

**The View from the Backbench: Irish Nationalist MPs and their Work,  
1910-1914.**

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**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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**2002**

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James McConnel

The View from the Backbench: Irish Nationalist MPs and their Work, 1910-1914.

If in 1910 the typical Member of Parliament was still a 'gentleman', then Irish Nationalist MPs were undoubtedly the 'players'. Elected to win Home Rule for Ireland, Nationalist Members were pledge-bound, remunerated and very carefully supervised when in the House of Commons. Yet, Nationalist backbenchers were much more than 'lobbyfodder'. For they combined 'sitting, acting and voting' with the Irish Party in Parliament, with an unrivalled concern for the representation of their constituents' interests. The mechanics of this constituency role (correspondence, parliamentary questions and visitations) are for the first time examined here in detail, as are the tensions in Irish parliamentary representation.

Eschewing the narrow parliamentary focus of many party studies, this thesis seeks to provide a glimpse of the professional and personal lives which Irish Members led outside the chamber and beyond the platform. Living in London and working at Westminster imposed genuine hardships on Irish MPs. Critics claimed that they became anglicised, but while there certainly is evidence for cultural assimilation, their lives should be examined without immediately being juxtaposed against those of the men of 1916.

During the third Home Rule crisis, Nationalist Members were at Westminster longer, voted more often and spoke less frequently than their British counterparts. Thus, for all their so-called 'mellowing', Nationalist MPs demonstrated that they continued to be unlike other backbenchers. However, not only did this punishing routine make unprecedented personal demands on Nationalist MPs, but it meant that local interests were increasingly subordinated to national imperatives. Though this study argues that the points of contact between Nationalist MPs and Irish society were more numerous than has hitherto been appreciated, it concludes that the Home Rule crisis did strain relations between MPs and their constituents.

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## Abbreviations

A-C	Anglo-Celt
AFIL	All For Ireland League
AOH	Ancient Order of Hibernians
CDB	Congested Districts Board
CA	Cork Accent
CE	Cork Examiner
CFP	Cork Free Press
CJ	Clare Journal
DMP	Dublin Metropolitan Police
DP	John Dillon Papers
FJ	Freeman's Journal
G-A	Gaelic-American
GAA	Gaelic Athletic Association
IHS	Irish Historical Studies
II	Irish Independent
INLGB	Irish National League of Great Britain
IP	Irish People
IPA	Irish Press Agency
ITGWU	Irish Transport and General Workers' Union
ITUC	Irish Trades Union Congress
LA	Leitrim Advertiser
MLB	Michael McCartan Letterbook
NLI	National Library of Ireland
OBP	J.F.X. O'Brien Papers
ODP	Tom O'Donnell Papers
OMP	James O'Mara Papers
PA	Parliamentary Affairs
PP	John Pinkerton Papers
PRO	Public Record Office
PRONI	Public Record Office of Northern Ireland
RIC	Royal Irish Constabulary
RP	John Redmond Papers
SP	Sheehy-Skeffington Papers
TCD	Trinity College Dublin
UCDA	University College Dublin Archive
UDC	Urban District Council
UIL	United Irish League
UILGB	United Irish League of Great Britain
YIB	Young Ireland Branch

References to Nationalists (as opposed to nationalists) refer to the Irish Party or its supporters. Spellings of Irish place-names are those which appear in the contemporary press, and so may differ from modern usage.

### **Declaration**

This thesis results entirely from my own work and has not been previously offered in candidature for any other degree or diploma. Material from the published or unpublished work of others, which is referred to in this thesis, is credited to the author of the text.

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### Acknowledgements

In the course of my research I have received the assistance of many individuals and organisations. I would like to thank the staff of the British Library at Colindale, Cambridge University Library, the manuscript room of Trinity College Dublin, Durham University Library, the Historical Library of the Religious Society of Friends in Ireland, the House of Lords Record Office, the National Archive of Ireland, the National Library of Ireland, the National Register of Archives, the Public Record Office, the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, the University of New Hampshire Library, University College Dublin Archive. In particular, I would like to thank Mrs Ann Toseland of the microfilm reading room, Cambridge University Library, for all her help over the last five years.

I wish to acknowledge the financial help I received through the award of a University of Durham studentship in 1998-9 and later a scholarship from the Arts and Humanities Research Board. I would also like to thank the AHRB and the University of Durham Dean's Fund for enabling me to consult manuscript sources in Dublin in 2000.

Dr Chris Constable, Dr Sean Rands and Dr David Byrne all have my gratitude for assisting me with various aspects of databasing and statistical analysis. My father provided the computer on which this doctorate was written.

I would like to thank Mr Alan Heesom for supervising my MA and subsequently this PhD. My personal thanks to the support and friendship of Dr Heather Marquette, Dr John Naylor, Dr Beth Hartland and all of my friends in New Hampshire. Thanks to Lily Marquette for a whole bunch of stuff.

Charlie McConnel produced the excellent map of London for me. My greatest personal debt is to my mother, Susan McConnel, without whom this PhD would not have been possible. Her support throughout has been unstinting, and it is in appreciation of this, that I dedicate this thesis to her.

James McConnel

September, 2002.

## Introduction

In late July 1914, the Member of Parliament for West Wicklow, Edward Peter O’Kelly, died, at the age of 68, from diabetes. According to his obituary in the *Freeman’s Journal* ‘The deceased was truly the victim of his sense of duty to Ireland’.<sup>1</sup> For despite his ill-health he had been assiduous in his attendance at Westminster; in 1913 he had voted in 519 out of a possible 605 divisions. In fact, his voting record appeared to be his chief parliamentary distinction, since his voice had rarely been heard in the chamber of the House of Commons either during debates or at question time. He was, in short, (as the *Freeman’s* described another Irish MP who died just over a month later) ‘[one] of the solid body of earnest, unobtrusive- almost unknown- workers behind the spokesman of the Irish cause.’<sup>2</sup>

Yet, as the press reports of the following weeks revealed, O’Kelly was by no means simply the anonymous martyr-like figure of his *Freeman’s* obituary. At the beginning of August, for instance, the parliamentary correspondent of a London magazine (who was himself a Liberal MP), wrote in warm and affectionate terms that though ‘the public knew nothing of him...in the inner life of Parliament he was well known and widely popular. As a raconteur he had few equals and no superiors, and he seemed always to be surrounded by a ring of fellow-legislators who revelled in his inexhaustible fund of anecdotes’.<sup>3</sup>

From outside Parliament, tributes to O’Kelly (or ‘E.P.’ as he was familiarly known) were also forthcoming.<sup>4</sup> For O’Kelly had, as the *Pall Mall Gazette* explained some years earlier, belonged

to that class of Nationalists whom Mr Redmond gladly welcomes into his party. These men count for much in their own localities. They have built up thriving commercial businesses of one kind or another, and have learned the meaning and responsibilities of public life through having served as Justices of the Peace or acted as chairmen of County Councils or Boards of Guardians. After having been trained in such a school they are not likely to prove volatile or skittish, or to act as if they had bees in their bonnets...<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *FJ*, 23.7.14., 5.

<sup>2</sup> *FJ*, 28.8.14., 4.

<sup>3</sup> *London Opinion*, 1.8.14., 209. Also see, *II*, 23.7.14., 4.

<sup>4</sup> *Leinster Leader*, 1.8.14., 5; 8.8.14., 3.

<sup>5</sup> *Pall Mall Gazette ‘Extra’, The Popular Handbook to the New House of Commons, 1910* (London, 1911), p. 166. (Henceforth cited as *PMG ‘Extra’*.)

O'Kelly had, in fact, been a merchant and 'successful auctioneer' in his native county of Wicklow, in addition to which he served as a local magistrate and (from 1899) as the chairman of the Wicklow County Council and of the Baltinglass Board of Guardians. Accordingly, the response to his death in Wicklow was co-ordinate with the status of such an important local son. The Unionist *Wicklow News-Letter* mourned his passing,<sup>6</sup> while the *Wicklow People* reported that 'the deepest and sincerest sorrow hangs over his native town [of Baltinglass], as well as in the hearts of his very many friends throughout the whole country. Small wonder, indeed, it should be thus! Never did a more sincere and genuine Irishman labour in the great cause than the late Member'. And the paper concluded its tribute with the hope (which it believed would be shared by both 'rich and poor') 'that the spoil of his dear native county may rest lightly on his remains'.<sup>7</sup>

O'Kelly's local popularity was still further evidenced by the many resolutions of sympathy passed by public boards and organisations ranging from that of the Baltinglass Teachers' Association to those of the various Wicklow Volunteers corps. In fact, the Volunteers played a central part in his funeral. According to one local newspaper 'Huge numbers of the men of East Wicklow and the adjoining counties', along with seven Members of the Irish Party and 14 priests (not including O'Kelly's own son), attended the funeral which saw his 'body...escorted from the church to the graveside by National Volunteers who saluted the coffin as it passed through the streets of the little town. The scene was most impressive. Not for many years has there been witnessed in County Wicklow such a spontaneous exhibition of love'.<sup>8</sup>

This study considers the 'solid body of earnest, unobtrusive- almost unknown- workers' who comprized the majority of the Irish Parliamentary Party, i.e. its backbench Members. For the example of E.P. O'Kelly demonstrates that while an MP may have been unknown to the general public, he could be a familiar, popular and important figure among both his parliamentary colleagues and his constituents. There is a particular need for such a study because historians have given comparatively little attention to the role and function of backbench Members of the Edwardian Irish Party. This proceeds not alone from their contemporary 'obscurity', but also from the political climate which existed in Ireland in the wake of the Union. Indeed, Irish attitudes towards the Party during the inter-war years

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<sup>6</sup> *Wicklow News-Letter*, 25.7.14., 8.

<sup>7</sup> *Wicklow People*, 25.7.14., 3, 5.

<sup>8</sup> *Wicklow People*, 1.8.14., 4, 6, 8.

were characterized by indifference and hostility.<sup>9</sup> The 1940s and 1950s, however, saw the growth in academic interest in the Party under the direction of T.W. Moody. Conor Cruise O'Brien's book examined parliamentary nationalism during the 1880s, while F.S.L. Lyons' study of the post-Parnellite Party surveyed the often neglected period between the deposition of 'the Chief' and the eve of the third Home Rule crisis.<sup>10</sup> Through cohort analysis, O'Brien highlighted the shift from the 'marginal' Home Rulers of the 1870s to the Parnellites of the 1880s, while Lyons observed the emergence of the 'local' MP after 1900. Both historians brought much needed light to questions such as candidate selection, the payment of Members and the operation of the pledge. However, because both studies were essentially concerned with the 'high politics' of the Home Rule struggle, their view of the Party very much reflected a 'front bench' perspective and only considered backbench MPs en masse.

The 50th anniversary of the rising in 1966 saw the publication of a number of essay collections, all of which numbered an article on the Irish Party written by F.S.L. Lyons (with the exception of one essay by R.D. Edwards).<sup>11</sup> Given the occasion, it is not surprising that nearly all these contributions dealt with the 'decline and fall' of the Party, with Lyons expanding on his contention (originally advanced in 1951) that the Party was, in fact, in terminal decline from 1891 (some 27 years!). All of these essays were predicated on the assumption that 'although it...numbered more than seventy Members, only four of these [Redmond, Dillon, O'Connor and Devlin] "counted" in any real sense'.<sup>12</sup>

This historiographical bias is also observable in the numerous biographical studies of prominent Party figures which have been written. L.G. Redmond-Howard's 1910 life of John Redmond,<sup>13</sup> and W.B. Wells' 1919 biography,<sup>14</sup> were popular works based on anecdotal and press material. Both were very much products of their time; the first, an unauthorized and opportunistic book written to satisfy the demand for information about a

<sup>9</sup> Conor Cruise O'Brien, *Memoir* (1998, London, 1999), p. 8; F.X. Martin, '1916- Myth, Fact and Mystery', *Studia Hibernica*, no. 7 (1967), p. 60.

<sup>10</sup> Conor Cruise O'Brien, *Parnell and his Party, 1880-90* (Oxford, 1957); F.S.L. Lyons, *The Irish Parliamentary Party* (1951, Westport, Conn., 1975).

<sup>11</sup> F.S.L. Lyons, 'Dillon, Redmond, and the Irish Home Rulers', in F.X. Martin (ed.), *Leaders and Men of the Easter Rising: Dublin 1916* (London, 1968), pp. 29-42; F.S.L. Lyons, 'Decline and Fall of the Nationalist Party', in O.D. Edwards and Fergus Pyle (eds.), *1916: The Easter Rising* (London, 1968), pp. 52-61; F.S.L. Lyons, 'The Irish Parliamentary Party', in Brian Farrell (ed.), *The Irish Parliamentary Tradition* (Dublin and New York, 1973), pp. 195-207; Ruth Dudley Edwards, 'The Decline and Fall of the Irish Nationalists at Westminster', in K.B. Nowlan (ed.), *The Making of 1916: Studies in the History of the Rising* (Dublin, 1969), pp. 127-56.

<sup>12</sup> Lyons, 'Decline and Fall', p. 57.

<sup>13</sup> L.G. Redmond-Howard, *John Redmond: The Man and the Demand* (London, 1910).

<sup>14</sup> W.B. Wells, *John Redmond* (London, 1919).



man expected to be Ireland's first Prime Minister, and the second, an apologia written in the wake of Redmond's death.<sup>15</sup> Both studies ignored the party of which Redmond had acted as chairman for 17 years.

Although also written in 1919, Stephen Gwynn's biography of Redmond had the advantage that its author had been one of Redmond's personal circle within the Party. Unashamedly sympathetic to its subject, nonetheless, Gwynn's study is surprisingly well-balanced and honest concerning Redmond's shortcomings. It is particularly valuable to any [modern] study of the Party because it provides numerous insights (albeit from the perspective of one who was often not in the mainstream of constitutional nationalism) into how Redmond was regarded by those he led.

The first (and still most recent) full-scale, historical biography of Redmond, that by Denis Gwynn, was published in 1932 and like his father's study (though to a greater extent) drew on Redmond's private papers. F.X. Martin thought it a 'masterly' and 'lucidly' written work, which 'has never been given the credit it deserves',<sup>16</sup> but more recently historians have highlighted some of its weaknesses.<sup>17</sup> According to one reviewer in 1932, the strength of Gwynn's book, was that it illustrated 'how...the opposing statesman...meet together in private conferences, unknown to the general body of their respective followers', and for this reason it has been of limited use to the present study.<sup>18</sup>

Since 1932, Redmond has been the subject of only one short biography by Paul Bew. This, while acknowledging that a brief life is not a substitute for a full-scale study, is, nonetheless, an important work which provides a valuable exposition of Redmond's political philosophy.<sup>19</sup> In contrast (with the exception of Joe Devlin)<sup>20</sup> Redmond's colleagues in the leadership of the Party have fared rather better at the hands of historians.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Redmond-Howard was Redmond's nephew. Redmond sought to prevent the publication of the biography. F.W. Ryan to John Redmond, 12.1.09. NLI, RP, ms 15,251; Fisher-Unwin to John Redmond, 25.2.10., NLI, RP, ms 15,252[1]; Hust and Blackett Ltd to John Redmond, 20.6.10., NLI, RP, ms 15, 252 [1]; *II*, 8.12.13., 4.

<sup>16</sup> F.X. Martin, '1916- Myth, Fact and Mystery', p. 61.

<sup>17</sup> Paul Bew, *John Redmond* (Dundalk, 1996); Maume, *Gestation*, p. 217.

<sup>18</sup> *Times Literary Supplement*, 17.6.32, 17.

<sup>19</sup> Bew discusses other recent academic and journalistic contributions concerning Redmond in his short biography. Bew, *Redmond*, pp. 58-9.

<sup>20</sup> Professor A.C. Hepburn is currently preparing a biography of Devlin.

<sup>21</sup> Hamilton Fyfe, *T.P. O'Connor* (London 1934); L.W. Brady, *T.P. O'Connor and the Liverpool Irish* (London, 1983); M.A. Banks, *Edward Blake, Irish Nationalist: A Canadian Statesman in Irish Politics 1892-1907* (Toronto, 1957); Liam O'Flaherty, *The Life of Tim Healy* (London, 1927); Frank Callanan, *T.M. Healy* (Cork, 1996); Michael MacDonagh, *The Life of William O'Brien* (London, 1928); J.V. O'Brien, *William O'Brien and the course of Irish Politics, 1881-1918* (Berkeley, Cal., 1976); Sally Warwick-Haller, *William O'Brien and the Irish Land War* (Dublin, 1990)

This is not to suggest that these biographies have not facilitated a much greater understanding of the Party, nor that several senior Victorian and Edwardian Party figures (Tim Harrington and Thomas Sexton spring to mind) would not benefit from biographical treatment. But, since all of these men were, in effect, ‘frontbenchers’, their lives reveal comparatively little about the rank and file.

