The Irish Revolution, early Australian communists and Anglophone radical peripheries: Dublin, Glasgow, Sydney, 1920–23

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Abstract: 'Communism' and 'Ireland' remain, as a legacy of Cold War binarisms, two subjects that rarely converge in Australian historiography. This article explores the place of 'Ireland' in the political imagination of the nascent Australian Communist movement between its fractured formation in 1920 and the end of the Irish Civil War in 1923. In challenging nation-centric and essentialist treatments of 'the Irish' in Australian political history, it foregrounds a diffuse politicisation around 'Ireland' itself that transcended identitarian ontologies. This article argues that, examined within the ambivalent translation of early interwar radical cosmopolitanisms in a white settler labour movement, 'Ireland' was a directly 'international', if racialised, coordinate in the imaginative geography of early Australian communism. Although the 'Irish Question' circulated within the existing networks of the Comintern, this contest was also produced within other 'routes' on the Anglophone peripheries of the Communist world. The mobile lives of Peter Larkin, Esmonde Higgins and Harry Arthur Campbell, and the momentary alliance of the Communist Party of Australia with the Sydney Irish National Association during the 1923 'Irish envoys' tour, allow for these connections to be reframed in non-primordialist terms within border-crossings and transnational encounter. An investigation of the 'Irish Question' within transgressions of cultural boundaries,

instead of 'shared' national histories, can facilitate its extrication from Cold War narratives of ossified 'identity'.

Keywords: Ireland, nationalism, settler-colonialism, CPGB, Australia.

Τhe birth of the Australian communist movement in 1920 coincided with the highpoints of the Russian Civil War and the Irish War of Independence: two flashpoints in a post-war global context marked by a chronological extension of the Great War into a 'Greater War'.[1] 'Ireland' figured, within the early Australian communist movement, as a facet of an ambivalent contest over 'empire', 'race' and 'self-government' in a racially exclusionary 'white' settler society in the Pacific. In foregrounding the fluid and contested character of these early debates, this article explores the place of 'Ireland' in the political imaginary of the nascent Australian communist movement between its formation in October 1920 and the end of the Irish Civil War in 1923. It contends that a broader politicisation in the 'white' settler world around Irish independence shaped the 'global' and counter-imperial imaginary of early Australian Communists. Although the Communist International mediated the anti-colonial outlook of Australian communists at the most general level, the 'Irish Question' circulated within multiple other radical networks constituted through cross-border mobility and direct contact with the Irish revolution. The mobile lives of radicals who moved across the Anglophone peripheries of the communist world – in Australasia, England, Scotland and Ireland itself – offer avenues for investigating the networked character of the 'Irish Question' beyond the 'grammar of nationalism', and within distinctly cosmopolitan subjectivities.

The disparate strands of Australian radicalism with sympathies for the Russian Revolution converged, in October 1920, in the belated formation of an initially fractious communist movement visibly attuned to a global context of imperial disintegration. Stuart Macintyre situates the emergence of the Comintern beyond the obvious import of the Russian Revolution itself to the international communist movement, and within wider revolutionary aftershocks in Italy, France,

Spain, China, India and Latin America.[2] Yet by contrast, the Irish War of Independence and Civil War have yet to be examined in the same terms as a formative 'global' influence upon Australian communism. By contrast to their treatment of Russia as a self-evidently 'international' question, historians of Australian political radicalism have largely confined their framing of the 'Irish Question' to narratives of a bounded 'Irish presence' inside the labour movement.[3] Frank Farrell largely omitted the 'Irish Question' from his study of 'international socialism' in Australia, except to excise it as an example of the 'tammany-style politics' of 'Catholics'.[4] The trope of 'Irish radicalism', as such, figures more prominently in Australian historiography as a subset of radical *Australian* nationalist myth – a surrogate for masculinist narratives of settler egalitarianism – than as a modern, post-war nationalist movement.[5] Although reified conceptions of identity may correct the marginalisation of Irish cultural difference from Australian history, they foreclose the possibility of assessing 'Ireland' itself as a focus of 'internationalist', cosmopolitan and indeed non-'Irish' politicisation within integrated urban spaces.

Early histories of Catholic-Irish Australia largely replicated this abstraction of the 'Irish Question' from broader contexts of interwar political radicalism while holding the subject of Communism to be a long-standing historiographical taboo. Writing as a self-acknowledged cultural insiderist in a climate of Catholic anti-communism, historian of Irish-Australia Patrick O'Farrell, whose work remains foundational to the field, characterised labour radicals and 'anything touched by' the Bolshevik revolution as a 'socialist kiss of death'.[6] O'Farrell, a contributor to the conservative *Quadrant* journal, whose intellectual outlook was heavily shaped by Cold War contexts, broadly sympathised with the aims of the anti-communist Democratic Labour Party (DLP) and described communism as an 'insidious and powerful menace which must be opposed without compromise'.[7] By contrast to cognate histories in Britain and the United States, studies of the 'Irish Question' in the Australian labour movement, including Celia Hamilton's, have similarly been concerned less with Irish nationalism than with the roots of Cold War political Catholicism.[8] Yet in potentially overstating the depth of Catholic-communist animosity in the early interwar Australian labour

movement, this historiography has tended to anachronistically read Cold War tropes into the socio-political conflicts of the early twentieth century. One recent contribution to the genre of 'DLP history' draws an explicit link between the Catholic Worker's Association of the Great War and the anti-communist 'Movement' of the Cold War.[9] A core feature of this distinctly Cold War interpretation is a methodological Australian nationalism, within which, according to O'Farrell, 'the big Irish questions in Australia' were those that raised peculiarly 'Australian' instead of global or imperial questions.[10]

