

Irish State betrayal

BE IT feudal or monarchic, centrally planned or market oriented, democratic or fascist, the acid test of government is its ability so to order a nation's affairs that its citizens can get a livelihood.

By that criterion, the government of Ireland is the worst in the world. For 160 years now, a livelihood has been denied to half the nation which, as a result, starved to death, rotted in dole queues, or emigrated.

The performance of native government over seventy years, has been no different from that of the preceding colonial government. The number of people able to get a livelihood has continued to decline since 1922 as it did before that and is now less than at any time in the past 250 years.

Half the population is still forced to emigrate as it was before 1922. Since then, 1.5m people have been driven out permanently. Annually, 60,000 people are now born in the Republic; and annually 30,000 are forced to emigrate.

In the 70 years before 1920, the incomes of those left in Ireland rose more rapidly than any others in Europe. Since 1920, they have been rising less rapidly than all other European incomes. Unemployment is three times greater now than when independence was gained.

The most singular accomplishment of the State since independence has been to clock up the largest public debt relative to Gross National Product in the world. It is relatively speaking, three times greater than that of Peru, the most debt-ridden country in the world after Ireland.

Ray MacSharry [Finance

By **RAYMOND CROTTY**

Minister, now Ireland's Commissioner in the Common Market] turns his back on this cock-up and makes his way to Brussels to collect the loot the Irish politicians regard as their entitlement for serving their dynasties and their parties by betraying the nation. Miracle Mac has brought order to the Irish public finances – forsooth! He has secured a lull in the storm in the ocean of public debt in which the nation wallows.

How brief and misleading this lull is will be evident next year when the public sector borrowing requirement will be once more well in excess of £1 bn and when, with free movement of capital, the State will no longer have a captive supply of savings.

A lull has been bought in the storm of the Irish Public finances at enormous cost. Redundancy after redundancy puts as many on to the dole queues as are removed by the emigrant ship and the hounding by officials of applicants for assistance.

Like Scrooge, the books are balanced – more or less and for the time being – but the body politic withers. And all for nothing: a futile effort to curb a public debt that has for long been out of control.

But not to worry. Hospital wards, school classrooms, factories and shops may close; but there is a brand new prison to incarcerate the wretched victims of this utterly unjust, utterly corrupt and utterly inefficient socio-economic order.

At a cost of £40 million to build and £2.5 million a year to operate,

it will hold 120 wretches, at a weekly capital plus current cost of £1000 a week per inmate.

WHY, for 160 years, have half the Irish failed to get a livelihood in Ireland? Are we shiftless morons, unworthy of a livelihood – we Irish who have contributed vastly more than our share to the growth and development of the world outside this island?

Are our fields barren or our waters sterile? Are we located in some out-of-the-way corner close to the antipodes?

It is sufficient to pose these questions to realise that these matters have no bearing whatever on the problem.

Colonialism was the cause of half the Irish being denied a livelihood for a century prior to 1922. Failure to rid our nation of the abominable heritage of colonialism has been the cause of the continuing denial of a livelihood to half the Irish.

The flags, the symbols and the songs of colonialism left in 1922; but the essence remained. The nation's land and the nation's money have continued to be appropriated for the profit of a privileged elite and for the destruction of the nation post 1922 as they were pre 1922.

The privileged 1% who possess half the nation's land have its use for nothing – freer now than at any time since that land was stolen from the nation. While the nation's poor are charged by the moneylenders 500% for their borrowed pittance, the privileged borrow from the banks at negative real interest rates.

While land and capital are thus free for the privileged, the labour for which workers

receive a low price costs the user a high price, because of the imposition of the wage taxes such as Pay As You Earn (PAYE), and the further erosion of depleted wage packets by VAT and by the EEC's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which doubles in many cases the cost of the foods on which Ireland's poor spend nearly half their incomes.

The casualties of this arrangement are not the workers who, by union action, can have their wages and salaries adjusted to allow for the taxes and the CAP.

The real casualties are, directly, that half of the nation which cannot sell its labour for a pittance, but for which users have to pay a high price.

The indirect casualties of this social order are the Catholics of Northern Ireland whom a Protestant statelet tries to batter into submission, to prevent the North being absorbed into such a patently inequitable and inefficient South.

The beneficiaries are, in the first place, the milk and beef barons - the 1% of the nation who own half the nation's land and almost all its milk quotas.

Next are the commercial and industrial operators who have used the capital made available to them for free, first to replace labour which has been made dear by PAYE, VAT and the CAP; and more recently to invest it abroad.

Then there are the bankers who have grown grotesquely rich and powerful by expanding the nation's money from £150m 30 years ago to £17,000m now.

And on top of the obscene pile are the Cosgraves, the deValeras, FitzGerald, Lemass, Springs, O'Malleys and all the breed of Irish politicians who, through 70 years of dastardly native government, have ravaged the nation to create their dynasties and to

EUROPE CASH PLEA

RAYMOND CROTTY has, for almost 40 years, campaigned to have Irish land taxed, as Henry George advocated nearly 110 years ago.

His work has been mainly in research and publication, beginning with *Irish Agricultural Production: Its Volume and Structure*, published in 1966 by Cork University Press.

That argued that the best way to secure efficient farming in Ireland was to tax land so that only efficient farmers would remain in possession of land.

Other works of Crotty's are: *Cattle, Economics and Development* (Commonwealth Agricultural Bureaux, 1980) which, based on several years' experience in the Third World, showed how the land tenure system imposed on those countries by colonialism resulted in their pastoral resources being wretchedly misused.