The same criticism can be made of F.S.L. Lyons’ biography of John Dillon.<sup>22</sup> For among several blind-spots which his study contains (on Dillon’s attitude towards women’s suffrage, for example), Lyons does not convey the sense that Dillon operated (at least some of the time) within a party context. Lyons examined Dillon’s relationships (somewhat inadequately) with Redmond, Devlin and O’Connor, but did not consider him vis-à-vis important Dillonites such as Dick McGhee, P.A. McHugh, Jerry MacVeagh, John Roche or Larry Ginnell. That said, alone among the biographers of Irish Party Members, Lyons sensitively examined the impact of Dillon’s parliamentary career on his personal and family life.

Íde Ní Liatháin has recently argued that because Irish political biography is a relatively new genre, it is hardly surprising that ‘if the “lieutenants” and leaders have been relatively forgotten....that the footsoldiers [have]...remain[ed] in obscurity’.<sup>23</sup> Still, a handful of individual Irish MPs have received attention from historians. Willie Redmond (perhaps more a ‘lieutenant’ than a ‘footsoldier’) has been the subject of two full-length biographies.<sup>24</sup> The second, by Terence Denman, very much reflects that historians wider interest in the Irish experience of the First World War.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, Denman justifies his biography of Redmond by the fact that ‘his death in the trenches encapsulates the tragedies and ambiguities of Irish involvement in the Great War and the final crisis of the Irish Parliamentary Party’,<sup>26</sup> rather than by the fact that Redmond was a prominent figure in Irish and British politics for over 30 years.

Redmond’s former colleague and comrade-in-arms, Tom Kettle, has also been the subject of a recent biography (and another forthcoming short study by Senia Paseta). However, as an intellectual and ‘fast-track’ entrant, Kettle was hardly a typical Irish MP

<sup>22</sup> F.S.L. Lyons, Lyons, *John Dillon* (London, 1968).

<sup>23</sup> Íde Ní Liatháin, *The Life and Career of P.A. McHugh, A North Connacht Politician, 1859-1909: a Footsoldier of the Party* (Dublin, 1999), p. 8.

<sup>24</sup> Rafaël Debevere, *William Redmond, 1861-1917* (Loker, W. Flanders, 1967).

<sup>25</sup> Terence Denman, *A Lonely Grave: The Life and Death of William Redmond* (Dublin, 1995). Also see, Terence Denman, “‘A voice from the lonely grave’: the death in action of Major William Redmond, MP, 7 June 1917”, *Irish Sword*, vol. xviii, no.73 (1992), pp. 286-96.

<sup>26</sup> Denman, *Redmond*, p. 9.

either.<sup>27</sup> This is less true of William Field, whose biography was published in book-form in 1918 (perhaps to shore up Field's hold on his Dublin constituency).<sup>28</sup> Although providing a wealth of detail on Field (whom J.J. Horgan described as possessing a 'picturesque appearance reminiscent of Buffalo Bill'),<sup>29</sup> it is much more a catalogue of his public achievements than a scholarly study. More recently, Field has been the subject of an interesting article by a local historian, as has another backbench MP, Michael Joyce.<sup>30</sup>

Only one Redmondite MP, Tom O'Donnell has been the subject of a full-length biography, being based largely on his private papers held in the National Library of Ireland.<sup>31</sup> But although J.A. Gaughan's biography explores in great detail the position of O'Donnell within his Kerry bailiwick, he (in common with many scholars of the Party) does not consider O'Donnell's parliamentary career in a comparative framework.<sup>32</sup> Íde Ní Liatháin's short biography of the editor-MP, P.A. McHugh, demonstrates a greater awareness of his subject as a backbench Member of Parliament and local politician.<sup>33</sup> Unfortunately, McHugh left no private papers and so Liatháin's study relies heavily on McHugh's journalistic output. In contrast, Patricia Lavelle was able to draw on her father's extensive correspondence in the writing of his biography. However, her study is primarily concerned with her father's Sinn Féin career.<sup>34</sup>

Ironically, David Fitzpatrick's seminal study of grass-roots Irish politics between 1913 and 1921 may have had the unintended effect of obscuring the role Irish Members played within their constituencies. For Clare's MPs, Willie Redmond and Arthur Lynch, had (atypically) neither family nor residential links with the county they represented, and were, according to Fitzpatrick, 'exotic rather than familiar figures'.<sup>35</sup> Unfortunately, local studies remain comparatively few in number and have tended not to consider the role of Members of Parliament. Peter Hart's study of the IRA in Cork, for example, does not mention that county's parliamentary representatives. As a result, the more active role played by some

<sup>27</sup> J.B. Lyons, *The Enigma of Tom Kettle* (Dublin, 1983).

<sup>28</sup> 'M.A.' and J.F. Reid, *Life of William Field* (Dublin, 1918).

<sup>29</sup> J.J. Horgan, *From Parnell to Pearse* (Dublin, 1948), p.151.

<sup>30</sup> Donal McGahon, "'The Light of the Village'" - William Field MP, *Proceedings of the Blackrock Society*, vol. 9 (2001), pp. 82-90; Brian Donnelly, 'Michael Joyce: Squarerigger, Shannon pilot and MP', *Old Limerick Journal*, no. 27 (1990), pp. 42-44. The author would like to thank Dr Patrick Maume for drawing attention to Donal McGahon's article.

<sup>31</sup> J.A. Gaughan, *A Political Odyssey: Thomas O'Donnell* (Dublin, 1983).

<sup>32</sup> One study that examines the careers of numerous Irish Members is that by P.F. Meehan. This provides biographical information rather than analysis. P.F. Meehan, *The Members of Parliament for Laois and Offaly* (Portlaoise, 1972).

<sup>33</sup> Ní Liatháin, *McHugh*, p. 58.

<sup>34</sup> Patricia Lavelle, *James O'Mara: A Staunch Sinn Féiner* (Dublin, 1961).

<sup>35</sup> David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life, 1913-21* (Dublin, 1977).

MPs in the localities they represented has not received sufficient attention. Hopefully, Mike Wheatley's doctoral research on midland Members will go a considerable way to rectifying this. In the meantime, the best consideration of the relationship between a Nationalist MP and his constituency is Thomas Dooley's book on Waterford, which contains a section on John Redmond's representation of that city in Parliament.<sup>36</sup>

Although the Irish Party has not been the subject of a dedicated study in the last 25 years, it has still received considerable attention from historians. Notable among recent contributions is the work of Paul Bew. While Bew's study of the tensions in rural Irish politics and society after 1903 is extremely valuable for the light it casts on the agitational role some Irish MPs continued to assume up to 1914,<sup>37</sup> it self-avowedly concentrates on 'Irish nationalism in Ireland', and does not examine Irish Members in their own right. Much more important to how the Party has been recently viewed, is the same author's treatment of the third Home Rule crisis. Of particular value is Bew's analysis of the Edwardian Irish Party, based not (as previous studies have been) on somewhat limited statistical summaries of class, age or occupation, but rather, on detailed research using the wealth of eclectic personal information available in newspaper obituaries. More problematical is the fact that in reconstructing the 'project of Redmondism', Bew's study overstates the extent to which the rank and file shared Redmond's priorities and commitments.

In contrast to Bew's study, the judgement of the majority of historians on Edwardian constitutional nationalism has been largely critical. J.J. Lee described the Party as 'obesely bourgeois',<sup>38</sup> a sentiment echoed by several historians of the Irish labour movement. Other scholars have seen the Party as fatally compromised by its relationship with British Liberalism. K.T. Hoppen has observed that Redmond's party had a distinctly whiggish tinge to it, while Philip Bull has claimed that in the Liberal alliance, the Edwardian Irish Party 'retraced the journey of Daniel O'Connell from Repeal to the Whig alliance'.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> T.P. Dooley, *Irishmen or English Soldiers? The Times and World of a Southern Catholic Irishman (1876-1916) enlisting in the British Army during the First World War* (Liverpool, 1995), pp. 73-8. However, for a wide-ranging discussion of the constituency relations of Ulster Unionist MPs, see Alvin Jackson, *The Ulster Party: Irish Unionists in the House of Commons, 1884-1911* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 196-240.

<sup>37</sup> Paul Bew, *Conflict and Conciliation in Ireland, 1890-1910* (Oxford, 1987).

<sup>38</sup> J.J. Lee, *The Modernisation of Irish Society* (Dublin, 1973), p.152.

<sup>39</sup> K.T. Hoppen, *Elections, Politics and Society in Ireland, 1832-1885* (Oxford, 1984), p. 485; Philip Bull, *Land, Politics and Nationalism: A Study of the Irish Land Question* (Dublin, 1996), p. 169.



Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh has described the Party after 1886 as a 'provincial flank' of the Liberal Party.<sup>40</sup>

Several historians have seen the Party's de-radicalisation as betokening its broader cultural assimilation. A.T.Q. Stewart depicted Irish MPs as 'old hands and reliable entertainers',<sup>41</sup> Alvin Jackson has characterized the Party as made up of 'tough-talking but sedentary and ageing gentlemen',<sup>42</sup> while John Hutchinson described it as 'bureaucratic, careerist and ossified'.<sup>43</sup> Most recently, Christy Campbell has referred to it as 'ageing and anglicized'.<sup>44</sup>

Much of this criticism echoes the contemporary critique of the Party advanced by heterodox nationalists and Irish socialists. However, until recently such ideas had not been closely examined. In his *Long Gestation*, Patrick Maume has produced a study which not only individualizes the post-Parnellite Irish Party, but examines its corporate identity and the criticisms of its detractors.<sup>45</sup> However, valuable as this is, because he eschews mainstream Dublin newspapers in favour of the more critical O'Brienite and 'mosquito' press, Maume's perspective on the Irish Party perhaps over-emphasizes (and gives too much coherence to) the separatist critique of it as comprized of cynically-motivated, place-hunting, socially conservative 'anglicized adventurers'. Of course, much of the valuable personal detail which animates Maume's narrative derives from such very sources. What is absent from his study, however, is a more routine appreciation of what the *Freeman's Journal* termed the 'humdrum functional business' of politics.<sup>46</sup>

Such a perspective is, at least partially, available in the work of Alan O'Day. Unlike previous studies of the Nationalist Party, O'Day's doctoral research (published in 1977 as *The English Face of Irish Nationalism*) rejected the view that it was a single-issue entity, advancing instead the argument that it was not only a nationalist formation, but a recognisably British political party, which engaged with British and imperial questions constructively as well as tactically.<sup>47</sup> But though his Westminster-centred study was

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<sup>40</sup> Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh, 'Nineteenth Century Irish Politics: The Case for "Normalcy"', in P.J. Drudy, *Anglo-Irish Studies* (1975), p. 74.

<sup>41</sup> Stewart, *Ulster Crisis*, p. 36.

<sup>42</sup> Jackson, *Ireland*, p. 207.

<sup>43</sup> John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Irish Nationalism* (London, 1986), p. 284.

<sup>44</sup> Christy Campbell, *Fenian Fire: The British Government Plot to Assassinate Queen Victoria* (London, 2002), p. 36.

<sup>45</sup> Patrick Maume, *The Long Gestation: Irish Nationalist Life, 1891-1918* (Dublin, 1999).

<sup>46</sup> *FJ*, 3.3.10., 7.

<sup>47</sup> Alan O'Day, 'The Irish Parliamentary Party and British Politics, 1880-1886' (PhD thesis, University of London, 1971); *The English Face of Irish Nationalism* (Dublin, 1977). The author would like to thank Professor O'Day for providing him with a copy of his PhD thesis.

valuable in showing the mundanity and 'routine of committees, ponderous involvement in question time and nightly vigilance in the corridors of Westminster',<sup>48</sup> his analysis does not sufficiently consider Irish MPs in their capacity as private Members.

More recently, however, O'Day has discussed the '[a]daptation of Parnellism from an issue to a service organisation'.<sup>49</sup> By 'service' O'Day means 'service to their constituencies', such as securing government investment in the local infrastructure, or putting local grievances before government departments and Ministers. This is undoubtedly an important point; for it provides a much more holistic, integrated perspective of the work of Irish MPs. Indeed, as O'Day observes, through such service, Members provided a 'crucial link between local communities and Westminster politics'.<sup>50</sup> However, while he highlights the importance of the Party's service orientation (particularly during politically fallow periods), O'Day does not examine the 'nuts and bolts' of this work, nor seeks to understand its place within the evolution of British or Irish parliamentary representation.

In fairness to O'Day, British historians have fared little better. Richard Crossman observed in 1969 that

The points of contact between representative and constituency are vital ones in any parliamentary system, yet they have been subjected to very little detailed scrutiny in nineteenth or twentieth century Britain. While other aspects of the political system...have received detailed analysis, there has been relatively little examination of the personal contacts enjoyed by a Member of Parliament in his constituency, of the processes by which the opinions of constituents are brought to bear upon him, and the methods used by a Member and his supporters to retain favour in his constituency.<sup>51</sup>

More recently, the former MP, Sir Philip Holland, has made much the same point.<sup>52</sup> Of course, some historians of British politics have sought to study backbench MPs. William Aydelotte and W.C. Lubenow have both subjected the parliamentary behaviour of Victorian MPs to quantitative analysis.<sup>53</sup> Local studies also provide information about the

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<sup>48</sup> Alan O'Day, *Irish Home Rule, 1867-1921* (Manchester, 1998), p. 84

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*, p. 184.

<sup>51</sup> B.S. Trinder (ed.), *A Victorian MP and his Constituents: The Correspondence of H.W. Tancred 1841-1859* (with a foreword by the Richard Crossman, MP) (Banbury, 1969), p. ix.

<sup>52</sup> Philip Holland, *Lobby Fodder? The Role of the Backbencher in Parliament* (Oxford, 1988), p. 5.

<sup>53</sup> William Aydelotte, 'Constituency Influence in the British House of Commons, 1841-1847', in William Aydelotte (ed.), *The History of Parliamentary Behaviour* (Princeton, 1977), pp. 225-46; W.C. Lubenow, *Parliamentary Politics and the Home Rule Crisis: the British House of Commons in 1886* (Oxford, 1988).

careers of MPs.<sup>54</sup> In contrast, Jon Lawrence has used Wolverhampton as a case-study in his scholarly consideration of popular politics in the mid-to-late nineteenth century.<sup>55</sup>

However by far the most important recent work on nineteenth century MPs has been produced by two North American historians, Kirstin Zimmerman and Joseph Coohill. Zimmerman's doctoral research considers extra-parliamentary speech and how the development of 'annual public review speeches' contributed to popular notions of parliamentary accountability in the mid Victorian period.<sup>56</sup> Working on the slightly earlier Reform era, Joseph Coohill has examined the constituency correspondence of Liberal MPs in the 1830s and 1840s.<sup>57</sup> Coohill highlights the key-role agents played as 'mouthpiece[s] of [the] constituency', and the importance (both in terms of remuneration and political integration) which Members and their constituents attached to patronage. However, as Coohill recognizes, his work stands in opposition to 'one of the strongest historiographical attitudes towards nineteenth century political history', namely '[that] there is nothing much of interest except at the top'. As a result 'backbenchers studied as a class, rather than as individual figures in local studies, are still without their historian.'<sup>58</sup>

One consequence of this neglect has been that backbench MPs have been studied almost exclusively by political scientists. For, since the 1950s, a growing body of scholarship has researched not only the nature of the relationship between representatives and electors, but also the practical means by which MPs acquire information. However, despite the breadth and quality of much of this research, it has not measurably advanced historical understanding of the work of backbenchers before the Second World War. In part, this reflects the fact that the methodology of political science does not readily lend itself to the study of the past beyond living memory. But it also reflects a particular adhesion to disciplinary boundaries. Thus, some political scientists have simply side-stepped the historical dimension ('My concern is essentially a-historical' writes one), while others have

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<sup>54</sup> For examples, see Alan Heesom, *Durham City and its MPs, 1678-1992* (Durham, 1992).

<sup>55</sup> Jon Lawrence, *Speaking for the People: Party, Language and Popular Politics in England, 1867-1914* (Cambridge, 1998).