Over half a century on from the Cold War Labour Party split in Australia, a breaching of the historiographical divide between 'communism' and 'Ireland' in Australian history necessitates moving beyond nation-centric and ontologically essentialist paradigms. As Bruce Nelson contends in relation to similar debates in histories of Irish-American nationalism, attempts to uncover a monolithic and consensual 'Catholic opinion', usually conceived as 'conservative', can obscure the relationship of the 'Irish Question' to wider contexts of early interwar political radicalism.[11] Elizabeth Malcolm and Dianne Hall have, in emphasising the multiplicity of 'Irish' experiences in Australia beyond ethnic ideal-types, foregrounded relations of settler-colonialism and 'race' in their *New History of the Irish in Australia*.[12] Recent transnational approaches to the 'Global Irish Revolution' offer further avenues for extricating the 'Irish Question' from bounded histories of 'Australia.' Enda Delaney and Fearghal McGarry propose a broadening of Irish revolutionary history from histories of 'the Irish overseas' to the 'Irish Question' itself, as it circulated within global networks.[13] This embrace of connections over conventional metaphors of 'shared' national histories presents, in turn, a basis for recovering the relationship of radical, and particularly communist, networks to the global Irish revolution. In a departure from 'island histories' of interwar Irish radicalism, Maurice Casey examines the role of personal networks in the formation of a distinct 'Comintern Generation' in interwar Ireland.[14] Oleksa Drachewych has, in the same vein, argued for trans-nationalising the study of the Communist International itself through a re-emphasis upon radical networks, diasporas and border-crossings.[15] Applied to Australian contexts, a transnational and anti-essentialist

conception of the 'Irish Question' can facilitate the recovery of previously overlooked solidarities, alliances and political imaginaries beyond settler national narratives

Imagining Ireland at the foundation of the CPA

Any consideration of the influence of the Irish revolution upon Australian communism necessitates a study not of one Communist Party, but of a shifting alliance of radical currents, marked by fluid political boundaries. In a far cry from the disciplined and highly centralised party apparatus of the later CPA, Australian communists remained divided for the entirety of 1921 between two Sydney-based factions following a futile attempt at an initial unity conference.[16] One grouping, based on Sussex Street, named itself the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) and comprised an eclectic collection of former Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) members led by Tom Glynn, radical trade union officials in Sydney led by Jock Garden, and a short-lived grouping of former Victorian Socialist Party (VSP) members led by Percy Laidler in Melbourne.[17] The other, a grouping based on Liverpool Street that called itself the International Communists, was a reincarnation of the existing Australian Socialist Party (ASP).[18] The period of 1920–1921 thus formed a liminal juncture for Australian radicalism in which not one but numerous radical networks vied for influence on the revolutionary left of the labour movement. Early attempts by radicals to relate to the 'Irish Question' thus took place not within a well-oiled party machine, but a loose alliance of industrial militants, iconoclastic personalities and radical intellectuals. The ensuing twenty months of internecine feuding between the 'Sussex Street' and 'Liverpool Street' parties, culminating in the formal recognition of the CPA by the Comintern in May 1922, broadly coincided with the highpoint of Australian politicisation around the Irish revolution itself.[19]

Communist responses to the 'Irish Question' in Australia were, at a local level, anchored in a wider alignment between Catholic and labour associational networks.[20] Although leading figures in the New South Wales Catholic Federation did ideologically oppose communism,

an explicit conflation by Patrick O'Farrell of ecclesiastical opinion with 'Catholic' opinion more widely obscures the entangled character of Catholic-labour relations 'from below'.[21] Melbourne's Catholic Archbishop Daniel Mannix was himself influenced by the wider urban radical culture of the anti-conscription movement and routinely made speeches that, as Val Noone notes, mirrored the rhetoric of radical Labour parliamentarians.[22] The early Australian communist parties opposed anti-Catholic sectarianism, but took a considerably more critical attitude towards the Catholic hierarchy itself than the Victorian Socialist (VSP).[23] An early supporter of the call for an Australian section of the Comintern was the Melbourne radical Guido Barracchi, a figure prominent in radical literary circles.[24] Writing for his journal the *Proletarian Review,* Barracchi linked the deportation from Australia of German priest Father Charles Jerger in 1920 to the 'the Irish'.[25] Although unrelated to the 'Irish Question' itself, the Jerger controversy provided Barracchi a political frame for differentiating 'Irish' from 'Catholic' concerns. Noting the presence of Daniel Mannix and Eamon de Valera in the United States in August 1920, Barracchi contrasted the enthusiasm of the church to defend Jerger with the apparent failure of either Irish nationalist to defend Jim Larkin from prosecution by American authorities.[26] The symbol of Larkin allowed the CPA to combine a sympathy for Irish independence with an anti-clerical class discourse, and was recapitulated in an 'Open Letter' from the Sussex Street CPA to Mannix:

> You know that when you were in America you dared not even mention the name of Jim Larkin, who was thrown into the jails of America by the American Capitalists. Jim Larkin! The foremost fighter for social freedom that your country, Ireland ever bred … Here is the difference between us, Jim Larkin is a member of the Irish working class. You are a member of the Irish bourgeoisie, and the class struggle leaves us face to face. On the Irish question alone can we come together. You stand for the liberation of the Irish people from the bloody dictatorship of the British, so do the Communists.[27]