The Irish Land Question and Sectarian Violence, was a Henry George Centenary Essay, published by the Economic and Social Science Research Association.

Ireland in Crisis: a Study in Capitalist Colonial Underdevelopment (Brandon, 1986), and A

Radical's Response (Poolbeg, 1988), followed.

All of these are principally concerned with the harmful effects of the system of private ownership of land, which was everywhere in the colonies imposed by the metropolitan powers and which has everywhere been retained by the colonies following independence.

Crotty has consistently opposed Irish involvement in the European Economic Community, principally because closer integration would lessen the chances of a land tax being introduced in Ireland.

He has successfully challenged in the Irish courts the Single European Act, which is designed to expedite the integration of the EEC. In a succeeding referendum, 30% of the electorate sided with Crotty against the combined political parties.

Raymond Crotty is now contesting the elections for the European Assembly, or Parliament, in June.

• Donations to Crotty's campaign should be sent to: The Crotty European Parliament Election Campaign Fund, c/o Trustee Savings Bank, 70 Grafton Street, Dublin 2, Ireland.

Given the widespread opposition in Ireland to closer EEC integration, and Ireland's proportionate representation system of voting, he feels he has a good chance of winning one of the 15 seats allocated to Ireland in the European Parliament.

Should he do so, he would be the first advocate of a land tax to win a prominent position in Irish public life since Henry George's supporter, Michael Davitt.

This could be a first major step, 110 years on, towards implementing the taxation of Irish land which was originally urged by Henry George and which an increasing number of Irish people are now beginning to favour.

Crotty urgently needs financial support for his election campaign. He will be opposed in that campaign by the established political parties, all of which favour zero taxation on land but heavy taxation on labour and enterprise. The campaigns of those parties, but not Crotty's will be heavily subsidised by the EEC.

make of Leinster House, with its sons, daughters, grandsons, granddaughters, brothers, widows, cousins, nephews and in-laws a den of nepotism to which, by contrast, the English House of Lords must seem a place of Jacobean rectitude.

HOW HAVE these abominations survived? Two things have made it possible. First, the half of the nation who have consistently

been denied a livelihood here have emigrated, to change their place of residence rather than the diabolical social order that denied them a livelihood.

Second, the State, which is merely the projection of the colonial administration decked out in tricolours and harps, has commanded the resources of the modern nation State of the West;

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and these resources have been added to substantially during the past 40 years when the State has on average borrowed every year the equivalent of 8% of current GNP.

It is because these two circumstances no longer obtain that there is now hope of change in the process of national retrogression or undevelopment that has obtained here for five centuries, and during the past 70 at least as much as in earlier years.

Emigration is no longer so easy. To squeeze out the half the population denied a livelihood it is now necessary to have a reservoir of 250,000 unemployed persons compared to a normal reservoir of 50,000 in the past. That five times larger pool of unemployed gives rise to new financial and political strains.

That is one consideration. The other is that with borrowing, it's a long road that has no turning; and the State's apparently limitless capacity to borrow has now been exhausted. The public debt is way beyond control. Within the next five years it will bring crashing down the entire public finance system of the country. With that crash will go whatever power and prestige the State and those who control it command.

It is in that context that it has become peculiarly timely and relevant for the nation – workers and workless – to unite to end the cursed situation where only half the nation can get a poor and insecure livelihood. The necessary reforms are easy to identify.

- Immediately abolish the status of unemployed. That can be done overnight by paying to every resident citizen, unconditionally, a basic income or national dividend in excess of

present unemployment assistance.

- All deterrents to employment should be removed or offset. That means abolishing PAYE and VAT. The £5 per person per week that the CAP costs should be offset by appropriate taxes on the produce particularly of large farmers.

- The ample means to finance these essential reforms include:

- (a) The £1.6 bn of the nation's tax revenues which politicians are now using, along with new borrowings, to service the debt which they created to establish and sustain their family political dynasties;

- (b) A revenue-maximising tax on all the nation's land, both urban and rural; and

- (c) A revenue-maximising tax on the financial system such that its controllers would cease to usurp the nation's prerogative of expanding its money supply.

THESE measures are technically, economically and financially possible. The task is to make them politically necessary.

Those who are denied a livelihood here can contribute most towards bringing that about, by acquiring – and creating in others – a clear and burning awareness of the inequity, inefficiency and mindlessness of the present situation.

They can help by supporting persons and movements concerned to bring about fundamental change which would end mass unemployment and mass emigration.

They can help to bring about change by withdrawing support for a State that is the enemy of the nation in that it denies a livelihood to half its members.

The half who are denied an opportunity to work can help to bring about change by making it impossible also for the other half to work.

And like Marx's workers of the world, Ireland's workless should remember that they have only their £35 a week dole to lose, and if they cannot immediately win justice and reason, they will at least be assured of a £1000 a week stop in the State's newest prison.

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posed basic land law and the prevailing national land use planning law must be studied. In order to reduce land prices, the government must possess the power to enforce such a reduction.

At issue is the possible sale of the former Japanese National Railways land lots, which is frozen for the moment. How the government handles the sale will foreshadow the attitude and determination with which it will handle the basic land law.

Land must be treated as a public property. If the government repeats the blunder of provoking land price hikes by the sale of the former JNR plots, not much can be expected of the basic land law. The proposed legislation should not become a bureaucratic plaything.



Tokyo Tower: Sky-high land prices