<sup>56</sup> Kristin Zimmerman, 'Speaking to the People: Liberal Crisis and Extraparliamentary Speech, 1850-1870', (PhD thesis, Stanford University, 2001). The author would like to thank Dr Zimmerman for making a copy of her doctorate available for consultation.

<sup>57</sup> Joseph Coohill, 'The Unenfranchised and Their MP: the Backbencher as Compensation in the Early Reform Era', conference paper given at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association, January 1996. The author would like to thank Dr Coohill for providing him with a copy of his paper.

<sup>58</sup> Coohill, 'Unenfranchised', p. 1.

been content to ignore the question entirely ('There is little known about backbenchers of long ago, and conditions were not comparable' writes another).<sup>59</sup>

Of course, some political scientists have sought to produce longitudinal studies. Most recently, Michael Rush, has published *The Role of the Member of Parliament since 1868*, in which he examines how the 'partisan', 'scrutiny' and 'constituency' roles of British MPs have developed over the last 130 years.<sup>60</sup> However, not only is Rush's study overly schematic, but his attempts to [empirically] measure the work of Victorian and Edwardian MPs soon becomes unstuck. His study is strongest in his statistical treatment of Members' parliamentary behaviour and in his discussion of post-war backbenchers, about whose activity considerable quantitative data exists. However, this line of enquiry falters for the period before the Second World War, in part, because of the relative scarcity of qualitative evidence, but also because what information there is, exists in archives and the provincial press, neither of which Rush has consulted.

Some of these criticisms can also be made of those scholars who have studied Irish parliamentary representation in the period since 1922. For, starting in the 1950s (when Basil Chubb published his seminal essay "'Going about Persecuting Civil Servants": the role of the Irish Parliamentary Representative'), political scientists have studied the constituency service of T.D.s in considerable detail.<sup>61</sup> However, while some of this work has shown an awareness that the practice of 'Irish constituents...extract[ing] service from their parliamentary representatives was well established before the foundation of the modern Irish state',<sup>62</sup> little progress has been made beyond this basic observation, in part because of the continuing tendency to emphasize the discontinuity between the Union and Free State polities.<sup>63</sup>

Having (as custom dictates) demonstrated 'neglect', it should be immediately asserted that this doctorate does not aspire to single-handedly rectify these shortcomings. Although it does seek to examine the nature of 'British' parliamentary representation at the beginning

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<sup>59</sup> R.E. Dowse, 'The MP and his Surgery', *Political Studies*, vol. xi, no. 3 (1963), pp. 334; Leslie Hale, 'The Backbencher', *The Parliamentarian*, vol. xlvii, no. 3 (1966), p. 197.

<sup>60</sup> Michael Rush, *The Role of the Member of Parliament since 1868: From Gentlemen to Players* (Oxford, 2001).

<sup>61</sup> Basil Chubb, "'Going about Persecuting civil servants": the role of the Irish parliamentary representative', *Political Studies*, vol. xi, no. 3 (1963), pp. 272-286.

<sup>62</sup> Brian Farrell. 'Ireland: From Friends and Neighbours to Clients and Partisans: Some Dimensions of Parliamentary Representation under PR-STV', in Vernon Bogdanor (ed.), *Representatives of the People? Parliamentarians and Constituents in Western Democracies* (Aldershot, 1985), pp. 237-63

<sup>63</sup> Lyons, 'Irish Parliamentary', pp. 206-7.



of the twentieth century, it is, first and foremost, a study of backbench members of the Irish Party and what their work entailed on a day-to-day level in the years immediately preceding the First World War.<sup>64</sup> What was it like to be an Irish? How did they regard the issues of their day? What did being an Irish MP involve and how were they and their work perceived by their contemporaries? These are some of the most important and exciting questions which will be addressed in this study.

In tackling these questions, the purpose here is neither to provide an answer as to why the Party was so massively defeated in 1918, nor to prove the importance of 'the unimportant'. The former debate, while undoubtedly necessary, has tended to divert attention away from what MPs actually did before 1914. As to the latter, for far too long, backbench MPs as a whole have been judged on the 'single crucial distinction between politicians who just did their particular jobs, and politicians who took it upon themselves to create the general situation.'<sup>65</sup> The requirement for MPs to be politically significant (as measured in terms of 'cut[ting] a dash' at Westminster) before they are worthy of study has been dispensed with here, in favour of an approach which examines backbench MPs in their own right. Indeed, in this study, a perspective (drawing on that developed by political scientists) has been adopted which conceives of (Irish) backbenchers as an 'occupational category',<sup>66</sup> thereby permitting a much more complete consideration of rank and file MPs and their work.

This study is loosely organized into three parts. The first examines the interaction of backbench MPs with several extra-parliamentary organisations. Chapter one considers the relationship between Edwardian constitutional and physical force nationalism through a study of the continuity of personnel between the two traditions, while chapter two reassesses the Party's relationship with several other important organisations on the basis of an examination of the involvement of MPs.

The second section (encompassing chapters three, four, five and six) considers how Edwardian Irish MPs represented their constituents. Chapter three examines the covert and public aspects of candidate selection in Edwardian Ireland and explores the

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<sup>64</sup> The independent nationalist MPs who were not members of the Party have not (unless specifically mentioned) been included in this study.

<sup>65</sup> A.B. Cooke and John Vincent, *The Governing Passion: Cabinet Government and Party Politics in Britain, 1885-86* (Brighton, 1974), p. 136.

<sup>66</sup> Anthony King, 'The Rise of the Career Politician in Britain- And Its Consequences', *British Journal of Political Science*, vol. ii (1981), p. 250.

tensions between local and central elites. Chapters four, five and six comprise a detailed analysis of constituency correspondence, 'visitations', and parliamentary questions.

The final part of this study focuses on what living and working at Westminster involved for Irish MPs. Chapter seven looks at what 'sitting, acting and voting' in Parliament entailed for Members on a routine basis, while chapter eight considers MPs' social and domestic lives at Westminster and in London.

## **Chapter One: The Edwardian Irish Parliamentary Party and the Legacy of the New Departure.**

Many historians have noted the symbolic role the veteran fenian and 1916 Proclamation signatory, Thomas Clarke, played as a 'living link' between the neo-fenians of Easter 1916 and a previous generation of Irish revolutionaries.<sup>1</sup> However, before 1914, the neo-fenian claim to the revolutionary nationalist tradition was by no means unchallenged. For constitutional Nationalists also claimed the legacy of the 'men of '67'. Although this now seems most implausible, at the time it was much more convincing, not least because of the presence of so many former fenians in the Irish Parliamentary Party. In 1887, the RIC estimated that 23 of the 83 Parnellite Members of Parliament had been fenians before entering Parliament. Paul Bew has argued that their presence influenced the 'ideological tone' of Parnellism; bringing to it an admiration for armed insurrection which though emphasising its inexpediency also stressed its nobility and heroic qualities.<sup>2</sup> Yet, historians have shown less awareness of the fact that, even over two decades later, in 1909, 21 (25 per cent) of the 83 Nationalist Members of Parliament were former fenians and a further four were suspected of having been members of the IRB. This chapter will, therefore, consider what effect their presence had on the ideological tone of *Edwardian* parliamentary Nationalism.

John O'Connor Power was not the first member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood to be elected to Parliament,<sup>3</sup> but he was the first (and only) fenian who took his seat without immediately forfeiting his membership of the IRB.<sup>4</sup> For during the mid 1870s O'Connor Power was simultaneously M.P. for Mayo and representative for Connaught on the supreme council. His position was, of course, unique, but he was by no means a dissident. He was elected with the support of the local Mayo IRB, and (just as importantly) the sanction of the supreme council, among whose members he was but one of several senior fenians who in the wake of the abortive 1867 rising advocated a policy of 'parallel action' between constitutional and physical force nationalism. The result was the IRB's three year trial support of Isaac Butt's Home Rule League in 1873 and the amendment of its constitution the same year to the effect that the IRB

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, see F.S.L. Lyons, *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland, 1890-1939* (Oxford, 1979), p. 86; Nicholas Mansergh, *The Irish Revolution, 1840-1921* (1940, Toronto, 1965), p. 225; Hereward Senior, 'The Place of Fenianism in the Irish Republican Tradition', in Maurice Harmon (ed.), *Fenians and Fenianism* (Dublin, 1968), p. 66.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Bew, *Land and the National Question in Ireland, 1858-82* (Dublin, 1978), p. 46.

<sup>3</sup> This was Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa. For Rossa's election, see R.V. Comerford, *Charles J. Kickham: A Study in Irish Nationalism and Literature* (Dublin, 1979), pp. 105-6, 112.

<sup>4</sup> For O'Connor Power, see Donald Jordan, 'John O'Connor Power, Charles Stewart Parnell and the centralisation of popular politics in Ireland', *[Irish] H[istorical] S[tudies]*, vol. xxv, no. 97 (1986), pp. 46-66.

would in future aid 'every movement calculated to advance the cause of Irish independence'.<sup>5</sup> It was on this basis that O'Connor Power stood for Parliament and took the oath of allegiance to the crown.

O'Connor Power's election left some (namely those who regarded the fenian and parliamentary oaths as fundamentally incompatible) within the transatlantic revolutionary movement deeply uneasy. However, neither O'Connor Power nor Joseph Biggar (who became a fenian *after* his election in 1874) saw any such conflict of interest. Both men combined membership of Parliament with that of the supreme council (as evidenced by the fact that during the mid 1870s they conducted their IRB correspondence on House of Commons writing paper).<sup>6</sup> When O'Connor Power visited America in 1875 and 1876 at the behest of the supreme council, he was (despite some misgivings) treated as a 'friend' by the American organisation.<sup>7</sup> However, a combination of personal ambition, genuine dissatisfaction at the IRB's abandonment of revolutionary principles, and the apparent lack of progress made by the Irish Party in Parliament, led to the ruling by the supreme council in 1876 that fenians should withdraw from active participation in the Home Rule movement. As a result, O'Connor Power and Biggar were expelled.

Ironically, the prospect of 'fenians in Parliament' emerged once more in the form of the new departure, co-authored by Michael Davitt and John Devoy (who had strongly opposed O'Connor Power's continued membership of the supreme council), which envisioned the election of 'nationalists' to Parliament as part of a broader co-operative strategy between the 'physical' and 'moral' force movements.<sup>8</sup> This elicited from John O'Leary a letter querying whether Devoy meant by 'nationalists' 'more of the O'C[onnor] P[ower] and B[iggar] sort of thing', whose election he characterised as 'gross perjury', and in the case of the former 'gross treachery'.<sup>9</sup> Without waiting for an answer, the *Irishman* published an unsigned editorial the following day (written by Charles J. Kickham) in which Devoy's meaning was interpreted exactly in such terms, and which insisted that simply by taking the parliamentary oath 'a nationalist must of necessity cease to be a nationalist'.<sup>10</sup> In a letter to the *Freeman's Journal* at the end of December 1878, Devoy sought to reassure such critics that as American citizens and

<sup>5</sup> Comerford, *Kickham*, p. 124.

<sup>6</sup> Leon O Broin, *Revolutionary Underground: The Story of the Irish Republican Brotherhood 1858-1924* (Dublin, 1976), p. 11.

<sup>7</sup> William Carroll to John Devoy, 10.4.76., in William O'Brien and Desmond Ryan (eds.), *Devoy's Post Bag*, vol. i, (Dublin, 1948), p. 152.

<sup>8</sup> On this, see T.W. Moody, 'The New Departure in Irish Politics, 1878-9', in H.A. Cronne, T.W. Moody and D.B. Quinn (eds.), *Essays in British and Irish History In Honour of James Eadly Todd* (London, 1949), pp. 303-34.

<sup>9</sup> John O'Leary to John Devoy, 8.11.78., in *Ibid*, p. 373

<sup>10</sup> *Irishman*, 9.11.78., quoted in Comerford, *Kickham*, pp. 142-3.

unpardoned felons, the sponsors of the new policy could not enter Parliament, and that in any case, they were ‘personally opposed’ to fenians taking an oath to Queen Victoria. However, his concluding comments that ‘the constituencies are the proper judges of the merits of the candidates, and that the nationalist movement has more important work to do than standing sentinel at the door of the House of Commons’ were not calculated to instil confidence.<sup>11</sup> Accordingly, when, at its meeting in Paris in January 1879, the supreme council rejected the new departure, it specifically prohibited members of the IRB from following O’Connor Power’s example of entering Parliament, with the result that the next occasion when a fenian was elected to Westminster was not until 1895, when John Daly was returned for Limerick City. Yet, if the supreme council’s decision finally ended the prospect of further ‘fenian M.P.s’, it did not prevent men who had been fenians (and even some who remained wedded to ‘emotional fenianism’) from entering Parliament in the following years.

The revolutionary careers of several of those fenians who later became M.P.s are obscure and so establishing IRB credentials is difficult. This, as Patrick Maume found in the case of Parnell, is particularly so for those men who were members of the IRB in the generation after 1867.<sup>12</sup> Little, for instance, is known about the Sligo M.P. John O’Dowd other than the fact that he was associated with the IRB after he returned from America in 1876.<sup>13</sup> William Duffy is another Member about whose fenian career little is known, though his links with the IRB are believed to have been the reason for his involvement in the foundation of the Gaelic Athletic Association in the mid 1880s.<sup>14</sup> J.C. Flynn was, according to a former colleague, a fenian ‘in early life’, but this part of his career is obscure.<sup>15</sup> According to F.S.L. Lyons, John Fitzgibbon was a fenian, but his obituarists only made oblique reference to this part of his life.<sup>16</sup> Patrick Maume has connected the Protestant M.P. William Abraham with the IRB; a claim certainly consistent with his public oratory.<sup>17</sup> The fenian career of William O’Brien began in the company of his brother Jim, who he assisted in the importation of arms from England (via Wales) into Ireland.<sup>18</sup> William O’Brien was himself later secretary of the Munster IRB.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>11</sup> *FJ*, 27.12.78., 7.

<sup>12</sup> Patrick Maume ‘Parnell and the IRB Oath’, *IHS*, vol. xxix, no. 115 (1995), pp. 363-70.

<sup>13</sup> Michael Farry, *Sligo 1914-1921* (Trim, Co. Meath, 1992), p. 2.

<sup>14</sup> W.F. Mandle, *The Gaelic Athletic Association and Irish Nationalist Politics, 1884-1924* (London and Dublin, 1987), p. 8.

<sup>15</sup> *G-A*, 12.5.10., 3; *CE*, 16.11.22., 5; *II*, 16.11. 22., 4.

<sup>16</sup> F.S.L. Lyons, *John Dillon* (London, 1968), p. 225; *Roscommon Herald*, 13.9.19., 3; *Roscommon Messenger*, 13.9.19., 3.

<sup>17</sup> Patrick Maume, *The Long Gestation* (Dublin, 1999), p.223. See, for instance, *FJ*, 2.2.10., 8.

<sup>18</sup> William O’Brien, ‘Was Fenianism Ever Formidable?’, *The Contemporary Review*, vol. lxxi (1897), pp. 688.

<sup>19</sup> William O’Brien, *Recollections* (London, 1905), p. 116. Also see, T.H. Ronayne to John Devoy, 24.9.81., in William O’Brien and Desmond Ryan (eds.), *Devoy’s Post Bag*, vol. ii, (Dublin, 1958), p. 101.

Patrick Maume has explored the possibility that T.P. O'Connor took the IRB oath.<sup>20</sup> During the 1890s, John Dillon was suspected by colleagues of having been an IRB member.<sup>21</sup> Dillon's friend and collaborator, Wilfred Scawen Blunt, recorded in 1908 that John Devoy 'was a personal friend of Dillon, though they differed on many points, for Devoy is quite opposed to the Parliamentary Party. Dillon himself, of course, began by being a fenian.'<sup>22</sup> In fact, while Dillon admitted that 'rebel' 'was a term I was never ashamed of in the old days',<sup>23</sup> he denied ever having been a member of 'the Separatist group'; a claim supported by his biographer.<sup>24</sup> During the same period, the Irish police also suspected that John and Willie Redmond were members of the IRB.<sup>25</sup> As Parnellites they were certainly both involved in what Matthew Kelly has recently termed the 'fenian-Redmondite nexus' of the 1890s,<sup>26</sup> and it is known that Redmond's close friend and Parnellite colleague, Pat O'Brien, had been a Liverpool fenian.<sup>27</sup> Another Parnellite (though only later an M.P.), Arthur Lynch was allegedly 'an important figure in the IRB....in the early 1890s', though another authority has described Lynch as 'on the periphery of Irish revolutionary politics.'<sup>28</sup> Certainly, it is known that Lynch was president of the London Amnesty Association in the 1890s, was an associate of leading members of Clan na Gael and fought on the side of the Boers during the South African War, as commander of the Second Irish Brigade.<sup>29</sup> Joe Nolan also had links with American fenianism, and was implicated by British intelligence in transatlantic dynamite conspiracies in the 1880s.<sup>30</sup>

No difficulty of identification is encountered with the great majority of ex-fenian M.P.s, most of whom freely admitted in later life that they had been 'active' members of the IRB during the 1860s. James Halpin, for example, was definitely a fenian, though according to a colleague, he was never actually 'out'.<sup>31</sup> According to the *Pall Mall Gazette*, J.P. Nannetti 'has stated that in 1867 he was a fenian and was trusted in the inner ranks of that

<sup>20</sup> Maume, 'Parnell', p. 363.