In practice, the relationship between early Australian communists and Irish nationalist mobilisation was more unstable than such formal polemics suggest. In the absence of close relations with the Comintern itself in the early months of Australian communism, a broader politicisation around the 'Irish Question' in the 'white' settler world was pivotal in shaping the contest inside the Australian communist movement over Ireland.[28] Between March 1921 and the conclusion of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in December 1921, Irish nationalist activity in Australia took place under the helm of various campaigns that sought to translate movements for 'Irish self-determination' in Britain, Canada and the United States to Australian conditions. Formed by Canadian-born Irish republican organiser Katherine Hughes in 1921 with the support of Dáil Éireann itself, the most significant of these organisations was the Self-Determination for Ireland League of Australia (SDILA), developed into a mass movement of 40,000 members across 400 branches.[29] Neither the SDILA nor CPA made formal overtures to one another, but both nascent communist parties attempted to relate to popular interest in the Irish revolution by holding open-air meetings on the 'Irish Question' on the Sydney Domain in the early months of 1921.[30] Individual communists, including branch secretary Jack Rawstrong in the mining town of Newcastle, did actively participate in the SDILA.[31] The trans-nationalisation of the Irish revolution shaped the political climate in which Australian communists responded to the 'Irish Question', but in reaching Australia, converged with other political contexts beyond the Irish community itself.

Historians such as Keith Pescod have explained the 'Irish Question' in the Australian labour movement through measurements of 'Irish' ethnic representation in parties and trade unions, but the analytic value of an 'ethnic head-count' for understanding radical imaginings of Ireland itself is highly questionable.[32] Such primordialist explanations of the 'Irish Question' imply an overly linear relationship between 'ethnicity' and politics that maps onto Cold War narratives of Australian 'political Catholicism'. There is however, little evidence to suggest that an organised 'Irish' or Catholic 'presence' in the CPA shaped the contest over 'Ireland' within it to any extent, or that 'Ireland' inhabited a distinct ontological category in the early Australian communist imagination from

other 'international' questions including Russia. Australian responses to the Irish revolution can be more usefully understood, within a specific post-war paradigm of 'self-determination', as forms of radical cosmopolitanism, distinguished more by what Verity Burgmann identifies as 'multiplicity, movement and connection' than by bounded conceptions of ethnic identity.[33] Communists of non-Irish and non-Catholic, albeit 'white settler, background figured equally, if not more, prominently in the formation of connections with radical networks in Ireland than those of Irish birth or ancestry. Hugo Throsell, a CPA member of Methodist background who visited Ireland as a soldier on leave during the war, conceived of Ireland in universalist terms as an example of how 'the wheels which control the conditions of our lives, and the lives of others, go around'.[34] Yet even insofar as the 'Irish Question' politicised CPA members of Irish descent, a reduction of their political outlook to their 'ethnic origin' alone would invariably entail an erasure of internationalist and cosmopolitan facets to their radical agency.[35]

In imagining Irish independence in directly 'international' terms, Australian communists firmly positioned Ireland within the 'colonised' – as distinct from the 'colonial' – world. Both communist parties welcomed the Irish revolution as an antecedent to the disintegration of the British Empire, an empire 'built upon the exploitation of colonial peoples and its working classes'.[36] The 'Sussex Street' Party strongly linked the 'Irish Question' to independence movements in India, Egypt, and even China, and continually invoked analogies in its press between the 'Black and Tans' and Reginald Dyer as illustrations of British imperial violence.[37] Tom Glynn, whose anti-colonial sympathies were also shaped by his pre-war experiences as an IWW member in South Africa where he witnessed the 1906 Bambatha Rebellion, noted in response to news of the repression of protests in Bengal that 'Ireland is not the only country which is just now enjoying the British policy of peaceful penetration'.[38] This overtly 'anti-colonial' framing of the 'Irish Question' was encapsulated in a cartoon published on the front page of the *Communist* titled 'Empire Days in Egypt, India and Ireland' that, in an inversion of racialised portrayals of these nationalities, depicted a British officer carrying out a massacre as an ape (see Figure 1).[39] In place of a top-down transmission of ideas from Moscow, the 'Irish Question' remained

contested within the early Australian communist movement. The communist and erstwhile English suffragette Adela Pankhurst Walsh, who had earlier dismissed Irish independence as a form of 'nationalism', had by 1921 changed her stance considerably within a heightened climate of Irish nationalist politicisation.[40] Addressing the Sydney May Day demonstration in 1921, where the Union Jack was reportedly burned, Pankhurst linked the flag to 'the cruelties of the bourgeoisie in Ireland and in India'.[41] Not all communists were convinced. In 1921, a railway union member approached Guido Barracchi with doubts about whether communists should endorse a 'bourgeois nationalist movement', to which Barracchi responded in the affirmative, and welcomed national independence movements insofar as they formed a 'disintegrating influence' upon the British Empire.[42] This 'anti-colonial' sympathy for Ireland was however, accompanied by an ambivalent relationship to settler-colonialism in Australia. Unlike supporters of the Australian Labor Party, neither Communist Party in Australia coupled the 'Irish Question' with calls for White Australian 'independence' or a defence of settler sovereignty against 'Imperial Federation'.[43] Instead, Sussex Street CPA leader Jock Garden likened the hired 'thugs' of Australian employers to 'Black and Tans', within criticisms of Australian nationalism.[44] Yet despite this formal 'internationalism', the use of anti-colonial analogies between Ireland and the subaltern world by the CPA was not, in the early 1920s, accompanied by a recognition of settler-colonialism in Australia or an extension of 'self-determination' to indigenous people.[45]

The Anglophone radical world itself contained multiple vectors of cultural transfer between Ireland and Australia beyond any single diaspora nationalism.[46] The cultural symbol of James Connolly had, by the formation of the CPA, been widely circulated in Australia by the Victorian Socialist Party, a sister organisation of the British Independent Labour Party (ILP) founded by Tom Mann.[47] The imperial connections of the Australian labour movement with its British counterpart strongly shaped the 'Irish Question' in the CPA, who placed demands not only on the British Government but also the British Labour Party.[48] These connections between the metropolitan and settler radical movements emanated less from the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) *per se* than the contest within the broader British labour movement

EMPIRE DAYS IN EGYPT, INDIA AND IRELAND.

