

Constance Markievicz

IN THE CAUSE OF IRELAND

Revolutionary



Constance Markievicz, with her sister Eva Gore-Booth and her daughter Maeve Markievicz
© PRONI REF. D4131/K/4/1/49

socialist. But as always her socialism is tempered by the securing of independence for her country first. Constance had also become urbanised and her viewpoint was heavily influenced by the conditions of Dublin's and Belfast's workers. In rural Ireland the 'Wyndham' Land Act of 1903 was turning tenant farmers into land owners. Josslyn, her brother, had been one of the first landlords to sell to his tenants. Now that they owned their land, however little, over time they became increasingly conservative. Massive emigration of young people to England and America meant that gradually the age profile of the countryside changed and the conservative element became predominant. Constance's idea of a worker's republic could only gain traction where the predominantly rural population had something to gain. Now that they were becoming owners of their land they had, it appeared, something to lose. The rural labouring class was slowly being eradicated by emigration and although this would take decades the process accelerated as the decades passed.

On April 2nd 1914 the inaugural public meeting of what was to become *Cumann Na mBan* was held to enrol women in an organisation that was the female equivalent of the Irish Volunteers.



"The Arrest" by Kathleen Fox
© Sligo County Museum

In October, Jim Larkin travelled to the United States and James Connolly became the Acting General Secretary of the ITGWU and editor of the "*Irish Worker*". In the Issue of October 24th it carried on its' masthead "*We serve neither King nor Kaiser but Ireland*" and a similar banner was hung over the front of Liberty Hall. By the end of November Connolly stated the Irish Citizen Army, well drilled and disciplined, would protect the workers. He also declared that he would try to procure arms for them.

On December 10th 1913 the London and Northwestern Railway Company workers announced the abandonment of their sympathetic strike and Dublin Port re-opened after 14 weeks. The strike now slowly crumbled without any material gains for the workers. It left behind a bitterness that did not extinguish with the generation involved. Constance lectured in Belfast in February 1914 on "*Strikes as a Revolutionary Weapon*". The progress of her thinking and change in her attitudes over the five years is marked. She espouses the idea of a worker's republic. Constance had become a



Liberty Hall extensively damaged after the 1916 Rising
© Postcard Sligo County Library
Local Studies Collection Dra 1198

Inghinidhe na hÉireann subsequently merged with *Cumann na mBan* and ceased to be a separate organisation. The *Irish Women Franchise League* organised a fund raising endeavour on April 24th and 25th which featured feminist tableaux including one of Constance as Joan of Arc appearing to a suffragist prisoner in her cell. Constance made the costume herself from cardboard. Ostensibly Constance was continuing to be involved in all kinds of activities but she had an agenda and tried to influence the organisations she was involved with to support that agenda. On certain issues she wanted all to speak with one voice and therefore she continued to be a member of organisations whose nuance was different from her own.

SLIGO COUNTY LIBRARIES

LEABHARLANNA CHONTAE SHLIGIGH

Clár Éire Ildánach
Creative Ireland
Programme
2017-2022



SLIGO COUNTY COUNCIL
COMHAIRLE CHONTAE SHLIGIGH