<sup>21</sup> O Broin, *Revolutionary Underground*, p. 56; Denis Kilbride to John Dillon, 1.7.96., T[rinity] C[ollege] D[ublin], D[illon] P[apers], ms 6756/771.

<sup>22</sup> W.S. Blunt, *My Diaries* (London, 1919), p. 166.

<sup>23</sup> *FJ*, 9 .10.11., 8.

<sup>24</sup> *Hansard, HC*, (5th series), 2.1.13., vol. xlv, 575; Lyons, *Dillon*, p. 15. Also see, John Dillon to John Devoy, 6.8.91., in O'Brien and Ryan, *Devoy's Post Bag*, vol. ii, p. 319.

<sup>25</sup> O Broin, *Revolutionary Underground*, p. 55.

<sup>26</sup> Matthew Kelly, "Parnell's Old Brigade": The Redmondite-Fenian Nexus in the 1890s', *IHS* (forthcoming), p. 17. The author would like to thank Mr Kelly for allowing him to read a copy of this article prior to publication.

<sup>27</sup> *Kilkenny People*, 14.7.17., 5.

<sup>28</sup> Warwick Gould, John Kelly, Deirdre Toomey (eds.), *The Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats, 1896-1900* (Oxford, 1997), p. 463; D.L. McCracken, *MacBride's Brigade: Irish Commandos in the Anglo-Boer War* (Dublin, 1999), p. 78.

<sup>29</sup> Arthur Lynch, *Ireland: Vital Hour* (London, 1915), p.174; *My Life Story* (London, 1924), p. 219, 224, 236.

<sup>30</sup> *G-A*, 19.3.10., 3; Christy Campbell, *Fenian Fire: The British Government Plot to Assassinate Queen Victoria* (London, 2002), pp. 279-80.

<sup>31</sup> *FJ*, 27.7.09., 6; Stephen Gwynn, *Experiences of a Literary Man* (London, 1926), p. 276.

organisation.<sup>32</sup> The obituary of Tom Condon in the *Irish Independent* described how 'In early life he was associated with the fenian movement, and took part in the activities of that organisation in 1867 and 1868.'<sup>33</sup> while on his death, the *Freeman's Journal* described Kendal O'Brien as a member of the 'old guard' of the IRB.<sup>34</sup> Michael Reddy's obituary referred to the fact that 'In his younger days...he was an active worker in the fenian movement'.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, the *Kilkenny People* described the former county Member, Michael Meagher, as having been 'associated' with the fenian movement as a younger man.<sup>36</sup> His entry in *Dodd's Parliamentary Companion* specified that he 'took part in the rising in 1867.'<sup>37</sup> 'Like so many of his contemporaries' recalled the *Irish Times* on the death of David Sheehy 'he joined the fenian movement, and was a prime figure in the rising in Mallow.'<sup>38</sup> The *Cork Examiner* recorded that John O'Connor was '[a]n ardent nationalist from his youth...[and] joined the Fenian Brotherhood'.<sup>39</sup>

During the 1860s most of these men were 'junior fenians' in the sense both that they were young (P.A. Meehan, for instance, was just 15 in 1867) and without authority. However, the Edwardian Party also numbered among its members men who had occupied positions of seniority. James Gilhooly was, according to the *Independent*, 'on the threshold of manhood at the time of the '67 rising and it was no secret that he was closely associated with the movement.'<sup>40</sup> The RIC believed that Gilhooly had been 'head centre' of the Bantry IRB in 1867.<sup>41</sup> John Phillips was in 'fenian days...looked upon as the leader in the county [Longford] of the extreme section', in which position 'many a stirring scene he took part in those stormy days'.<sup>42</sup>

William Lundon was one of the 'centres' for County Limerick and an active IRB organiser. In early 1866 he and other fenians narrowly escaped arrest in the townland of Nicker.<sup>43</sup> Seeking refuge in America, he 'stubbornly' opposed the plans for a fenian invasion of Canada, insisting instead on the priority of liberating Ireland. Nonetheless, he joined the fenian invasion force with the rank of Colonel.<sup>44</sup> Following this 'expensive fiasco',<sup>45</sup> he returned to

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<sup>32</sup> *Pall Mall Gazette- 'Extra': The Popular Handbook to the New House of Commons 1910* (London, 1910), p. 68.

<sup>33</sup> *II*, 6.7.43., 2.

<sup>34</sup> *FJ*, 29.11.09., 13.

<sup>35</sup> *FJ*, 31.7.19., 2.

<sup>36</sup> *Kilkenny People*, 31.12.27., 5.

<sup>37</sup> *Dodd's Parliamentary Companion* (London, 1918), p. 394.

<sup>38</sup> *Irish Times*, 19.12.32., 8.

<sup>39</sup> *CE*, 29.10.28., 6.

<sup>40</sup> *II*, 17.10.17., 2.

<sup>41</sup> C.C. O'Brien, *Parnell and his Party, 1880-90* (1957, Oxford, 1968), p. 156.

<sup>42</sup> *Longford Leader*, 7.4.17., 1; *Longford Independent*, 7.4.17., 3.

<sup>43</sup> *FJ*, 19.5.13., 8.

<sup>44</sup> For this, see Hereward Senior, *The Last Invasion of Canada* (Toronto and Oxford, 1991).

<sup>45</sup> John Newsinger, *Fenianism in Mid Victorian Britain* (London, 1994), p. 47.

Ireland in the spring of 1867 and participated in the rising in his native Limerick, though (according to his obituarist) he knew 'the futility of such a proceeding'. He advised the fenians of his native Kiltelly not to turn-out, and he went to Limerick Junction (the rendezvous for the Munster IRB), and advised against further action. He was subsequently imprisoned for three years.<sup>46</sup>

By contrast, James O'Connor, while certainly a middle ranking if not senior fenian, was definitely not 'out' in 1867. O'Connor had formerly been one of three Cork city 'centres' and by 1865 was cashier of the fenian newspaper the *Irish People*. Although in this capacity he does not appear to have been particularly competent,<sup>47</sup> the demise of the paper owed nothing to his mismanagement but was wholly due to its suppression by Dublin Castle. When the paper's offices were raided by the police on September 15 1865, O'Connor was arrested along with the paper's editor, John O'Leary, and business manager, Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa. Convicted of 'treason-felony', he was sentenced to seven years penal servitude, of which he served four.

But arguably the most senior ex-fenian in the Irish Party in 1910 was James O'Kelly. At his death, much of O'Kelly's public reputation derived not from his involvement with the IRB, but in connection with his other exploits. As the *Times* described him in its obituary of 1916, 'he was a typical example of a character of which Ireland has been prolific...a sort of soldier of fortune readier to take a hand in any enterprise the more desperate it appeared to be.'<sup>48</sup> No doubt, to the *Times*, O'Kelly's service with the French Foreign Legion in North Africa and Mexico, his attempts to recruit an Irish Brigade during the Franco-Prussian War, and his experiences as a war correspondent in Cuba, during the 'Indian Wars' (where he met and hunted with 'Buffalo' Bill Cody), and in the Sudan, rendered his life a romantic one, and thus worth obituarising.<sup>49</sup> In contrast, his involvement in 'Irish underground conspiracies' was only referred to obliquely. And yet, his membership of the IRB between 1861 and 1880 was the directing force of his early life.

As a child growing up in Dublin, O'Kelly had been friends with John Devoy, who was later to become the senior figure in Irish-American fenianism. They both joined the IRB together in 1861 (O'Kelly being then 16). In the same year, he moved to London and in 1863 he became London 'head-centre'.<sup>50</sup> O'Kelly seems to have had considerable success in organising the IRB in London, but differences with James Stephens may have been the cause of his departure for France in 1864 to join the Legion.<sup>51</sup> O'Kelly was in Mexico when Devoy's

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<sup>46</sup> *Limerick Leader*, 2.4.09., 4.

<sup>47</sup> Bourke, *O'Leary*, pp. 72-3.

<sup>48</sup> *Times*, 23.12.16., 9.

<sup>49</sup> For O'Kelly's experiences in Cuba, see James O'Kelly, *The Mambi-Land or, Adventures of a Herald Correspondent in Cuba* (London, 1874).

<sup>50</sup> Devoy, *Recollections*, p. 334.

<sup>51</sup> *I[rish] P[eople]*, 21.10.99., 1.



letter informing him of the intended rising reached him. He deserted and made his way to New York,<sup>52</sup> where, finding that the proposed rising was poorly planned and would be inadequately armed, he opposed it.<sup>53</sup> He returned to London (apparently with the intention of fighting),<sup>54</sup> but did not participate in the rising.<sup>55</sup>

Paul Bew has written of how fenianism in the years immediately following the rising of 1867 was in a 'semi-chaotic state'.<sup>56</sup> Through Irish-American efforts, the IRB was reorganised and its executive reconstituted as the supreme council at the beginning of 1868. However, with the release of the IRB prisoners in 1869, a 'new fenian elite' came to the fore. Prominent among this group were J.F.X. O'Brien and James O'Connor. Indeed, according to R.V. Comerford, at their behest a new supreme council was formed in the summer of 1869, which included (among others) James O'Kelly, John O'Connor (James O'Connor's brother and not to be confused with the Kildare MP) and John O'Connor Power.<sup>57</sup> In deliberate contrast to the one-man dictatorship of Stephens, the new executive was oligarchical in structure. It lost no time in identifying the weaknesses which had caused the failure of the recent rising,<sup>58</sup> and quickly began to reorganise and rearm, so that by early 1870 'fenianism in Ireland was probably as formidable in military terms as it had been in the mid-1860s'.<sup>59</sup>

As early as 1869 some members of the supreme council were already contemplating a political arrangement with constitutional nationalists. Such a plan was apparently laid before George Henry Moore by O'Connor Power, James O'Connor and Edmund O'Donovan, but Moore's death in 1870 brought this initiative to an end.<sup>60</sup> An opportunity for individual fenians to participate in politics was affected by the amnesty movement under Isaac Butt, which agitated for the release of fenian prisoners. However, some fenians took exception to the rival popularity of the tenant-right agitation as embodied in the Tenant League (also under Butt).<sup>61</sup> This tension was reflected in the Tipperary by-election of 1869, when Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa (then still in prison) was put forward- successfully- by advanced nationalists as the amnesty candidate against the Catholic Whig candidate favoured by Butt. In fact, J.F.X.

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<sup>52</sup> Devoy, *Recollections*, p. 335.

<sup>53</sup> *IP*, 23.6.00., 1; 30.6.00., 1; Devoy, *Recollections*, p.234.

<sup>54</sup> *IP*, 24.11.00., 3; Devoy, *Recollections*, p. 336.

<sup>55</sup> According to O'Kelly he was a member of the provisional government (located in London) which organised the rising, being elected during the rising to replace one of the members who had been arrested. *Times*, 17.7.89., 5.

<sup>56</sup> Bew, *Land and the National Question*, p. 41.

<sup>57</sup> Comerford, *Fenians*, pp. 166-7.

<sup>58</sup> T.W. Moody and Leon O Broin, 'The IRB supreme council, 1868-78', *IHS*, vol. xix, no. 75 (1975), pp. 303-10.

<sup>59</sup> Comerford, *Fenians*, pp. 168.

<sup>60</sup> Michael MacDonagh, *The Home Rule Movement* (Dublin and London, 1920), pp. 115-16. For a discussion of this, see F.S.L. Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine* (1963, London, 1985), p. 150.

<sup>61</sup> Comerford, *Fenians*, p. 177; David Thornley, *Isaac Butt and Home Rule* (London, 1964), pp. 70-1.

O'Brien (acting on his own initiative) put Rossa forward at the suggestion of the local IRB,<sup>62</sup> later criticising Butt for not endorsing Rossa's candidature himself.<sup>63</sup>

Despite such tensions, the new Home Rule movement which emerged following the disappointment of Gladstone's Land Bill, attracted the interest of many individual fenians, among them several members of the supreme council. James O'Kelly (who had been on 'intimate terms' with both Moore and Butt during the late 1860s) met the latter some time shortly before the Bilton Hotel meeting in 1870, and indicated that the IRB would regard the Home Rule organisation with 'benevolent neutrality'.<sup>64</sup> Both O'Kelly (under the pseudonym John Martin) and his colleague James O'Connor also attended the meeting, which led to the foundation of the Home Government Association.<sup>65</sup> J.F.X. O'Brien called on Cork fenians to give 'fair-play' to the new constitutional movement, though not without some opposition from within the IRB.<sup>66</sup> In 1873, when the Home Rule League was founded, it was achieved with the support of O'Brien, who (according to William O'Brien) 'was one of the most determined that, within certain limits, Mr Butt's projects should have fair play'.<sup>67</sup> O'Brien resigned from the IRB in 1874, citing the 'disintegration' of the movement as his reason. By his own account, he had little involvement with politics in the following years,<sup>68</sup> though in the mid 1870s Kickham regularly visited his Cork home and he also made O'Brien one of the trustees of his tribute fund in 1879.<sup>69</sup> Even so, that year the RIC commented that '[he] is not now observed to mix much with suspected fenians'.<sup>70</sup> Initially hesitant about Parnell, by 1885 he had thrown his support behind parliamentary nationalism.<sup>71</sup>

In the aftermath of the rising, O'Kelly was 'the chief driving force' in reorganising the IRB in London. He was re-elected London 'head-centre' and became a member of the supreme council. In 1870, he organised a plot to break Devoy and the remaining fenian prisoners out of jail, but this was cancelled when it became clear that they were to be released shortly.<sup>72</sup> Later that year, he returned to French service during the Franco-Prussian War, and following the fall of Paris embarked on a career in journalism in America. However, during the 1870s he

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<sup>62</sup> Unpublished autobiography of J.F.X. O'Brien, N[ational] L[ibrary] I[reland], O[']B[rien] P[apers], ms 16,695.

<sup>63</sup> Thornley, *Butt*, p. 72.

<sup>64</sup> *G-A*, 22.1.10., 3; Bourke, *O'Leary*, p. 150.

<sup>65</sup> *FJ*, 26.1.84., 5; Bourke, *O'Leary*, p. 143.

<sup>66</sup> O'Brien, *Recollections*, p. 98.

<sup>67</sup> Thornley, *Butt*, p. 161. Also see, O'Brien, *Recollections*, pp. 139-41.

<sup>68</sup> *Times*, 29.6.89., 5.

<sup>69</sup> Charles J. Kickham to John Devoy, 29.4.76., in O'Brien and Ryan, *Devoy's Post Bag*, vol. i, p. 163; Comerford, *Kickham*, p. 135, 158.

<sup>70</sup> Quoted in O'Brien, *Parnell and his Party*, p. 156.

<sup>71</sup> Unpublished autobiography of J.F.X. O'Brien.