Figure 1: *Communist*, **27 May 1921, p1**

over Ireland, and as Evan Smith contends, the CPGB leadership itself took little interest in the early CPA.[49] From 1921, the British labour movement slogan of 'Hands off Ireland' entered into the repertoire of the Australian labour movement.[50] The communist-led New South Wales Labour Council – the so-called 'Trades Hall Reds' – resolved in February 1921 to demand that the British labour movement 'stop the war in Ireland by stopping the supply of munitions of war' on the template of the 'Hands off Russia' campaign.[51] Beyond the circulation of discourses, the culturally hybrid lives of radicals who moved between national contexts may provide an insight into the process by which radicals became politicised around the 'Irish Question' during the formation of Australian communism.

Shadow networks and radical cosmopolitanisms

The physical crossing of Australia's racialised borders by 'white' transnational radicals facilitated the circulation of influences between British, Irish and Australian communists over the 'Irish Question' in the early interwar world. Contrary to the assumption by Patrick O'Farrell that 'Ireland' merely provided Australian Catholics a 'convenient allegory' for 'local' parish-level concerns, Ireland was a tangible focus of transnational contention that circulated from outside 'the nation'.[52] Beyond direct ties with the Comintern, these networks took the form of personal connections on the Anglophone peripheries of the Communist world. The most prominent Communist orator on the 'Irish Question' in Australia was also the most prominent member of the of the Irish revolutionary generation to have lived in Australia.[53] Between 1915 and 1922, Peter Larkin, the brother of Irish labour radicals Delia and Jim, lived in Australia as a seafarer, wharf labourer, IWW organiser and Communist following an earlier visit to the United States.[54] Peter Larkin had, in 1920, been recently released as one of the 'Sydney Twelve' Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) prisoners and joined the Sussex Street CPA at its foundation.[55] Larkin was notable among Australian IWW and CPA members for his pronounced radical Irish nationalist sympathies that earnt him the title of a 'dangerous and fanatical revolutionary with a dash of Sinn Féin thrown in' from the police.[56] Larkin dismissed the Republican fundraising efforts of the SDILA as a 'waste of money' and insisted that 'the way to help the Irish workers is for the workers of Australia to fight for the same social revolution', but his relations with organised Irish nationalists in Australia were far from antagonistic.[57] In November 1920, he addressed a rally of the Irish-Ireland League in response to the death from hunger strike of Cork Sinn Féin mayor Terence MacSwiney: the same demonstration that led to the expulsion from parliament of Labor Parliamentarian Hugh Mahon.[58] During a tour of Australian east coast in 1921 as a CPA organiser, Larkin spoke on Ireland-related topics ranging from 'Sinn Féin and the Irish Labour Movement' to 'Communism, Ireland and Australia'.[59] His lectures combined an unambiguous sympathy for 'Sinn Féin' with an assumption that the Easter Rising was an 'industrial' rebellion, and he claimed

that 'Irish workers are fighting behind the Sinn Féin flag … Because they know that when the time arrives it will turn Red'.[60]

As a peripatetic radical without 'Australian' national attachments, Peter Larkin's connections with the Irish revolution disrupt monolithic narratives of an assimilationist 'Irish-Australian' national identity. In Australia, Larkin's imagining of the Irish revolution was shaped less by the Comintern *per se* than within a continued identification with the Irish Transport and General Workers Union (ITGWU), of which he was an active member during the Great Dublin Lockout of 1913.[61] A leaflet for the Sydney Twelve Release Committee explicitly referred to Peter Larkin as a member of the 'Irish Transport Workers'.[62] Burgmann holds that Larkin 'was no propagandist for Irish nationalism', but assessed beyond 'Australian' national exceptionalisms, and within long-distance connections with ITGWU members, Larkin's political identity was more multi-layered rather than singularly 'syndicalist'.[63] As Emmet O'Connor holds, the ITGWU was not only a syndicalist union, but was politically entangled with Republicanism before and during the Irish revolutionary period.[64] Peter Larkin unequivocally sympathized with the Easter Rising and remained in continual correspondence from Australia with Delia Larkin and her wider networks. In a letter to Enniskillen-based trade unionist Thomas O'Byrne, he expressed, in a use of 'Larkinite' cultural symbols that echoed the masthead of the ITGWU's pre-war *Irish Worker* newspaper, that it was for the 'faith of James Fintan Lalor' that 'the boys under Pierce [sic] and Connolly gave the [sic] lives'.[65] Specific networks and cultural transfers, instead of an essential Irish *ethnos*, sustained Larkin's performance of an Irish nationalist identification in the CPA.

