

Workers' Voice

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'Live Horse, and . . . !' Farmers and the Annuities

by Jim Galton

A vivid picture of the worsening condition of the Irish farmers and of the problems they are facing to-day is given in the following article to the WORKERS' VOICE from James Galton, a Leitrim farmer who recently returned from America

The farms near Leitrim consist mainly of holdings of from three to twenty acres of bad land.

To-day we farmers find ourselves in a position where we are unable to balance our yearly budget, due to the reduced prices for what we have to sell, without a proportionate drop in [the price of] shop goods we are forced to buy.

This is not a new phenomenon. On the contrary, as far back as I remember fathers of families went to Scotland or England during Harvest time, leaving young children that should be attending school, to reap and gather in crops at home. In this way, and through the "Dole" received from relatives in America we were able to pay rent and taxes and help generally in supporting a horde of people who never did a useful day's work in their lives.

For example, the farm I live on is part of a grant of land given by King Billy to Lord Abermarle for services rendered in the scrap against King James which ended with the fall of Limerick. Since that time my ancestors have been paying rent to the original land thief or one of his descendants for the privilege of cultivating the soil to feed themselves and families.

Nor is this ended yet, for where the Abermarles laid off, the Irish Land Commission stepped in and is bleeding me yet.¹

What I want to know from the *Workers' Voice* is how we small farmers will be able to maintain our already low standard of living in the face of the curtailed cheques from the United States due to the crisis there.

The reason I ask the *Voice* for this information is because as far as I know it is the only paper that interests itself in the economic problems of the small farmers and workers. All the other press are contenting themselves with advice, to be patient, and with giving vague promises of something in the future.

Live horse and you'll get grass is their motto! It's not mine, nor the motto of my fellow farmers.

¹ A reference to the payment of land purchase annuities to the former landlords, collected by this Irish state commission from 1922. The land purchase annuities were a type of mortgage payment, paid each year by Irish tenant farmers against the amounts lent to them to purchase land from the landlords under the land acts, principally those of 1891, 1903 and 1909.