<sup>72</sup> *G-A*, 30.12.16., 7.

remained involved with the 'movement' as a member of Clan na Gael; in 1877, for instance, he was involved in 'one of those lunatic schemes which the Irish-Americans were periodically planning in the second half of the nineteenth century',<sup>73</sup> namely the invasion of Gibraltar by a small force of Irish and American fenians.<sup>74</sup> But, at the same time, he continued to nurture hopes of a closer working relationship between advanced and constitutional nationalists. After he first met Parnell in Paris in August 1877, O'Kelly wrote to Devoy that 'He had an idea I held at the starting of the Home Rule organisation, that is the creation of a political link between the conservative and radical nationalists'.<sup>75</sup> In the following three years, O'Kelly drew increasingly close to Parnell and became, in effect, his link 'to the inner circle of fenianism'.<sup>76</sup> He organised the Dublin meeting in 1878 between Parnell and O'Leary to discuss the new departure- in connection with which he has been termed by one historian as the 'real schemer'.<sup>77</sup> That said, like Davitt, he clearly did not regard any fenian rapprochement with constitutional nationalism as necessitating the cessation of the IRBs military planning. In 1879, O'Kelly was the moving force behind a scheme to arm the Zulus in their conflict with Britain.<sup>78</sup> And, in 1880, he was behind an unsuccessful attempt to revive the Arms Bureau, the agency which had imported weapons for the IRB, formerly under the direction of Michael Davitt.<sup>79</sup> However, the personal antagonism between O'Kelly and O'Leary led the supreme council to reject his mission,<sup>80</sup> and as a result he resigned from the organisation and soon afterwards 'not having anything particular to do',<sup>81</sup> seemingly drifted into parliamentary politics.

After his release from prison in 1869, James O'Connor became a senior member of the supreme council and was closely involved in early initiatives to co-ordinate the different wings of Irish nationalism. At the same time, he recommenced his journalistic career, and was editorially associated with several newspapers, most prominently Richard Pigott's *The Irishman*.<sup>82</sup> When, in 1880, another of Pigott's papers, the *Flag of Ireland*, was purchased by the Land League, and retitled *United Ireland*, under the editorship of William O'Brien, O'Connor became assistant editor. How significant this was for his 'conversion' from revolutionary to constitutional nationalism remains unclear. In 1879, Kickham had come to live with O'Connor and his family in Blackrock. At this time both O'Connor and his brother

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<sup>73</sup> Bourke, *O'Leary*, p. 151.

<sup>74</sup> O'Brien and Ryan, *Devoy's Post Bag*, vol. i, pp. 292-4.

<sup>75</sup> Quoted in Jules Abels, *The Parnell Tragedy* (London, 1966), p. 70.

<sup>76</sup> F.S.L. Lyons, *Charles Stewart Parnell* (London, 1977), p. 71.

<sup>77</sup> *G-A*, 6.1.16., 7; Bourke, *O'Leary*, p. 150.

<sup>78</sup> Bourke, *O'Leary*, p. 408-11.

<sup>79</sup> Devoy, *Recollections*, p. 344.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 274-5, 333

<sup>81</sup> *Times*, 17.7.89., 6.

<sup>82</sup> See, James O'Connor, *Recollections of Richard Pigott* (Dublin, 1889).

supported the 'old guard's' campaign *against* the new departure.<sup>83</sup> However, by 1881 he had joined the Land League, and when that year, *United Ireland* was suppressed, he was among those imprisoned in Kilmainham (along with James O'Kelly). Upon his release he returned to his job and remained with the paper until the Split, when he was among those staff members who (unsuccessfully) sought to physically resist Parnell's efforts to capture the offices of *United Ireland* in December 1890.<sup>84</sup>

John O'Connor's 'defection' to constitutional nationalism was much more troubled. After 1867, O'Connor continued to be an active fenian.<sup>85</sup> He travelled to America as an envoy of the IRB in 1874, was a member of the Cork directory and was engaged in importing arms into Ireland up until 1879. However, according to O'Connor, at some point in the late 1870s '[m]y mind had undergone some change as to the means to be adopted in the cause of Ireland'.<sup>86</sup> Indeed, as he later revealed to the House of Commons 'I arrived at the conclusion that the policy I was pursuing was the policy of despair...I worked on, toiled on without hope, and with no prospect before me but the convict's jacket or the hangman's rope.'<sup>87</sup> However, this personal turmoil did not prompt any immediate action (in fact, he was rumoured to have been a leading figure in an abortive attempt by the Cork IRB to kidnap Parnell),<sup>88</sup> and it was not until John Devoy's public letters in 1878 and Michael Davitt's speeches in America calling for advanced nationalists to engage in politics,<sup>89</sup> that O'Connor seems to have decided not simply to support Parnell, but to leave the IRB altogether. Clearly, this had not been Devoy's intention, but despite his personal efforts to 'detach' O'Connor from constitutionalism, the latter immediately became involved in organising the Land League in Cork and in trying to attract rank and file fenians to support parliamentary action.<sup>90</sup> In 1885, he was elected as the personal nominee of Parnell as one of the Members for Tipperary.<sup>91</sup>

With few exceptions, little is known about the careers of many of the 'junior fenians' in the years following the rising. Some of them were involved (like J.F.X. O'Brien and James O'Kelly) as organisers and campaigners in the series of by-elections (between 1868 and 1875),

<sup>83</sup> Comerford, *Kickham*, pp. 162-3; T.W. Moody, *Davitt and Irish Revolution, 1846-82* (Oxford, 1981), p. 278.

<sup>84</sup> *Times*, 14.3.10., 13; *Wicklow People*, 19.3.10., 4; *II*, 14.3.10., 6.

<sup>85</sup> According to Stephen Gwynn, O'Connor strongly considered joining the Papal Brigade in 1869, but remained in Ireland because he had several relations to provide for. Stephen Gwynn, *Memories of Enjoyment* (Tralee, 1946), p. 86.

<sup>86</sup> *Times*, 10.7.89., 11.

<sup>87</sup> *Parl. Deb.*, (3rd Series) 3.3.90., vol. cccxli, 1713.

<sup>88</sup> *Times*, 29.10.28., 19.

<sup>89</sup> *Times*, 11.7.89., 11; Lyons, *Parnell*, p. 79.

<sup>90</sup> For the political geography of Cork in the early 1880s, see Maria Murphy, 'Fenianism and the Cork Trades, 1860-1900', *Saothar* (1979), pp. 27-38.

<sup>91</sup> James O'Shea, *Priest, Politics and Society in Post-Famine Ireland: A Study of County Tipperary, 1850-1891* (Dublin, 1983), p. 203.

and during the 1874 general election, which saw a diverse range of 'fenians' seeking election to Parliament.<sup>92</sup> Tom Condon was 'an excellent specimen of the "Flying Column" before whose onset Sergeant Heron's great cravat and his Whig retinue went ingloriously down' during the Tipperary election won by O'Donovan Rossa. William O'Brien reported the election for the press.<sup>93</sup> Kendal O'Brien acted as a guarantor for Rossa's election expenses (as he did when John Mitchel stood for Tipperary in 1875).<sup>94</sup> John O'Connor campaigned for Mitchel in Cork at the 1874 general election.<sup>95</sup>

Later, the great majority of these men were associated with the Land League in the years 1880-81. When the Land League began in Limerick, for instance, William Lundon was apparently one of the first to join, and in 1885 sought selection as one of the M.P.s for the county; only withdrawing at the behest of 'his fellow labourer in 1867', John O'Connor.<sup>96</sup> However, it is unclear how many of these men (like O'Connor) defected from the IRB and how many were (like J.F.X. O'Brien) already lapsed fenians. P.A. Meehan, for example, had been publicly flogged by his father for his participation in the 1867 rising. What, if any, effect this had on his political outlook is unknown, but by 1874 he had established himself as a local businessman and had joined the Queen's County Independent Club- a Home Rule political club. He was later the first secretary of the Land League in Laois and the 'organiser of victory in the national cause in Queens County.'<sup>97</sup> In contrast, the fact that Michael Reddy was associated with both the IRB 'circle' over which Matt Harris (East Galway, 1885-1890) was 'centre' and with the Mayo Land League in which Harris was so prominent a figure, may suggest that he was a direct 'convert' from fenianism.<sup>98</sup> Similarly, it is possible that Pat O'Brien, who was the secretary of the Liverpool Land League and secretary of the Ladies' Land League,<sup>99</sup> and J.P. Nannetti, who 'was one of the founders of the first Home Rule organisation' in Liverpool,<sup>100</sup> may have been influenced by John Barry (South Wexford, 1880-1893) and other fenians in the North of England who were sympathetic to the new departure.<sup>101</sup>

However, what can be asserted with greater confidence is that the eventual election of men like Meehan and Reddy to the House of Commons did not represent some sort of continuing dividend of the new departure. For ten of the 21 fenian M.P.s in Parliament in 1909

<sup>92</sup> O'Kelly campaigned on behalf of John Martin (John Mitchels' brother-in-law) in Longford in 1868. *G-A*, 13.1.17., 2.

<sup>93</sup> O'Brien, *Recollections*, p. 123.

<sup>94</sup> *FJ*, 29.11.09., 13.

<sup>95</sup> *Times*, 10.7.89., 11.

<sup>96</sup> *Limerick Leader*, 2.4.09., 4; *FJ*, 7.11.85., 7.

<sup>97</sup> Meehan, *Members of Parliament for Laois and Offaly*, p. 69; John O'Hanlon and Edward O'Leary, *History of The Queen's County* (Dublin, 1914), vol. ii, p. 728; 735.

<sup>98</sup> *Jl*, 31.7.19., 2.

<sup>99</sup> *Jl*, 13.7.17., 2; *Times*, 13.7.17., 9.

<sup>100</sup> *Jl*, 27.4.15., 6; *FJ*, 27.4.15., 5.

<sup>101</sup> O Broin, *Revolutionary Underground*, p. 11; *G-A*, 20.8.10., 3.

were elected in or after 1900. Doubtless, the status of having been connected with the IRB was usually (though not always) an advantage for most parliamentary aspirants,<sup>102</sup> but, arguably, their election owed much more to the changes in parliamentary selection procedures after 1900. For one consequence of the reforms initiated by William O'Brien was the increased proportion of farmers and merchants within the Irish Party. Among those former-fenians elected after 1900, four were farmers, three were merchants, two were teachers and one was a printer.<sup>103</sup> This was in contrast to those ex-fenians who had been elected before 1900, among whom there were three journalists, two merchants, a brewer's agent, a coal merchant, a miller, a lawyer, a butcher and a private secretary. According to F.S.L. Lyons, many of the Members elected after 1900 were '*par excellence* the representatives of local opinion...[who] were deeply immersed in local affairs and were invaluable interpreters of opinion in the country'.<sup>104</sup> This group was distinguished by including a high proportion of M.P.s who had both family and residential links with the localities they represented, and who were elected primarily because they were 'acquainted with the needs of the[ir] constituencies'.<sup>105</sup>

Although the IRB prohibited its members from entering Parliament, the excommunication of transgressors was not necessarily total or absolute. When he died in 1905, for example, the *Gaelic-American* sought to reclaim J.F.X. O'Brien's soul to the fenian fold. O'Brien, it observed, had been 'like a fish out of water' in Parliament, because he 'never changed his convictions as to what would be the ideal solution of the Irish question', with the consequence that 'He...maintained the most friendly relations with his old fenian colleagues'.<sup>106</sup> Certainly, O'Brien corresponded with O'Donovan Rossa during the 1890s.<sup>107</sup> According to John Denvir (himself a former fenian and later organiser for the Irish National League of Great Britain), when Rossa called on O'Brien at the INLGB London offices sometime in the 1890s 'it was...a delightful experience to hear the two old warriors, who had done and suffered so much for Ireland, fighting their battles over again'.<sup>108</sup> Rossa, however, remembered the meeting as somewhat more strained.<sup>109</sup> Tom Condon, Michael Meagher and John Fitzgibbon attended Rossa's funeral in August 1915.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> A candidate's fenianism was not always a means to automatic selection. For instance, see the case of John O'Connor and Tipperary in 1885. O'Shea, *Priest, Politics and Society*, p. 203.

<sup>103</sup> Additionally, of those fenians elected after mid 1909, Lynch was a writer and journalist and Fitzgibbon was a merchant.

<sup>104</sup> F.S.L. Lyons, *The Irish Parliamentary Party* (1951, Westport, Conn., 1975), p. 175.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p 177-9.

<sup>106</sup> *G-A*, 3.6.05., 5.

<sup>107</sup> Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa to J.F.X. O'Brien, 30 July 1894; 5.9.94., NLI, OBP, ms 13,432 [9].

<sup>108</sup> John Denvir, *The Life Story of an Old Rebel* (Dublin, 1910), p. 73.

<sup>109</sup> Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa, *Rossa's Recollections, 1838-1898* (1898, Shannon, 1972), pp. 27-8.

<sup>110</sup> *II*, 2.8.15., 4; *FJ*, 2.8.15., 6.

Another of the 'neo-fenian elite' of the late 1860s, James O'Connor, also maintained links with his former colleagues. Even in 1882, when he was already an 'M.P.-in-the-making', O'Connor was at Charles Kickham's deathbed and organised the public funeral (though he was prevented from delivering a graveside oration by disgruntled fenians).<sup>111</sup> O'Connor was also a pallbearer at John O'Leary's funeral in 1907.<sup>112</sup> The following year he assisted John Devoy in securing his late brother's papers for the Clan (John having formerly been secretary of the supreme council and possibly president after Kickham's death).<sup>113</sup>

O'Brien and O'Connor remained in contact with old comrades, but were definitely 'retired' revolutionaries. However, in the case of several M.P.s this distinction is difficult to make. For instance, according to Dr Mark Ryan (a former member of the supreme council), Pat O'Brien had left the IRB after the failure of the new departure.<sup>114</sup> But, as a Parnellite M.P. in the 1890s, O'Brien was not only closely involved with the London Amnesty Association (in connection with which he raised funds for the relatives of the Manchester Martyrs),<sup>115</sup> but with the Irish National Brotherhood, 'one of the violently opposed sections into which Irish-American revolutionists had split'.<sup>116</sup> Moreover, according to the Irish police, O'Brien was at one time involved with Fred Allan in a plot to kidnap a junior member of the royal family in order to secure the release of fenian 'dynamitards' imprisoned in the 1880s.<sup>117</sup> O'Brien (like Willie Redmond) was also involved with Maud Gonne's Transvaal Committee. Indeed, Gonne and O'Brien were good friends, though 'later politics broke that friendship of many years'.<sup>118</sup>

James O'Kelly was another M.P. whose retirement as a fenian is questionable. O'Kelly maintained contacts not only with some of his colleagues from the old London IRB,<sup>119</sup> but also with Devoy. During the 1880s, for instance, O'Kelly acted (gratis) as the London correspondent of the New York *Irish Nation*, edited by Devoy.<sup>120</sup> More significantly, O'Kelly (who, much to the amusement of his parliamentary colleagues, continued to imagine the downfall of England through foreign intervention) not only gave Devoy technical advice

<sup>111</sup> Comerford, *Kickham*, p. 173, 176.

<sup>112</sup> Bourke, *O'Leary*, p. 233. David Sheehy also attended the funeral. *FJ*, 20.3.07., 10. It seems likely that O'Connor was the author of an appreciation of O'Leary 'written by one who knew him', which appeared in the *Freeman's Journal*. *FJ*, 18.3.07., 6.

<sup>113</sup> James O'Connor to John Devoy, 1.12.08.; 29.12.08.; 26.2.09., in O'Brien and Ryan, *Devoy's Post Bag*, vol. ii, p. 372, 374, 377; O Broin, *Revolutionary Underground*, p. 30.

<sup>114</sup> M.F. Ryan, *Fenian Memories* (Dublin, 1946), p.65.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 181.

<sup>116</sup> O Broin, *Revolutionary Underground*, p. 64.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71. For Allan, see Owen McGee, 'Frederick James Allan (1861-1937), Fenian and Civil Servant', *History Ireland*, vol. 10, no. i (2002) pp. 29-33.

<sup>118</sup> Maud Gonne MacBride, *A Servant of the Queen* (London, 1938), pp. 298-9, 116.

<sup>119</sup> James Clancy to John Devoy, 21.1.91., in O'Brien and Ryan, *Devoy's Post Bag*, vol. ii, p. 317.