Direct contact with the Irish revolution in the form of 'political pilgrimages' enabled other early Australian communists to situate 'Ireland' within a post-war world.[66] Ireland can, as Kenneth Shonk argues, be conceived of as a 'shadow metropolis' that provided a space of contact between counter-imperial movements.[67] Clarence 'Carl' Wilbur Baker, a founding member of the Sussex Street CPA and the first editor of the *Australian Communist*, had in 1917 been court-martialled in Belfast as an Australian soldier on leave after being found in possession of numerous Irish republican pamphlets, including tracts by Maeve

Cavanagh and James Connolly.[68] Baker remained publicly silent on his ordeal in Ireland upon his return to Australia, but other Australian radical travellers more explicitly situated Ireland within the same post-war revolutionary context as the Russian Revolution. Esmonde Higgins, the nephew of radical liberal politician Henry Bournes Higgins and a student at Balliol College, Oxford, experienced the political ferment of revolutionary Ireland first hand during a tour through the Irish countryside on his summer break in 1919. Higgins, who had yet to join the CPGB until he visited the Soviet Union the following year, admitted at the time to knowing 'nothing about Russia'.[69] Yet attesting to what Fredrik Petersson identifies as the capacity for radicals to forge an 'anti-imperialist' outlook within an awareness 'of the world as a complex system' through travel, Higgins mused that the 'only' solution to the Irish impasse was for small farmers and labour to 'Bolshevize' the country.[70] Although Higgins was of Irish Protestant 'descent', both his and Baker's politicisation around Ireland can, as Terry Irving holds, be better understood within a cosmopolitan register as forms of 'romantic modernism' produced less within primordial identities than within a specific post-war global context .[71]

The deportation of non-Australian born IWW members from 1917 under the Unlawful Associations Act, introduced by the Hughes Government to criminalise the movement during the conscription controversy, produced a small Australian radical 'diaspora' with ties to Irish labour radical networks. Jock and May Wilson, two IWW deportees in Liverpool who became active on the left-wing of the Independent Labour Party (ILP) upon arrival, established contact with Delia Larkin during her campaigns for the release from prison both of Peter Larkin in Australia and of Jim Larkin in the United States.[72] Glasgow, where a growth of Irish Republican activity converged with the industrial radicalism of 'Red Clydeside', formed an important contact zone that exposed at least two Australian radicals to the Irish revolution.[73] One deportee, Patrick Francis 'Paddy' Quinlan, arrived in Glasgow amid this deepening contest within the British labour movement over the 'Irish Question', as exemplified in 1921 by a strike of 400 members of the Lanarkshire Miners' Union in Giffnock in sympathy with Irish independence.[74] Quinlan, not to be confused with the Irish-born American

IWW member of the same name, was a Sydney wharf labourer known to fellow deportee Tom Barker as a leading member of the IWW's band in its weekly route marches, and who later lived in Dublin where he applied his creative abilities to the New Theatre in the 1930s.[75] Writing to Glynn soon after the 1920 British Labour Commission into Ireland in January 1921, Quinlan reported that 'the Black and Tans, helped by the army of occupation, were, and are still, murdering, burning and torturing poor little Ireland'.[76] In doing so, Quinlan voiced an increasingly common criticism within the left-wing of the British labour movement of the Labour Party leadership for 'twisting, distorting and side-stepping their imperative duty' towards Ireland.[77]

A radical traveler who directly participated in the contest within the British labour movement over Ireland was Harry Arthur Campbell, a self-described 'Australian Sinn Féiner' who, like Paddy Quinlan, lived in Glasgow.[78] Campbell, an Australian-born New Zealand labour activist, was a supporter of the British Independent Labour Party (ILP) in New Zealand and had earlier corresponded with Keir Hardie. In 1917, he emigrated from Wellington to Glasgow and became an ILP organiser on the appointment of Willie Stewart.[79] Over the course of the Irish revolution, Campbell visited Ireland twice as a political 'pilgrim': first in 1917, and subsequently in 1920 to document British reprisals at the height of the Irish War of Independence. On his second visit, Campbell published his observations in six-penny pamphlet, *The Crucifixion of Ireland,* that combined an Irish nationalist historical narrative with graphic, first-hand descriptions of police raids on civilians.[80] In line with the dominant framing of foreign correspondence from Ireland during the War of Independence, Campbell focused on the actions of the Auxiliaries and Black and Tans instead of the Irish republican movement, but curiously, omitted any reference to the Easter Rising from his historical narrative of the 'Irish Question'.[81]

In his association with the 'Irish Question' from within an 'Australian' identification, Campbell was a self-styled ambassador for what Marilyn Lake terms transnational progressivism, a New World political project that yoked claims for progressive state intervention to racialised discourses of settler 'self-government'.[82] From the outset of his involvement in the ILP, Campbell fashioned himself as an 'Australian Labour

Organiser' in the British labour movement and promoted 'Australia' – specifically, the Queensland Labor government of Thomas Joseph Ryan – as a social laboratory for 'state socialism'.[83] Campbell's performance of long-distance Australian radical nationalism became a visible point of demarcation between the ILP and supporters of the nascent British communist movement in 'Red Clydeside'. The Socialist Labour Party (SLP) considered Campbell to be an 'irresponsible' and 'nefarious' irritant 'imported from Australia', while John Maclean himself contrasted the politics of Peter Larkin with those of Harry Campbell, and claimed, in a letter to Delia Larkin, that 'many in Scotland have been misled by a Mr Campbell boosting Australia as the land of Socialism'.[84] A central component of Campbell's 'Australianess' during his political radicalisation around Ireland was an identification with the 'global colour line' and the White Australia Policy.[85] In this, Campbell's views on 'race' did not radically diverge from the early Australian communist movement. Although the CPA formally criticized Australian racial exclusion, its relationship to 'White Labourist' discourses of 'economic competition' remained, as Evan Smith and Jon Piccini have recently argued, consistent with the broader Australian labour movement well into the mid-twentieth century.[86] A radical sympathy for Irish independence evidently did not, in and of itself, lead to a questioning of settler-colonialism or racial exclusion in Australia.

