protection against usurers, and the effect of bad times, should be under the control of a National Board or Commission in whom should be vested the fee simple of all the estates of the peasant proprietors. A secure possession while they discharged all just claims and obligations they are entitled to; absolute ownership would be, as you perceive, their ruin, and raise the land question anew and in a worse form as more difficult perhaps impossible to grapple with.—Ed.

IRISH INDUSTRIES.

What here follows I print with an abundance of pleasure. It is from the pen of Mr. John H. Parnell, brother of Charles. For many generations now the Parnells have been producing men of a rare and fine type. If the Irish Parnells die out we shall have to import the Congleton branch.

I noticed a speech by Mr. John Dillon on the 11th in which he refers to Home Rule and Irish industries.

In his remarks as to the impossibility of developing those industries without first obtaining self-government I am sorry to differ.

I was always in favour of Mr. O'Brien and his views in reference to the vast depopulated grazing lands of Ireland being repopulated by people from the congested districts, and I think his objects were most worthy, and I hope will be carried out some day.

During my South Meath election in '95 I constantly drew attention to that very idea. I dwelt on the depopulation and extraordinary condition of county Meath and other parts of Ireland as regards population and industries.

In my first trip to Meath I was astonished at such a rich but undeveloped country, at the door of Dublin and other big markets, given over to cattle and sheep, and which if it was in any other portion of Great Britain would be the garden and workshop for London, teeming with people.

I cannot help then from commenting on Mr. Dillon's remarks, because they do not exactly correspond with the resolutions of the League, and as to waiting for Home Rule before you think of developing the country I think it is absurd.

If Ireland has to wait for that time where do Mr. O'Brien and Mr. Dillon expect to see the Irish population, in what part of the world will they find them? Not in Ireland, I am afraid, for it will take many years before we have Home Rule, that is Mr. Dillon's meaning for Home Rule.

I do not believe we will get Home Rule under the leadership of England, but I believe in future generations they

will see an Irish Republic, because in future the tendency will be for every country to become independent of its mother country, which means republican. The sooner Ireland is developed and the people educated the nearer we will be to Home Rule if we can get it. We are going about it in the wrong way. Now, if Ireland's wealth has to lay dormant until that occurs I am afraid there will not be many real Irishmen left to work their country.

We have seen the steady decrease of population since England destroyed Irish industries in order to support her own. The consequence was the country had to fall back on agriculture and cattle farming to feed England, whilst Ireland impoverished herself.

Everyone knows no country can support itself by agriculture alone, hence the depopulation of Ireland. At the present time there are districts where you could not start works, because the labourers are gone.

Now, I say to Mr. O'Brien and Mr. Dillon if they wait to attain their aims, the Irish will have emigrated. If something is not done on a large scale we shall see in less than 25 years a foreign people imported to cultivate the soil. It is coming to that now. Ireland's fields will be tilled by Scotch and English, her factories, her resources opened by foreign capital. Most of our industries are now controlled by English...

Why is this? Because Irishmen are not inclined to take hold themselves, and allow foreigners to grasp all.

The English are now coming over more than ever to seek Irish channels for their capital. That move has hardly begun, and before another generation they will control this country unless Ireland wakes up. We cannot afford to lose our small remainder of people, and if we do not grapple with the industrial problem the people will be gone.

Since I came to this country to reside I see well the gravity of its future. Her wealth will increase but not by her own people, but by aliens to the soil, I am afraid.

Having had some little experience myself by introducing Irish industries, I may be permitted to write on the subject. People may remember during the later years of my brother's life his energies were concentrated on the development of Irish resources and very little to politics. He began by developing a stone quarry at Arklow for paving setts in order to compete with the Welsh stone. He succeeded in doing so.

After my brother's death this quarry was broken up, and work suspended, and was offered for sale by auction by orders of court. I happened to be here

at the time, and accidentally heard that some Welsh company intended buying it on purpose to close it up. I determined they should not, as I thought too much about my brother's efforts to help Irish industries. I went to the auction determined to buy it. Although without means to buy, the quarry was knocked down to me, but fortunately I was enabled to find a wealthy Scotchman to buy it from me, but on condition he should develop the business, which he did well.

Before the auction I did my best to get Dublin people to help me to develop it, but they would not. This quarry is now sending stone into the heart of England, competing with their material, and is employing 200 hands.

The good example set by this has been the means of opening another since on Colonel Bayly's land, opposite Avondale, and is now going to work with another couple of hundred men.

My brother, I may mention, spent thousands in looking for stone on Avondale but could not find it because it was hid by other rock. I accidentally discovered it through clearing away some old fortifications, opened works, and proved the stone in Dublin Corporation.

This quarry only needs capital to develop it like the Arklow, and it would be the most suitable monument to a man who gave the last years of his life to Irish industries.

I also was the means of developing the furze bush umbrella handles business, the wood of which used to be burned up, but parts of it are now exported in large quantities all over the world for umbrellas. This business was grabbed from me by an English company, who are now working it under my nose, and because I could not get assistance in Ireland to carry it on, after spending money developing and finding a large outlet for the material.

It was at first boycotted by the English trade, who refused to take it because it was Irish. My commission merchant, who is a Belgian in the umbrella handle trade in London, afterwards told me he was obliged to take my handles out of the Irish boxes before he could sell them, and then he sold them for best English. Another dealer in Manchester told me his own men tried to spoil the material in order to throw discredit on Irish stuff; until he tried the wood himself by testing them and exposed his own men's rascality.

Before I managed to obtain a footing in the English market, and when I found that England refused to take our material, I determined to force them, and quietly sailed for New York, where I knew furze handles were heavily imported from England to the Italian trade who dealt in handles. In less

than one week I sold out my entire consignment worth £500, with orders enough ahead to last two years. In fact I took the market away from London because our Irish material was far superior to that they were in the habit of getting from England.

During these two years I employed 200 hands, men, women, and children, until the London trade discovered that I had actual control of their monopoly. Then they came in quick time to Avondale to buy the material which they formerly refused. The English, I am sorry to say, are now controlling the entire business in Wicklow and Wexford.

I also introduced the manufacture of wood fibre for bedding in mattresses in unions, hospitals, and as dog bedding, and that was grabbed.

Having had so much experience in helping to develop the fruit business in America, and spent 25 years there, and knowing that I could not possibly have succeeded there the way I did except for the help I got from the Americans, from the railway presidents down to the banks, and even the poor people, who worked faithfully for me, I feel deep chagrin at everything over here when one tries to develop an undertaking really for the benefit of the country than anything else. I just mention these facts as showing we allow foreigners to grab everything, to the destruction of our race. I therefore tell our people every industry in Ireland will in future be controlled by foreigners if we don't look out. Our lands, our factories, our resources will be developed and peopled by foreigners.

These very vast tracts of grazing lands will give out to the rearing of cattle in some years, and they will have to be tilled to bring them back again. Where, I ask, if we wait for Home Rule, are the people to come from to cultivate these lands? They will not be Irish—they must be imported. The United Irish League means well to put the congested population on these lands now, for assuredly before long they will be needed. Where will the cattle lords be, who are worse than landlords, as they employ no labour, when those lands must be worked? Let us not delay our great industrial question, but do the best we can to develop it.

JOHN H. PARNELL.

Avondale, April 20, 1901.

IT is not a genuine and sincere affection which leaves a helpless woman and a young family to the risks of poverty when immediate provision can be made by paying a small premium to the English and Scottish Law Office.—David Drimmie and Sons, Secretaries 41, Lower Sackville-street, Dublin, and 5, Lombard-street, Belfast.