<sup>120</sup> *G-A*, 6.1.16., 7.

concerning the purchase of weapons,<sup>121</sup> but laid several proposals before him for the defeat of England abroad. In 1884, he proposed that the Clan should supply the Mahdists in the Sudan with 20,000 rifles to fight the British. This scheme (which Devoy believed 'could have played havoc with British rule in Egypt') was rejected,<sup>122</sup> though it was not the last such proposal, since as late as June 1899, O'Kelly wrote to Devoy informing him that if the tension in the Transvaal led to war between the Boers and the British, he could introduce Devoy to the Boer representatives in Paris.<sup>123</sup> This, in fact, may have been one of the last contributions O'Kelly made to the organisation. It may also have been his last contact with Devoy, who claimed that he had been 'out of touch with my boyhood friend for many years' when O'Kelly died.<sup>124</sup> His death in 1916 was front-page news in the *Gaelic-American*, which made much of O'Kelly's revolutionary connections, while playing down his active involvement in parliamentary politics.<sup>125</sup>

Devoy's friendliness towards O'Kelly was not shared by all of his former fenian colleagues. O'Kelly received death threats and was strongly censured by some of his erstwhile associates.<sup>126</sup> According to Henri Le Caron, (the alias of the IRB informer Thomas Beach), 'O'Leary...denounced him [O'Kelly] for deserting the cause, and getting into Parliament instead....[thereby] betraying the interests of the organisation'.<sup>127</sup> Several other fenians received similar treatment. John O'Connor was also the recipient of death threats.<sup>128</sup> Devoy branded him a 'renegade',<sup>129</sup> and accused him in 1888 of being implicated in attempts to depose Parnell in favour of Davitt.<sup>130</sup> After his death O'Connor's former IRB colleagues in Cork sought to cast doubt on whether he had been 'out' during the 1867 rising, reviving sixty-year old claims that instead he had been 'under the bed'.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> O'Brien, *Recollections*, pp. 396-7; James O'Kelly to John Devoy, 21.9.82.; 24.10.82., in O'Brien and Ryan, *Devoy's Post Bag*, vol. ii, pp. 140-1, 157.

<sup>122</sup> Ryan, *Memories*, p. 34; Devoy, *Recollections*, p. 345; *G-A*, 6.1.16., 7.

<sup>123</sup> James O'Kelly to John Devoy, 14.6.99., in O'Brien and Ryan, *Devoy's Post Bag*, vol. ii, p. 341.

<sup>124</sup> Devoy, *Recollections*, p. 346.

<sup>125</sup> *G-A*, 30.12.16., 1, 7; 6.1.17., 1, 7; 13.1.17., 2.

<sup>126</sup> James O'Kelly to John Devoy, 27.7.80., in O'Brien and Ryan, *Devoy's Post Bag*, vol. i, p. 541.

<sup>127</sup> Le Caron told O'Kelly this in April 1881 when he met Parnell at the House of Commons. *Times*, 17.7.89., 6. Le Caron himself claimed that O'Kelly had on his arrival in England been 'unfaithful to his trust' by entering Parliament without repaying the money he had brought to England for the purchase of arms. This claim prompted O'Kelly to threaten a libel action, in response to which Le Caron's publishers excised certain offending passages. Henri Le Caron, *Twenty-Five Years in the Secret Service* (1892, London, 1893), pp v-viii, 153, 172. Devoy insisted that O'Kelly did pay this money back. Devoy, *Recollections*, p. 344.

<sup>128</sup> *Times*, 2.11.28., 19

<sup>129</sup> Devoy, *Recollections*, p. 346.

<sup>130</sup> Le Caron, *Twenty-Five Years*, pp. 259- 60.

<sup>131</sup> *Times*, 29.10.28., 19.



Similar tactics were employed against J.F.X. O'Brien and Arthur Lynch.<sup>132</sup> Lynch had been disliked by many of his comrades in the Irish Brigade for his arrogant manner, and his entry into Parliament and disavowal of physical force methods, made him something of a hate-figure in Clan na Gael and Irish neo-fenian circles. In the early months of 1914, the *Clare Champion* published a lengthy correspondence between Lynch and his critics (among them Devoy and Tom Clarke), who charged him with having inflated his South African war record.<sup>133</sup>

But, much of the criticism levelled at the fenians-turned-M.P.s had as much to do with what they became after entering Parliament, as their original defection. For as John O'Leary declared (in a heated argument he had with O'Kelly on the occasion of the March 1878 conference convened to discuss the new departure with Parnell) 'Nine out of ten Irishmen entering the British Parliament with honest intentions are corrupted soon...if Irishmen are to save their honour, they must keep aloof from everything English'.<sup>134</sup> Clearly, the IRBs objection was never simply a question of oaths, but reflected a more deep-rooted fear that those of its members who entered Parliament might succumb to 'The Atmosphere of the House'. As Liam O'Flaherty put it, 'Such is its power that it is calculated to tame the wildest man and turn him into a "Right Honourable Gentleman."'<sup>135</sup>

Certainly this was the feeling of fenians towards 'Long John' O'Connor, who came to embody (rather as O'Connor Power had) a '[p]olitically effete [nationalism]...enervated by association with English Liberals and week-kneed Irishmen.'<sup>136</sup> O'Connor's father had been a labourer and he himself began life working for a brewery. But during his forced absence from Parliament between 1892 and 1905 'his ambitions and patriotism were revolutionised. No longer the militant Parnellite, still less the bold fenian, he subordinated his country to the exigencies of the English connection, and became one of the most docile self-seekers that ever invaded the precincts of an English court of justice.'<sup>137</sup> By 1910, he was the close friend of a leading member of the Liberal government (Lord Loreburn), a popular member of 'clubland', a barrister, a keen golfer and permanent resident of Hampstead, a fashionable area among London's artists and writers. Indeed, though he never wrote himself, he moved in literary circles.<sup>138</sup> He was well regarded in Parliament, and was remembered affectionately by one

<sup>132</sup> Devoy, *Recollections*, p. 207.

<sup>133</sup> *Clare Champion*, February-May 1914; McCracken, *MacBride's Brigade*, p. 97, 159. Also see, Arthur Lynch to D.F. Cohalan, 9.3.09.; Thomas Clarke to John Devoy, 3.4.14., in O'Brien and Ryan, *Devoy's Post Bag*, vol. ii, pp. 378-9, 448.

<sup>134</sup> John O'Beirne Ranelagh, 'The Irish Republican Brotherhood in the Revolutionary Period, 1879-1923', in D.G. Boyce (ed.), *The Revolution in Ireland, 1879-1923* (London, 1988), p. 137.

<sup>135</sup> Liam O'Flaherty, *The Life of Tim Healy* (London, 1927), p. 67.

<sup>136</sup> *G-A*, 1.1.10., 3.

<sup>137</sup> *G-A*, 12.2.10., 2.

<sup>138</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 29.10.28., 15; Gwynn, *Memories*, p. 37.

English contemporary as 'an Irish Nationalist with English sympathies. John O'Connor could always tell a good story and delight the social circle with a happy and graceful speech.'<sup>139</sup> In contrast, even some of his Irish parliamentary colleagues were uncomfortable with his membership of the National Liberal Club and of his acceptance of Crown Briefs.<sup>140</sup>

And yet, O'Connor seems never to have been more than a moderately successful barrister,<sup>141</sup> and turned down a potentially lucrative career opportunity in order to return to Parliament in 1905, in order to be with the 'boys'.<sup>142</sup> Indeed, arguably his career might be seen as much in terms of upward social mobility as 'anglicisation'. Likewise, respectability probably sums up the post-revolutionary careers of many of the Party's fenian recruits. For middle age (and in some cases old age) and occupational advancement meant that many of the ex-IRB men became substantial men in their localities. At the time of his death in 1913, P.A. Meehan was an extensive businessman, who 'gave a large amount of employment' to the citizens of Maryborough.<sup>143</sup> John Fitzgibbon was 'one of the largest commercial men in the West of Ireland' (though Fitzgibbon's prosperity owed much to his father's business success).<sup>144</sup> James Gilhooly was the proprietor of a 'large drapery establishment'.<sup>145</sup> David Sheehy, who started life as the son of a successful miller, possessed by 1900 what one recent historian has termed 'that patina of gentility which went with professionalism',<sup>146</sup> -a house in Belvedere Place, a socially ambitious wife and patronage of a social and literary milieu that included writers and intellectuals.<sup>147</sup> Another former fenian, 'genial' Tom Condon, won provincial distinction, becoming mayor of his native Clonmel six times, a Town Commissioner, Poor Law Guardian, and a member of the Tipperary County Council.<sup>148</sup> (*Punch* nicknamed him 'the man of many mayoralties').<sup>149</sup> Similarly, though in an urban context, J.P. Nannetti, who had started life apprenticed to a printer, became president of the Dublin Trades Council, a member of the Dublin Corporation and Lord Mayor of Dublin in 1906-7. Doubtless, all these men could have been described, as Nannetti was by one London newspaper in 1910, as 'quite a mild sort of rebel now.'<sup>150</sup>

<sup>139</sup> Robert Steven, *The National Liberal Club* (London, 1925), p. 37.

<sup>140</sup> Unpublished autobiography of J.F.X. O'Brien; James O'Shee to John Redmond, 11.6.08., NLI, RP, m<sup>5</sup> 6748/345.

<sup>141</sup> *CE*, 29.10.28., 6.

<sup>142</sup> Gwynn, *Memories*, p. 84.

<sup>143</sup> *Leinster Leader*, 17.5.13., 8

<sup>144</sup> *Roscommon Messenger*, 13.9.19., 3.

<sup>145</sup> *II*, 17.10.17., 2.

<sup>146</sup> Leah Levenson and J.H. Natterstad, *Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington: Irish Feminist* (Syracuse, 1986), p. 7.

<sup>147</sup> Patricia Hutchins, *James Joyce's World* (London, 1957), p. 14.

<sup>148</sup> John Valentine, *Irish Memories* (Bristol, 1927), p. 66.

<sup>149</sup> *Punch*, 13.10.09., p. 266.

<sup>150</sup> *Pall Mall Gazette- 'Extra'*, 1910, p. 68.

But the success and prosperity of these men was not uniform. David Sheehy's social position was financially insecure and in 1915 he was declared bankrupt.<sup>151</sup> J.F.X. O'Brien, found the 'constant strain' on his health owing to his parliamentary duties 'very severe', and though a resident of London for many years, apparently 'hate[d] living in the enemies country and long[ed] to return to Ireland'.<sup>152</sup> James O'Kelly had considerable success as a journalist; first in New York and later in London. However, sitting at Westminster clearly involved such a drop in income that by late 1882 he was already considering resigning from Parliament, as he had no intention of 'playing the part of the impecunious Member.'<sup>153</sup> After he was defeated in 1892, O'Kelly became the London editor of the *Irish Daily Independent*. But at some point in the late 1890s his health seems to have collapsed and by 1900 was regarded as precarious.<sup>154</sup> In 1907 he wrote to John Redmond that 'I have been confined to the House since Parliament rose' and told him that 'I am in trouble financially owing to...the long adjournment from the House...[which] makes an awful gap.'<sup>155</sup> By the late Edwardian period O'Kelly was a 'physical wreck'.<sup>156</sup> Partially paralysed, he required a bath-chair in order to move around the House of Commons and he had difficulty talking. When at Westminster he was looked after by Pat O'Brien.<sup>157</sup>

Clearly, some (though not all) those former members of the IRB who entered Parliament had achieved a measure of prosperity in the decades following the rising of 1867. But how did these men regard their former commitment to physical force nationalism when viewed from the vantage-point of maturity, relative material comfort and allegiance to constitutional methods? Certainly there is no sense in any of these men's public statements of contrition; O'Kelly *et al* did not regard themselves as fenian 'renegades'. Rather, as William O'Brien explained in 1905 '[the] majority of the bravest and most thoughtful men, who staked their all under the fenian flag while it still represented a serious call to armed rebellion, made up their minds that secret conspiracy, as the only mode of freeing Ireland, was...hopelessly ineffectual'.<sup>158</sup> Of course, pragmatism and personal ambition also doubtless played their part, but it is significant that these men rationalised the transference of their allegiances from the IRB to the IPP in terms of the impracticality of armed revolution, rather than any fundamental ideological cleavage.

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<sup>151</sup> Ward, *Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington*, p.137.

<sup>152</sup> J.F.X. O'Brien to Thomas Sexton, undated, NLI, OBP, ms 13,429.

<sup>153</sup> James O'Kelly to John Devoy, 15.12.82., in O'Brien and Ryan, *Devoy's Post Bag*, vol. ii, p. 175.

<sup>154</sup> Jerry MacVeagh to John Dillon, 8.12.00., TCD, DP, ms 6757/1189.

<sup>155</sup> James O'Kelly to John Redmond, 2.12.07., TCD, DP, ms 6747/233.

<sup>156</sup> *G-A*, 13.1.17., 2.

<sup>157</sup> *Connacht Tribune*, 5.7.13., 4; Ryan, *Memories*, p. 34.

<sup>158</sup> O'Brien, *Recollections*, pp. 127-8.

Moreover, if those M.P.s with fenian records found nothing to be ashamed of in their parliamentary careers, so too did they claim that they ‘never cast back a regretful glance upon their own early war-dreams’.<sup>159</sup> Indeed, only one ‘fenian M.P.’, P.A. Meehan, publicly disavowed his membership of the IRB, denouncing the fenians as a ‘band of miscreants who enticed young innocent men into their ranks in order to further their anti-clerical ambitions.’<sup>160</sup> The majority, in contrast, were unrepentant. John O’Connor, for example, told a Tipperary meeting in 1885 that ‘I...endorse every act of my life, because looking back on my life, I am not ashamed of it’,<sup>161</sup> while J.F.X. O’Brien wrote in 1898 that he did ‘not feel that any excuse is necessary for the part I took in that organisation’.<sup>162</sup>

Such unhesitant willingness on the part of constitutionalists to endorse their erstwhile fenianism reflected in no small part the political savvy of these men. For by 1910, to have been a fenian undoubtedly strengthened any nationalist CV. Widely regarded as a ‘benchmark’ of political commitment, Paul Bew has rightly noted that many of the ex-fenian M.P.s traded on their IRB links at one time or another,<sup>163</sup> citing their records not only to emphasise their own thorough-going nationalism, but also deploying it pragmatically to deflect local criticism,<sup>164</sup> or to escape some of the exigencies of electoral politics.<sup>165</sup> Indeed, so important was the fenian ‘aura’ that it led some M.P.s who had not been associated with the physical force movement to construe their careers in terms of failure,<sup>166</sup> and others to exaggerate their *bona fide* fenian credentials.<sup>167</sup>

However, it would be wrong to see the prominence that many of these M.P.s clearly gave to their association with the ‘golden age’ of fenianism solely in terms of personal advantage. For the evidence suggests that fenianism continued to be central not only to their political, but also to their personal identities. As Michael Meagher’s obituary of 1927 put it ‘although he

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., p. 128.

<sup>160</sup> Meehan, *Members of Parliament for Laois and Offaly*, p. 69. In the 1880s O’Kelly was known for his associations ‘with the extreme republicans in Paris...[and] the red press’, while in the 1860s, J.F.X. O’Brien had been an ‘uncompromising, not to say vicious, anti-clerical correspondent of the *Irish People*.’ However, at least later in life, the majority of the ‘fenian M.P.s’ were of ‘unchallenged orthodoxy’. F.H. O’Donnell, *A History of the Irish Parliamentary Party* (1910, Dallas, Tx, 1970), vol ii, p. 325; Bourke, *O’Leary*, p. 62; O’Brien, *Parnell and his Party*, p. 28.

<sup>161</sup> *FJ*, 3.1.85., 3.

<sup>162</sup> Unpublished autobiography of J.F.X. O’Brien.

<sup>163</sup> Paul Bew, *Ideology and the Irish Question* (Oxford, 1994), p. 14.

<sup>164</sup> *Kilkenny Journal*, 29.12.09., 2.

<sup>165</sup> Despite the fact that O’Kelly was neither heard in Parliament for many years before his death nor seen in Roscommon after 1902, he apparently retained the confidence of his constituents. *FJ*, 30.12.09., 8.

<sup>166</sup> James H. Murphy, ‘Between the Drawing-room and the Barricade: the Autobiographies and Nationalist Fictions of Justin McCarthy’, in Bruce Stewart (ed.), *Hearts and Minds: Irish Culture and Society Under the Act of Union* (Gerrards Cross, 2002), pp. 111-20. The author would like to thank Dr McCarthy for allowing him to read a copy of this article prior to publication.