Yet it was the 'Irish Question', instead of the 'Australian Question', that formed the main pivot around which Campbell's relationship to early British communism underwent a dramatic transformation. From as early as 1918, Campbell became a vocal internal critic in the ILP over the Irish Question and wrote numerous letters to the Glasgow *Forward* that continually criticised the ILP leadership for supporting the Irish Convention, and for 'shilly-shallying' over its formal support for Irish independence.[87] He reserved particular opprobrium for John Arthur Henderson upon hearing that Henderson cheered the news of the execution of the 1916 leaders when it reached the House of Commons, and even visited Irish radical nationalist parliamentarian Laurence Ginnell to confirm the veracity of this story.[88] Yet he directed his polemics equally against figures on the left wing of the ILP, and personally confronted Manny Shinwell and Davy Kirkwood at public meetings.[89] Campbell's

account of the Anglo-Irish War was, assessed in light of these debates, a political contribution to a deepening internal debate within the British labour movement over Ireland, and more specifically, a response to the failure of the ILP to proceed with its own 'fact-finding'.[90] His polemics against the Labour Party leadership became increasingly trenchant by the time of his visit: he ridiculed the 'pious resolution' on Ireland passed by the Trade Union Congress at its September 1920 Congress, and called for 'direct action' by the labour movement to stop the war in Ireland.[91] The *Crucifixion of Ireland* concluded by urging the British labour movement to support Irish independence on the grounds that 'the interests of the workers of Ireland and England are identical'.[92]

Campbell's disillusionment with the ILP over the 'Irish Question' was coupled with a general political radicalisation towards the communist movement. Although he insisted on the need to convert the British Labour Party to socialism 'from the inside [rather] than from the outside' as late as September 1919, he was thoroughly disillusioned with parliamentarist politics by the publication of *The Crucifixion of Ireland*, and in it, claimed the House of Commons had become a 'a corrupt institution and the home of the original serpent that tempted Eve'.[93] As early as December 1918, he linked the position of Ireland during the War of Independence with that of Russia during the Civil War.[94] By the time of his 1920 tour, he had already identified with the Comintern, who he claimed were 'good, honest, sincere, able men, with clean hands'.[95] Campbell eventually left the ILP over the Irish Question upon his return to Britain, although he continued to influence the ranks of the ILP membership and delivered an eye-witness account of the Irish situation at an Edinburgh ILP meeting after his resignation.[96]

Beyond his attachments to the CPGB, Campbell maintained a transnational – if racialised – political subjectivity produced within a spatial imagining of the Anglophone radical world.[97] The Scottish Worker's Committee (SWC), the successor of the Clyde Workers' Committee who had earlier polemicised against Campbell, had by 1920, agreed to publish *The Crucifixion of Ireland*. For the most part, Campbell was a peripheral supporter of the British communist movement who made no appearance in the CPGB press itself. By mid-1921, he had all but resigned himself to his estrangement from the British ILP and

re-assumed an 'Australian' political identity through long-distance contact with its sister organisations in the Victorian Socialist Party (VSP) and the New Zealand SDP.[98] Writing to leading VSP intellectual Bob Ross, Campbell delivered a copy of *The Crucifixion of Ireland* accompanied with the message: 'for god's sake Bob, get into the fight! – get all the Socialists on the job'.[99] In a similar vein, Campbell wrote to his erstwhile colleague in the New Zealand Labour Party (NZLP), the parliamentarian Ted Howard, and urged the party to 'get to work in real earnest and use every means in their power' to redress the situation in Ireland.[100] Campbell, as such, remained a conduit between contacts in the Glasgow ILP and the NZLP, and during his tour of Ireland, a 10-year-old girl in the party's Socialist Sunday School wrote to Howard to wish that Campbell 'will get back safely from Ireland as we are very fond of him'.[101] While Campbell may have also met Ross during his pre-war political life in Australasia, his political break with the British ILP allowed him to establish new connections by distance with the CPA. After receiving a copy of the Sydney *Communist* at the SWC office, Campbell posted a consignment of pamphlets on the 'Irish Question' to the Sussex Street CPA, including his own, and claimed in anti-parliamentarist – albeit masculinist – terms that it was a 'summary of how the British male political prostitutes operate in Great Britain and Ireland'.[102]

The reception of the *Crucifixion of Ireland* in the Anglophone world offers a vector of comparison between the response of the British, and Australian, labour movements to the Irish Question. The *Daily Herald* favourably compared the pamphlet to *The Story of Irish Labour* by J.M. MacDonnell on the basis of its emphasis on the 'capitalist' roots of British rule in Ireland.[103] For the most part, the pamphlet received little publicity from within the British labour movement, and although Campbell claimed it was 'selling well', its circulation was most likely limited to ILP branches that Campbell himself toured, including in Consett where sixty copies were sold at a single meeting.[104] One public figure whose interest in the pamphlet was notable in light of his future association with Cold War anti-communism was Daniel Mannix, who during his three-week tour of Scotland, wrote to Campbell from Edinburgh to congratulate him on its publication.[105] It received its

most favourable response, however, in the antipodes, where both the VSP and Sussex Street Communist Party welcomed the pamphlet, and Bob Ross heeded a request by Campbell to publish an Australian edition of the pamphlet.[106] By contrast to the ambivalent reception of the pamphlet in the British labour movement, the pamphlet resonated with an increasingly mainstream sentiment in the Australian and New Zealand labour movements and appeared alongside Erskine Childers' *The Militarisation of Ireland* as one of several publications on the 'Irish Question' to have entered into circulation within the Australian labour movement by 1921.[107] In New Zealand, where the Labour Party more assertively supported Irish independence than its Australian and British counterparts, Labour leader Harry Holland defended the pamphlet in parliament against press censorship.[108] Campbell's experience of 'political pilgrimage' to revolutionary Ireland thus produced a circuit that connected the internal contest within the British labour movement over the 'Irish Question' with a broader diffusion of contention that travelled between Glasgow, Dublin and Sydney and Wellington.

