

Obituary: Mick Cullen

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Mick Cullen, a member of the Socialist Party of Ireland, died in his sleep on the 23rd Jan. He was formerly a member of the S.P.G.B. which he joined a few years before the first World War. Those who knew him will miss a comrade who was solid, untiring and full of zest and humour. He had one absorbing pursuit, the propagation of the socialist movement, and no difficulties dimmed his ardour or broke his heart for he was convinced of the ultimate success of the movement he did so much to help along. For years he carried on in Ireland alone, putting over the socialist case at every conceivable opportunity—a thorn in the side of all the established movements of one kind or another.

The first time the writer remembers actually meeting him was in circumstances that were typical of Mick. It was in the winter of 1916 at a meeting in Belfast organised by the I.L.P. In those days we used to attend all the opposition meetings we could in order to put questions and take part in discussions. At the meeting in question the speaker had sat down after finishing his address when a stentorian voice came from the back of the hall criticising his statements and arguments. The chairman pointed out that discussion was not allowed and endeavoured to silence the voice. He was out of luck. The voice roared "What, you can't hear me? All right I'll come to the front," and up the aisle marched Mick grinning. He then proceeded to address the audience for twenty minutes, the chairman having meanwhile dropped back into his chair with a gesture of despair. Mick had only arrived in Ireland that day, a fugitive from the operations of the Military Service Act, and this was his idea of "lying low"!

Perhaps a more revealing picture of Mick is that given by someone outside the Socialist movement who had obviously been impressed by Mick's sincerity and enthusiasm. It appeared in the Dublin Evening Mail on the 25th Jan., under the heading, "The Socialist Party of Ireland."

SOCIALIST PARTY OF IRELAND

DEATH OF MICK CULLEN—The weekly meeting of the Dublin Branch last Tuesday adjourned as a mark of respect upon hearing of the death of Comrade Mick Cullen. He had died in his sleep that evening.

Mick Cullen's life was devoted to the struggle for Socialism. An early member of the Socialist Party of Great Britain—he was speaking from a Socialist platform during the 1914-18 "War to End War"—he propagated Socialism wherever and whenever the opportunity arose, throughout Great Britain and in Belfast, and Dublin.

Lloyd George knew him—and the force of his oratory against conscription, war and capitalism. The late George Bernard Shaw was another of the many "eminent figures" of his time who had the misfortune to have Mick in their audience. That was in the Abbey Theatre in the 1920s, when Shaw threatened to wipe the floor with "the red-headed Socialist, Cullen," only to refuse the inevitable challenge to put his threat into practice.

Wherever workingmen and women collected for a political meeting, lecture or debate, Mick Cullen's voice was often raised on behalf of the Socialist cause. In fact, he was so familiar a figure at such gatherings as to become almost an institution—and one that seemingly would never pass away.

Quite a number of his acquaintances in the early days who made a show of preaching revolution are, today, in high office, but Mick Cullen never put a price-tag on his principles. That he was widely known as "The Socialist Painter" is proof sufficient of the value he placed on principles. No

compromise."

And now he's gone, having died for that which he'd lived and worked for—Socialism. But, truly, only physically gone; for the memory of his life of struggle will be constant inspiration to his Socialist comrades who stay behind to continue the same struggle. And while one Socialist yet remains, Mick Cullen will never be wholly dead, for he was one with the cause of Socialism.

"Fame is not popularity, the shout of the multitude . . . it is the spirit of a man surviving himself in the minds and thoughts of other men, undying and imperishable." (William Hazlitt).

We will not attempt to improve upon this excellent tribute. We will only add that Mick appeared at our last conference as full of energy, enthusiasm and conviction as he always was, and it was a real shock to learn that he had so unexpectedly passed out. His parting words to the writer last year were that he would be over this year and hoped to bring us good news of progress in Ireland. But, alas, it was not to be. Socialism has lost another of those sturdy advocates who leave a gap that is hard to fill, and some of us mourn an old and very "Good Companion."

Gilmac.

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