<sup>167</sup> *Times*, 29.10.28., 19.

afterwards adopted the constitutional policy, the influence of his early activities always shaped and determined his actions.’<sup>168</sup> According to Denis Gwynn, John O’Connor ‘often spoke of his own part’ in the Cork IRB (even his personal appearance mimicked the fenians of the 1860s), while William O’Brien recalled that Tom Condon also told anecdotes about his fenian experiences.<sup>169</sup> James O’Connor’s obituarist in the *Irish Independent* remembered that O’Connor often recalled his incarceration whenever he walked past the sight of the former Millbank jail (situated close to Westminster).<sup>170</sup> J.F.X. O’Brien ‘always talked feelingly of the good old fenian days’.<sup>171</sup>

But such fenian memories amounted to more than just smokingroom reminiscences; there is also good reason to believe that membership of the IRB may have underpinned a sense of *group* identity within the larger parliamentary party. Stephen Gwynn, for instance, wrote of how ‘For those who had been in the movement which had appealed to arms, even after they had frankly abandoned that way of action, [they] had their pride in the past, and would let none speak in their name who had not shared in their risks.’<sup>172</sup> A collective identity certainly seems quite plausible when it is remembered that many of the ‘fenian M.P.s’ had known one another long before they entered Parliament. Furthermore, a majority of them had shared similar post-fenian career-paths; not only did most of these men join the Land League, but many of them served terms of imprisonment during the 1880s for their participation in the Land War. Several (John Fitzgibbon, David Sheehy and P.A. Meehan) were also prominent during the ranch war of 1906-10.

That said, there is no evidence to suggest that fenianism was a determinant of parliamentary behaviour. This is not to say that youthful allegiances did not sometimes influence the attitudes of individual M.P.s, but that the members of the Party who had been connected with the IRB are not known to have acted as a bloc. This is evident in their response to the First World War. When in September 1914, John Redmond provisionally committed Ireland to supporting the allies against Germany, ‘Some of Redmond’s colleagues’, according to Stephen Gwynn, ‘held that they had been ‘extreme men’ all their lives and they thought it too hard that they should be expected to ask Irishmen to join the English army.’<sup>173</sup> Presumably Gwynn was referring to Michael Meagher and John Phillips, who were the only two Irish Members to publicly dissent from Redmond’s policy of support for the war before Christmas

<sup>168</sup> Unpublished autobiography of J.F.X. O’Brien; O’Brien, *Recollections*, p. 687; *Kilkenny People*, 31.12.27., 5.

<sup>169</sup> *Times*, 13.11.28., 18; Gwynn, *Memories*, p. 82; O’Brien, *Recollections*, p. 53.

<sup>170</sup> *II*, 14.3.10., 6.

<sup>171</sup> *G-A*, 3.6.05., 5.

<sup>172</sup> The same author described one stormy Party meeting during the Irish Council Bill when ‘one of the disaffected took on himself to say that the old fenian element had no trust in John Redmond’. Gwynn, *Memories*, pp. 85-6.

<sup>173</sup> Stephen Gwynn, *John Redmond’s Last Years* (London, 1919), p. 168.

1914.<sup>174</sup> In contrast, other former fenians proved enthusiastic for the allied cause. Michael Reddy was one of those Irish Members who cheered and waived their handkerchiefs in the House of Commons when war was declared (as was Arthur Lynch),<sup>175</sup> while O'Kelly supported the war because of his long-standing connections with France.<sup>176</sup> William Duffy, Tom Condon and John Fitzgibbon made pro-recruiting speeches in 1914.<sup>177</sup> Arthur Lynch was commissioned a Colonel in the British army (under special circumstances) for recruiting purposes later in the war.<sup>178</sup>

Although the Party's ex-IRB men seem only to have been intermittently conspicuous within Parliament (though their presence undoubtedly contributed to the Party's image at Westminster),<sup>179</sup> they were extremely important to its extra-parliamentary strategy. However, their value was less practical than symbolic. For there is little evidence to suggest that these men acted, for instance, as a bridge-head between the constitutional and physical force movements. O'Kelly had functioned in this capacity during the new departure, and continued to act as an intermediary in the late 1880s and early 1890s.<sup>180</sup> O'Kelly's 'protege', Joe Nolan, also performed a not a similar function on Parnell's behalf.<sup>181</sup>

Much more important, however, was the use the Party made of its fenian recruits to give it revolutionary ballast. In countering the accusations of 'Whiggery' made against it by Parnell's supporters during the Split of the 1890s, for instance, the anti-Parnellite majority held up James O'Connor and J.F.X. O'Brien as proof that at least among the majority 'The felon's cap is [still]...a noble crown'.<sup>182</sup> Twenty years later, during the third Home Rule crisis, the Party again drew attention to the presence of former fenians in its ranks, this time as evidence of Ireland's genuine desire for reconciliation. As Stephen Gwynn explained 'amongst the[m]...were men who had begun their political career in the old fenian organisation. They

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<sup>174</sup> J.P. Farrell to John Dillon, 8.10.14., TCD, DP, ms 6753/430; II, 3.12.14., 4. However, citing the absence of any mention of Phillips' 'pro-Germanism' in the Longford or Roscommon press, Micheal Wheatley has recently suggested that Farrell deliberately lied to Dillon about Phillips' anti-war stance as part of his on-going feud with the South Longford M.P. Additionally, in Spring 1916, Phillips' signed a recruiting circular issued by the Longford Recruiting Committee. Michael Wheatley to author, 16.8.[20]02 (in author's possession).

<sup>175</sup> *FJ*, 4.8.14., 4.

<sup>176</sup> Devoy, *Recollections*, p. 346. In 1916 Devoy declared that it was 'inconceivable that O'Kelly in good mental and bodily health could be in agreement with the recent action and attitude of the Party' because he was 'at heart an Irish rebel'. *G-A*, 30.12.16., 1; 13.1.17., 2.

<sup>177</sup> *FJ*, 25.9.14., 3; 8.1.14., 6; 11.11.14., 7. Fitzgibbon lost two sons during the war. See, Maume, *Gestation*, p. 153.

<sup>178</sup> Maume, *Gestation*, p. 234.

<sup>179</sup> E.T. Raymond, *Portraits of the New Century* (London, 1928), p. 277.

<sup>180</sup> Devoy, *Recollections*, pp. 345-6.

<sup>181</sup> *Times*, 23.4.88., 6.

<sup>182</sup> *FJ*, 3.6.92., 4.

made no secret...of the convictions which they had held in the past; still less did they apologise for them; but they made frank offer of friendship in return for fair play'.<sup>183</sup>

Clearly, the primary function that the Party's fenian cohort fulfilled was a symbolic one. R.V. Comerford has argued that 'the continuity of names and forms [between the mid Victorian IRB and later generations of fenians] means little and these things were not of the essence'.<sup>184</sup> For the Irish Party though, those M.P.s who had formerly been members of the IRB *were* emblematic of the continuity between mid Victorian and late Edwardian nationalism. At a political meeting in 1911, for example, Joe Devlin described James O'Kelly as 'a man who links the best traditions of fenianism with the movement of today',<sup>185</sup> while the *Cork Examiner* described J.F.X. O'Brien at his death as 'one of those land marks between the present and the past'.<sup>186</sup> To the Party, the presence of such men in its ranks validated its claim that (as Joe Devlin put it in 1907) 'The Irish movement of today is the legitimate heir and successor of the movement of '67, just as much as it is of the Repeal movement and the movement led by Isaac Butt.'<sup>187</sup> Moreover, via the fenian tradition, the Party (in this instance, Hugh Law, M.P.) also asserted that 'our movement is the legitimate successor of the movement of Wolf Tone, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, and Robert Emmet.'<sup>188</sup>

This claim (of the essential continuity of Irish nationalism) was a staple of the Edwardian Party's platform rhetoric. As Willie Redmond told a meeting in October 1910

if you do your duty, if you elect freely an Irish Party, stand behind them and respect them, allow us without faction and wrangling to voice the voice of Ireland, then, so surely as the stars are above us, the day will come when our forefathers in their graves may be blessed, when the aspirations of our race will be realised, and when the struggle of the men of '98, of '67, of '48 and of Parnell will be rewarded...<sup>189</sup>

In recent years, historians have commented unfavourably on just this kind of 'rhetoric'. Robert Kee has judged the claim that late nineteenth century constitutional nationalists were fired by the same motives as earlier revolutionary nationalists as 'little better than a historical confidence trick'.<sup>190</sup> Similarly, Timothy O'Keefe has argued that such 'daring rhetoric' was 'intellectual[ly] dishonest...double-talk by wily politicians trying to perpetuate a cheap historical confidence trick'.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> *FJ*, 13.10.14, 4.

<sup>184</sup> Comerford, *Fenians*, p. 249.

<sup>185</sup> *FJ*, 26.5.11., 4.

<sup>186</sup> *CE*, 29.5.05., 5.

<sup>187</sup> *FJ*, 25.11.07., 10.

<sup>188</sup> *Parl. Deb.*, 31.12.12., 226.

<sup>189</sup> *FJ*, 24.10.10., 8.

<sup>190</sup> Robert Kee, *The Bold Fenian Men* (London, 1976), vol. ii, pp. 127-8.

<sup>191</sup> Timothy O'Keefe, "'Who Fears to Speak of '98?': The Rhetoric and Rituals of the United Irishmen Centennial, 1898", *Eire-Ireland*, xxvii, no. 3 (1992), p. 81-2.

In fact, in arguing this, Kee and O'Keefe not only ignore the presence of the ex-fenian cohort within the Party, but also its wider network of 'rebel' connections, both of which leant the Party's rhetoric a degree of credibility.<sup>192</sup> Kee and O'Keefe also overlook the importance of the fact that the Party was identified with the physical force tradition by British contemporaries. For the coincidence of personnel was an important prosecution argument during the Special Commission; John O'Connor, James O'Kelly, J.F.X. O'Brien and other former fenians who had entered Parliament, were all called to give evidence. Margaret O'Callaghan has argued that although Parnell was personally vindicated, the government was successful in equating Parnellism with 'crime' in the British imagination,<sup>193</sup> but, arguably, this connection may not have been so damning in many Irish eyes.

Undoubtedly, however, Kee and O'Keefe are correct in seeing the Party as having sought to manipulate the Irish 'historical imagination' to its advantage. For the reflected glory which individual M.P.s sought to bask in was in part the product of the Party's project to make remembrance 'an alternative to action'; from 1867 onwards, constitutional nationalists played an central part in popularising the romantic notion of the mid Victorian IRB as the 'bold fenian men'.<sup>194</sup> T.D. Sullivan's song, 'God Save Ireland' was, for example, a product of the 'avalanche' of ballads and poetry produced in response to the execution of the Manchester Martyrs.<sup>195</sup> According to Owen Dudley Edwards 'it brought many to an unconscious acceptance of the justifiability of insurrection'.<sup>196</sup> Yet, at the same time, it was '[one] of the best known and most popular symbol[s] of the Irish Parliamentary Party'.<sup>197</sup> The Irish Party was also involved from the 1880s onwards in the annual commemoration of the anniversary of the Manchester Martyr's execution. Although, at times, the IRB used such occasions to denounce the Party, individual Irish Members continued to attend memorial ceremonies. In 1899, Michael Davitt, William O'Brien, Pat O'Brien and James O'Kelly were involved in

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<sup>192</sup> William Lunden and J.F.X. O'Brien had both been 'out' in 1848. William Field, John Dillon and Stephen Gwynn had close family connections with the Young Ireland movement. John Redmond, Dr John Esmonde, T.P. O'Connor and James O'Connor claimed to have ancestors who had fought in 1798. The father of one Member of the Party, the octogenarian Sam Young, had actually 'carried a pike and fought for liberty in '98.'

<sup>193</sup> Margaret O'Callaghan, 'Parnellism and Crime: Constructing a Conservative Strategy of Containment 1887-91', in Donal McCartney (ed.), *Parnell: The Politics of Power* (Dublin, 1991), pp. 102-124.

<sup>194</sup> Kelly, 'Parnell's Old Brigade', p. 17.

<sup>195</sup> Garry Owens, 'Constructing the Martyrs: the Manchester executions and the nationalist imagination', in L.W. McBride (ed.), *Images, Icons and the Irish Nationalist Imagination* (Dublin, 1999), p. 22.

<sup>196</sup> O.D. Edwards, 'Ireland', in O.D. Edwards, Gwynfor Evans and Ioan Rhys Hugh MacDiamid (eds.), *Celtic Nationalism* (London, 1968), p. 173.

<sup>197</sup> Peter Alter, 'Symbols of Irish Nationalism', in Alan O'Day (ed.) *Reactions to Irish Nationalism* (London, 1987), p. 7.



organising the Dublin demonstration.<sup>198</sup> In the following decade, four Irish Members (among them J.P. Nannetti and William Field, M.P.) attended the Dublin Old Guard ceremony on seven separate occasions.<sup>199</sup> In 1901, M.P.s attended meetings at Rathkeele and Castleisland. In 1902, John Redmond and several of the Party's fenians attended a demonstration in London. In 1904, J.F.X. O'Brien also attended the London meeting. In 1905, Augustine Roche, M.P., was among those who met O'Donovan Rossa when he arrived in Cork from America. In 1907, the M.P.s Joe Devlin and John Cullinan were present at a memorial meeting in Tipperary, while Michael Joyce, M.P., attended a demonstration in Limerick, and spoke at the meeting in London the following year. In 1909, Arthur Lynch addressed the London-Irish ceremony. Between 1910 and 1912, Irish Members attended ceremonies in various places around the British Isles, and in 1913, J.P. Farrell, M.P., attended the commemoration in Longford.<sup>200</sup>

The renewed enthusiasm for monumental art which overtook Ireland after 1900, also witnessed M.P.s commemorating fenian deeds in stone.<sup>201</sup> Tom Condon, for example, was present at the unveiling of a memorial to the Manchester Martyrs in Tipperary on the fortieth anniversary of the 1867 rising,<sup>202</sup> and in the years 1910-14, Irish Members unveiled memorials to old fenians (among them William Lunden) in Ireland, Australia and London.<sup>203</sup> For other fenians who died at this time (and, in particular, those who had sat in Parliament), their obituaries in the national and local press were often effectively monuments in print. The Party scored a particular coup in 1909 when Edward O'Meagher Condon (who had been tried along with the Manchester three) toured Ireland and expressed support for the Party.<sup>204</sup>

Clearly, Edwardian Irish Members rarely lost an opportunity to honour fenians and fenianism. But their praise was not simply nostalgic or patriotic, but rather deliberate and purposeful. For, while the Party readily acknowledged that (as Devlin put it) the fenians of '67 had been 'men of the highest character and of the noblest ambition',<sup>205</sup> all such tributes were made on the explicit understanding that (as Devlin explained on another occasion) 'the facts connected with the movement are conclusive against the probability of its final triumph. The fenians who survive,

<sup>198</sup> Owen McGee, "God Save Ireland": Manchester Martyrs Demonstrations in Dublin, 1867-1916', *Eire-Ireland*, vol. 36 (2001), p. 49.

<sup>199</sup> *FJ*, 27.11.00., 6; 25.11.01., 6; 21.11.04., 6; 26.11.06., 9; 25.11.07., 10; 23.11.08., 5; 24.11.09., 9. Nannetti had himself been a member of the Old Guard in the late 1890s. Field had been associated with the IRB when he served as treasurer of the GAA central council in the 1890s. McGee, "God Save Ireland", p. 61; Mandle, *Gaelic Athletic Association*, p. 93.

<sup>200</sup> *FJ*, 26.11.01., 6; 27.11.01., 6; 25.11.02., 5; 24.11.04., 6; 20.11.05., 9; 25.11.07., 23.11.08., 5; 22.11.09., 7; 23.11.10., 11; 24.11.10., 7; 29.11.11., 7; 23.11.12, 6, 8-9; 26.11.13., 5.

<sup>201</sup> Judith Hill, *Irish Public Sculpture: A History* (Dublin, 1998), p. 104.

<sup>202</sup> *FJ*, 11.3.07., 5.

<sup>203</sup> *FJ*, 8.3.11., 5; 19.5.13., 7; 2.6.14., 4; 27.7.14., 5.

<sup>204</sup> McGee, "God Save Ireland", p. 57.

<sup>205</sup> *FJ*, 19.5.13., 8.

with inconsiderable exceptions, all admit that Ireland has found a better way to freedom in the constitutional movement'.<sup>206</sup> The Irish Party's ageing band of ex-rebels, then, did not constitute a channel of communication with the IRB before or after 1907; there was no neo-fenian-Redmondite nexus.<sup>207</sup> Instead, they linked the Party to the popular, romantic myth of mid-Victorian fenianism, and thus (at least until 1914, when 'Redmond had to surrender the title-deeds of militancy to other and more daring hands')<sup>208</sup> empowered it to depict itself (in the words of Tom Kettle, M.P.) as the final manifestation of 'seven hundred years of strenuous opposition to an alien government.'<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> *FJ*, 27.11.11., 8.

<sup>207</sup> Alvin Jackson, *Ireland, 1798-1998* (Oxford, 1999), p. 167.