The CPA and anti-Treaty Irish Republicanism, 1922–23

In his 'industrial notes', Jock Garden responded to news of the Treaty by claiming the 'fire' lit by Connolly in 1916 'has burned out, and is flickering into darkness'.[109] In line with the Communist Party of Ireland (CPI) and the broader Comintern, the CPA took a strongly anti-Treatyite stance at the end of the Irish War of Independence, albeit without formally taking a side in the subsequent Civil War.[110] The *Communist* responded to news of the Treaty by reprinting the Easter 1916 Proclamation alongside a statement from the CPGB leadership.[111] The figure of Roddy Connolly, as it circulated through the exchange of British and Irish communist newspapers, surfaced prominently in the CPA's reading of the Treaty.[112] There is some evidence to suggest that the CPI newspaper, *Worker's Republic*, gained a distribution in Australia beyond the Australian Communist movement itself, and one reader wrote to the Labor Party newspaper *Westralian Worker* to promote the paper.[113]

The Treaty nevertheless remained a contested subject within communist-led unions. Although previously silent on the 'Irish Question', the Seamen's Union of Australia's *Australasian Seamen's Journal* published an exchange of letters from 1922 that carried a range of opinions on the Treaty.[114] The union's Communist leader, Tom Walsh provoked a small backlash from within the ranks of the union by writing a piece for the journal attributing the electoral defeat of the Irish Labour Party in 1922 General Election to its alliance with the Republican movement during the War of Independence.[115] Writing at sea to Walsh, one self-described Irish republican seafarer Sean O'Nea threatened that 'there are enough Irish Republicans in the Seamen's Union to make you regret that you ever penned the above paragraph', and claimed to have forwarded this letter onto the Irish republican press.[116] Walsh defended his position by counter posing the legacy of Connolly with that of Tom Johnson, but this exchange was so emotionally charged that he urged one contributor to 'write on one side of the paper' and to avoid hurling 'insults at the wage workers of any country'.[117] Despite these real differences with Irish Republicans, early Australian communists aligned themselves in practical terms with the anti-Treatyite margins of Australian Irish nationalist opinion, and the 'Trades Hall Reds' hosted an anti-Treatyite speaker from as early as 1922.[118]

The Irish Civil War of 1922-23 produced new solidarities that ruptured political boundaries between radical labour and Irish nationalist organisations. Frank Farrell claims that the 'fragile post-war unity between left-wing socialists and Catholic support for Ireland' began to 'fade' during the Irish Civil War, but the active involvement of the CPA in Anti-Treatyite Irish republicanism suggests the reverse.[119] Despite forging formal connections with Russian immigrant organisations including the Russian Workers' Organisation, Australian communists lacked comparable ties with Irish nationalist organisations until the Civil War of 1922–23.[120] The tour of two Anti-Treatyite Irish republican envoys, Sinn Fein president Michael O'Flanagan and John Joseph 'J.J.' O'Kelly ('Sceilg'), across the Australian east coast in mid-1923 produced a contest that placed Australian communists in contact with the transnational networks of Irish republicanism itself. O'Flanagan and O'Kelly had been dispatched by Eamon De Valera to carry out a fundraising

tour for Sinn Féin, but received no support from a predominantly pro-Treaty Catholic clergy upon arrival.[121] In May 1923 they were arrested on a charge of sedition, and were subsequently deported on the order of the High Court three months later.[122] Mark Finnane draws out the implications of the 'Irish envoys' tour for the consolidation of exclusionary border practices in Australia, but a specific consideration of the CPA's involvement in the tour offers an avenue for disrupting Cold War assumptions about Catholic-communist relations in the Australian labour movement.[123]

The political isolation of Anti-Treatyite sentiment in Australia during the 'Irish Envoys' tour produced a distinct, and episodic, alliance between the communist party and the Irish National Association (INA), who hosted the speakers on the Sydney leg of their tour. Formed in 1915, the INA was a radical Irish nationalist organisation with trans-pacific ties to the US-based Clan na Gael, and whose leading members had been interned in Australia in 1918.[124] The INA itself confines its official history of the Irish envoy's tour to a narrative of Irish intra-communal divisions, but omits the central involvement of non-Irish labour and communist networks in the campaign.[125] The tour was however, realised within a trans-ethnic alliance with political radicals that transcended the Irish community itself. As Floya Anthias holds, the possibility of trans-ethnic solidarities sits uncomfortably within paradigms of 'diaspora' that stress the boundedness and coherence of national identities.[126] In one of its earliest attempts to organise an 'international solidarity' campaign around a question other than Russia, the CPA not only supported but actively facilitated the formation of a defence campaign for O'Kelly and O'Flanagan following their arrest. In May 1923, it organised a joint demonstration with the INA on the Sydney Domain to protest 'the suppression of free speech' by the Bruce Government and arranged for a sub-committee within the New South Wales Trades and Labour Council to organise the demonstration.[127] Its members on the Trades and Labour Council moved a resolution of opposition to the arrests of the delegates that pledged to 'co-operate with all organisations' willing to defend their right to 'free speech', and numerous other trade unions did lend their name to the campaign'.[128] The willingness of the CPA to ally itself

with the INA accorded partly with the wider 'united front' sensibility of the Comintern in the early 1920s, but was also consistent with communist political sympathy for Irish independence in preceding years.[129]

Assessed in directly political terms as a form of place-based solidarity that transcended communitarian identifications, the involvement of the CPA in the 'Irish Envoys' tour offers an insight into the relatively porous boundaries between Irish Nationalist and labour radical circles in early interwar Australia. Internationalist solidarity is, as David Featherstone argues, a productive process formed through the 'coming together of different dynamic trajectories of political activity'.[130] On one level, the CPA identified a common interest with the INA in opposing restrictions on 'free speech' during what Neville Kirk identifies as a decade of Empire loyalist hegemony in the 1920s.[131] In the midst of a wider tour by O'Kelly and O'Flanagan, the Party lent the INA two of its political spaces, Communist Hall on Castlereagh Street and an outdoor speaking platform on Park Street, after threats from police deterred other public venues including Southern Cross Hall from hosting the speakers.[132] Yet the sympathy of the CPA itself was firmly tied to a political opposition to the Treaty, and the party invited J.J. O'Kelly to contribute a polemic against the Treaty to the front page of *The Communist* at the height of the controversy.[133] Carl Baker, previously court-martialled in Belfast, was a leading figure in the CPA during the 'Irish Envoys' tour, and described the Civil War as a situation of 'Irish people … fighting the foes in their own household in order to make peace with England'.[134]

Anti-Treatyite Irish republican organisations in Australia were, contrary to the Cold War assumption of a consensual and monolithic Catholic anti-communism, unequivocal in welcoming this overture from non-Irish labour radicals. The Irish Republican Association of Perth cabled the New South Wales Labour Council to congratulate it on its resolution.[135] INA Secretary John Sheehy was more explicit in acknowledging the support of the CPA, and despite having earlier stood against the Labor Party as a candidate for the Catholic Federation's Democratic Party, he thanked the communist party for doing 'what others were afraid to do' by providing the speakers a platform.[136] Sheehy's

absence of hostility towards communists undermines the anachronistic assumption that the Democratic Party was simply a precursor to the DLP.[137] A conscious gesture of trans-ethnic political solidarity was similarly expressed within 'three cheers' given at the conclusion of one meeting 'for the Communist Party, three for De Valera, three for the Irish Republic and three for the two delegates'.[138] Michael O'Flanagan, whose Republicanism was inflected with a sympathy for the Irish labour movement, was more enthusiastic in his overtures to the CPA than O'Kelly, and in calling for 'a little fellow feeling among one another', remarked 'the Communist dragon in Australia today had received the Sinn Féin dragon from Ireland'.[139] This INA-CPA alignment was, far from an organic outgrowth of a bounded Irish 'presence' in the CPA, an instance of political solidarity formed within a breaching of fixed political boundaries.

Contrary to the assumption by Patrick O'Farrell that the 'Irish Question' simply dissipated into 'Australian' concerns after the formation of the Free State, the Irish Civil War produced new contentious episodes that disrupted and re-aligned existing political allegiances.[140] As Dianne Hall notes, attempts to revive the CPA-INA alliance resurfaced during the 1925 tour of Irish republican envoys Kathleen Barry and Linda Kearns.[141] The emergence of new organisations during the Civil War, including the Wolfe-Tone Republican Cummann and the Irish Republican Association, suggests a more contested fracturing of prior allegiances than has been assumed within consensus-based histories of 'the' Catholic community. Chris McConville posits that Catholic 'identity' became synonymous with anti-communism during the interwar period, but as Val Noone convincingly argues, this selective remembrance of a single 'Catholic Irish' past erases the multiple other possible 'Irelands' in Australian history.[142] As Mo Moulton has found, a specific study of the 'Irish Question' and 'Irishness' in the interwar period can disrupt similarly static assumptions about the presumed involution of Irish 'identity' in England.[143] 'Ireland' in interwar Australia awaits a close study, but a lifting of the historiographical taboo on 'communism' offers a preliminary step towards such a study.

Conclusion

A breaching of the longstanding divide between 'Ireland' and 'communism' in Australian historiography reveals new dimensions to the 'Irish Question' that challenge ontologically essentialist and methodologically nationalist paradigms of ethno-political identity. It is therefore fitting that this discussion concludes not with a 'pioneer', but a seafarer. In 1922, Peter Larkin returned to Ireland, in part to campaign for the release of Jim Larkin from his American prison, and his final impressions of Australia unsettles any stable narrative of hyphenated nation-ness: 'Having travelled all over the world, and having traversed this country, I can say … that there is more union scabbery going on here than in any part of the world I have been in'.[144] Larkin's experiences as an itinerant radical in Australia between 1915 and 1922 broadly overlapped with the entirety of the Irish revolution. His relationship to the 'Irish Question', and that of the early CPA, inhabited not Irish-Australian identity, but Ireland-Australia connections.

For the nascent communist movement in White Australia, 'Ireland' surfaced as a directly 'international' question, constituted within ambivalent imaginings of 'empire' and 'race' in a settler-colonial context. This contest was produced within specific circuits, networks and mobilities on the Anglophone peripheries of the Comintern world. The mobile lives of radicals who moved across the Anglophone world, whether voluntarily as radical political travellers or involuntarily as deportees, connected the nascent CPA both with Irish political networks and a live contest inside the British labour movement over the 'Irish Question'. The global contest over the Irish revolution was, far from limited to diasporic nationalist mobilisation, a focus of radical cosmopolitanisms within interwar social movements that transcended the bounds of identitarian affiliation. As the alliance between the CPA and Irish National Association during the 1923 'Irish Envoys' tour illuminates, these transgressions of fixed cultural boundaries disrupt Cold War narratives of a consensual 'Irish presence' in Australian politics. Such disruptive counter-narratives allow for a repositioning of the Irish revolution within histories of border-crossing, transnational solidarity and contentious political action where it surely belongs.

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Notes

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