<sup>208</sup> F.S.L. Lyons, 'Decline and Fall of the Nationalist Party', in O.D. Edwards and Fergus Pyle (eds.), *1916: The Easter Rising* (London, 1968), p. 60.

<sup>209</sup> *FJ*, 9.11.10., 8.

## Chapter Two: Pereptions of the Irish Party

### Section One: The Irish Party and the Irish Labour Movement.

Many historians have drawn class', while Neal Blewett described the Party attention to the 'middle class' character of the Irish Party. Erich Strauss, for example, wrote of the Party that '[a]bove all, the leadership of Irish nationalism was in the hands of the middle as 'petit bourgeois'. Kieran Allen has written of the 'openly bourgeois Home Rule party [author's emphasis]', while J.J. Lee has described the Party as 'obesely bourgeois'.<sup>1</sup> Here the implication is clear: the Party was respectable, unimaginative and conservative. However, the labour historian Arthur Mitchell has taken this point further and argued that because the Party was comprized of 'property owners' it '[took] the side of the men of property' during the 1913 Dublin strike.<sup>2</sup> Other historians of the Irish labour movement before the Great War have also attached importance to the 'bourgeois' character of the Irish Party in understanding its relationship with the Irish trade union movement.<sup>3</sup> However, while the attitude of Redmond, Dillon and the MPs for Dublin city and county (known as the 'Dublin Six') have been examined by historians, little consideration has been given to the stance of the majority of Nationalist Members.

It was a boast, repeated *ad infīnitum* by Irish Members on platforms across Ireland and Great Britain, that 'long before the existence of the Labour Party, the cause of the workers in the House of Commons found constant, enthusiastic support from the Irish Party, which was essentially a Labour party'.<sup>4</sup> Although, given more recent pronouncements as to the class character of the Party, this claim now seems preposterous, at the time it was not so outlandish. Traditionally, Irish Nationalists had supported progressive legislation and, according to Alan O'Day, the Parnellite Party of the 1880s was probably 'the most consistently radical and democratic of the parliamentary groups where social controversies

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<sup>1</sup> Erich Strauss, *Irish Nationalism and British Democracy* (London, 1951), p. 188; Neal Blewett, *The Peers, The Parties and the People, The General Elections of 1910* (London, 1972), p.352; Kieran Allen, *The Politics of James Connolly* (London, 1990), p. 45; Lee, *Modernisation of Irish Society*, p.152.

<sup>2</sup> Arthur Mitchell, *Labour in Irish Politics, 1890-1930* (Dublin, 1974), pp. 47-8. Also, see Lyons, *Dillon*, p. 336.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Padraig Yeates, *Lockout 1913* (Dublin, 2000), p. 104.

<sup>4</sup> *FJ*, 9.7.10., 8.

were concerned.<sup>5</sup> The testimony of several contemporary British Labour activists lends weight to this impression.<sup>6</sup>

The Edwardian Party broadly maintained this attitude; despite initial reservations (never entirely overcome by some Members) towards old age pensions and national insurance, for pragmatic reasons the Party came to support, and claim credit for, the Liberal government's state welfare legislation after 1906.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, as part of the 'coalition' of parties which supported progressive legislation between 1910 and 1914, the Irish Party identified itself closely with the 'democracy' of England, and, in Parliament, supported the repeal of the Osborne judgement and the recognition of trades unions by private companies.<sup>8</sup> However, successive British by-elections (which saw contests between rival Liberal and Labour Home Rule candidates) undoubtedly placed some strain on this relationship.<sup>9</sup>

The Party's relationship with the labour movement in Ireland was somewhat different. Michael Davitt had made little progress in converting Nationalists to the view that the emancipation of labour was vital to Home Rule, and though he attempted to increase the number of Labour-Nationalist MPs, his efforts were largely unsuccessful.<sup>10</sup> In fact, the number of 'Lab-Nat' Members remained modest throughout the history of the Party, and of those who were recruited, the labour credentials of several were doubtful.

William Field, for instance, was simultaneously a leading commercial figure in Dublin and a labour advocate, though his formative political experience had been in agrarian politics. He was eccentric and idiosyncratic, though Padraig Yeates' judgement that he was an 'amiable, colourful but increasingly irrelevant figure', needs to be balanced by Patrick Maume's observation that his 'extensive contacts among the Dublin working class...was a significant obstacle to the challenge of Sinn Fein and independent labour'.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> O'Day, *English Face*, p. 157; Edward Norman, *A History of Modern Ireland* (London, 1971), p. 186.

<sup>6</sup> J.R. Clynes, *Memoirs, 1869-1937* (London, 1937), p. 308; Allen, *Connolly*, p. 101. See, also, Will Crook's speech to the Killarney branch of the UIL. *FJ*, 1.9.04., 5.

<sup>7</sup> Dermot Keogh, *The Rise of the Working Class* (Belfast, 1982), p. 47; Bew, *Ideology*, p. 125.

<sup>8</sup> See, for instance, *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. xvi, cols. 1334-7 (13.4.10.); (series 5) vol. xxxi, col. 1281 (22.11.11.).

<sup>9</sup> *FJ*, 19.9.11., 5; 14.10.11., 4. According to the *Daily Chronicle*, relations between the two parties only improved in July 1914, before which they were 'not cordial'. *Daily Chronicle*, 18.7.14., 1.

<sup>10</sup> T.W. Moody, 'Michael Davitt and the British Labour Movement, 1882-1906', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 3 (1953), p. 62; Yeates, 1913, p. 103.

<sup>11</sup> Maume, *Gestation*, p. 228.

Field's colleague in the representation of Dublin, J.P. Nannetti, was one of the 'pillars of the labour movement' in Dublin before the Great War.<sup>12</sup> He had been one of the founders of the Dublin Trades Council, and later became, successively, its secretary and president. As was evident during the January 1910 general election, Nannetti's background was in an 'older school of trade unionism', of small skilled societies and amalgamated unions.<sup>13</sup> A moderate, he advocated good labour relations with employers, disparaged the creation of a distinct Irish labour party, and insisted that nationality took precedence over class. He was not, then, well placed to advise Redmond (whose expert on labour politics he was) about the militant working class politics embodied by Jim Larkin. His resistance to the new unionism seriously weakened his standing in labour circles.<sup>14</sup>

Joe Devlin's brand of populist and pragmatic working class politics (based on personal charisma, pseudo-socialistic rhetoric and a genuine concern for the welfare of his constituents), was restricted to Belfast, beyond whose city limits he became variously the spokesman of Ulster, the president of the AOH or the general secretary of the UIL. Even Richard McGhee, the member of the Party with most experience of modern trade unionism was not ideally placed to exploit his labour contacts, since not only was his background in Scottish politics, but he was perceived as 'middle class' and was 'highly critical of socialism'.<sup>15</sup> Eugene Crean was a former president of the Cork Trades Council, but was first and foremost an O'Brienite. William Abraham had longstanding links with the Irish labour movement, but in 1910 he was 70 years old and his instalment in the Harbour Division of Dublin that year left him 'devoid of real connection'.<sup>16</sup> Willie Redmond had links with the Australian labour movement; his most recent biographer has termed him a 'state socialist, but, in fact, his background and rhetoric mark him out much more as a conservative paternalist'.<sup>17</sup>

These men were regarded as 'Nat-Lab poseurs' by more advanced advocates of labour interests. For they presented no coherent notion of what 'labour-nationalism' was. Nor did their presence disguise the Party's almost complete absence of an urban or a labour policy.

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<sup>12</sup> *FJ*, 2.5.10., 8; 27.4.15., 5.

<sup>13</sup> Maume, *Gestation*, p. 237; *FJ*, 17.1.10., 4; 10.1.10., 5; 25.1.10., 5.

<sup>14</sup> Keogh, *Working Class* (Belfast, 1982), p. 48; Austen Morgan, *James Connolly: A Political Biography* (Manchester, 1988), p. 39; Emmet O'Connor, *A Labour History of Ireland, 1824-1960* (Dublin, 1992), p. 60.

<sup>15</sup> Sir James Sexton, *Sir James Sexton, Agitator; The Life of The Dockers' MP* (London, 1936), p. 93; Moody, 'Davitt', p. 62; Anne George de Mille, *Henry George* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1950), p. 259.

<sup>16</sup> Yeates, 1913, p. 104.

<sup>17</sup> Denman, *Lonely Grave*, p. 65.

As Tom Kettle put it later, ‘What social policy did we, the comfortable, offer them [the poor]?’<sup>18</sup> For some the answer would have perhaps been obvious. Nearly one third of the population of Dublin lived in slums and more than 20,000 families lived in single rooms. The capital’s rates of malnutrition were ‘endemic’, its death rate the highest in Ireland and its infant mortality rate the highest in the United Kingdom.<sup>19</sup> Of course, Irish MPs were not unaware of the existence of, what John Redmond termed ‘so much real, naked, miserable, and horrifying poverty’,<sup>20</sup> and some did individually seek to ameliorate it.<sup>21</sup> But there was little effort to understand the underlying causes of poverty beyond traditional explanations of economic decline since the Union.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, such efforts as were made were uncoordinated and piecemeal, and where organized (as in the Town Tenants’ Association, which favoured small business tenants) were not oriented towards Dublin’s poorest inhabitants.<sup>23</sup>

The presence, then of Field *et al* in the ranks of the Irish Party in no way dissuaded its socialist critics from the belief that labour required separate political representation. From the first years of the twentieth century some Belfast trade unionists sought closer ties with the British Labour Party, while a group within the ITUC lobbied for a ‘pledge-bound’ Irish Labour party. Support for such sentiments was forthcoming at the 1906 and 1907 ITUC conferences, and again in 1910, after the Irish Transport and General Workers’ Union had been affiliated to the Congress. However, on each of these occasions supporters of the Irish Party mounted successful rear-guard actions, and it is probable that the majority of Irish trade unionists continued to believe (in the words of one delegate at the 1910 congress) that ‘they could not have a direct Labour Party until they had national independence. The Irish Party might not be perfect, but they were the representatives of the Irish people (applause).’<sup>24</sup>

The attitude of the Irish Party towards the Dublin strike in 1913 must be understood in the context of escalating industrial tension between (at least) 1910 and 1913. Individual MPs responded differently to militant working class politics. Many preferred to remain entirely above industrial conflicts. Joe Devlin, for instance, had little experience of trade union

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<sup>18</sup> *Leader*, 10.7.09.

<sup>19</sup> Morgan, *Connolly*, p. 111.

<sup>20</sup> *FJ*, 27.10.10., 8.

<sup>21</sup> *FJ*, 10.9.10., 4.

<sup>22</sup> Lyons, *Dillon*, p. 336.

<sup>23</sup> Yeates, *1913*, p. 104.

<sup>24</sup> *FJ*, 19.5.10., 4.

politics, and during the 1907 strike in Belfast led by Jim Larkin, preferred to stand to 'one side in the hope that good influences, a kindlier feeling and the due recognition of mutual responsibility would guide the masters and the men to a common agreement for the advantage of both sides' (though he was later criticized for cynically exploiting tensions for his own ends).<sup>25</sup> A similar reluctance to intervene was evident in May 1910, when the workers at the Dublin brushmaking company, Varian, went on strike following the alteration in their piece-work rates.<sup>26</sup> At a Labour Day rally, J.P. Nannetti explained that 'he did not take sides with either the employer or the workmen- he did not know which was right.'<sup>27</sup> He was subsequently criticized for his pusillanimity by both allies and enemies.<sup>28</sup> Again, during the strike of the Clare railwaymen of the West and South Clare Railway in September 1910, only reluctantly did the local Members of Parliament broach the matter. Arthur Lynch wrote to the local press that 'I had not thought it necessary on my part to intervene, but, as the dispute endures, it becomes imperative to call again emphatically for arbitration.' His colleague, Willie Redmond, took a similar line, adding 'I am not in a position to offer any opinion on the merits of the dispute, even if it were desirable that I should do so.'<sup>29</sup>

The advocacy of industrial arbitration was the furthest many Members were prepared to go in intervening in a strike, and even this was often done reluctantly. Some did, however, go further. Michael Davitt and T.P. O'Connor occasionally acted as mediators during strikes, though this was in a British context.<sup>30</sup> In Ireland it was uncommon, but not unheard of, for an MP to interest himself in a local dispute.<sup>31</sup> Occasionally, however, Members ventured more partisan opinions. During the all-Ireland rail strike of August 1911 the Longford MP, J.P. Farrell, called on a meeting of his constituents 'not be down-hearted. That was the war-cry of the great strike- "We are not down-hearted"- and the strikers were winning (hear, hear).' And he continued, 'It was an extraordinary uprising of the people of these countries, and it was a lesson to the government that the people were supreme when they took the bit in their mouths

<sup>25</sup> John Gray, *City in Revolt* (Belfast, 1985), p. 152.

<sup>26</sup> *FJ*, 2.6.10., 4.

<sup>27</sup> *FJ*, 2.5.10., 8. His colleague in the representation of Dublin, William Abraham, was more sympathetic to the striking brush-makers, as seen in the parliamentary question he asked in mid July. *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. xix, col. 11 (11.7.10.).

<sup>28</sup> *FJ*, 3.5.10., 5; 18.5.10., 10.

<sup>29</sup> Denman, *Lonely Grave*, p. 65; *FJ*, 21.9.10., 5; 5.9.10., 5; *Clare Journal*, 22.9.10., 3.

<sup>30</sup> Ben Tillet, *Memories and Reflections* (London, 1931), p. 187; Brady, *O'Connor*, p. 205-6; *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. xxix, col. 1971 (16.8.11.).

<sup>31</sup> For instance, see the example of Tom Scanlan and Sligo. *FJ*, 24.4.13., 7; 25.4.13., 6.

(cheers).<sup>32</sup> Similarly, Joe Devlin told a UIL meeting in Belfast that he was unhesitant in 'saying that he was heartily in sympathy with those railway employees who were making an effort...to better their conditions' and that he 'hoped [there] would be a satisfactory conclusion of the great industrial war'.<sup>33</sup> The following February he told the House of Commons that 'the cause of the strike was the conduct of the railway directors and the scandalous wages they paid', and that he was 'sorry the strike did not go on, for the railway directors would have been beaten'.<sup>34</sup>

Doubtless, Devlin's willingness to endorse the strike was influenced in part by the Party's poor relations with many Irish railway companies.<sup>35</sup> But, arguably, more immediately important would have been the sympathetic tone of the *Freeman's Journal* towards the workers and its criticism of the rail directors for their 'stubborn adherence to bygone industrial methods', for refusing to recognize the men's union, and for paying low wages.<sup>36</sup>

However, the spread of the rail strike from Dublin to Cork and Limerick, and the sympathetic action of workers in other sectors of manufacturing, left some Nationalists extremely uneasy. Speaking as a 'Catholic economist', the Dublin MP P.J. Brady, acknowledged that 'he was put in by the vote of the working men', and that there was '[no] greater evil...[than] that helpless individualism from which trade unionism had delivered them'. Nevertheless, he cautioned that '[the] right of combination like all such rights, may become an evident wrong unless it is taken in conjunction with its responsibilities, and unless its limitations are recognized. Let him implore them not to abuse their power, lest they should alienate sympathy.'<sup>37</sup>

For many Nationalists, the 'right' to strike had clearly been pressed too far when the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants called a general strike in late September 1911. As the *Freeman's* put it '[the] decision is deplorable on all grounds, ranging from the great consideration of public welfare to the pettiest selfish interest of the men concerned'.<sup>38</sup> The 'Dublin six' met and issued a statement regretting 'the deplorable crisis in our industrial affairs' and offered their assistance in resolving the dispute.<sup>39</sup> Other Members were less circumspect. At a meeting to consider the rail strike held in Clonmel,

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<sup>32</sup> *FJ*, 22.8.11., 2.

<sup>33</sup> *FJ*, 22.8.11., 9.

<sup>34</sup> *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. xxxiv, col. 1397 (28.2.12.).

<sup>35</sup> Chantal Brady-Deutsch, 'The Railway Question, 1902', *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society*, vol. 33 (1972), pp. 100-1.

<sup>36</sup> *FJ*, 19.8.11., 6. Also see, *FJ*, 9.8.11., 6.

<sup>37</sup> *FJ*, 22.9.11., 5.

<sup>38</sup> *FJ*, 22.9.11., 6.

<sup>39</sup> *FJ*, 23.9.11., 7.



for instance, Tom Condon claimed that 'In a fair fight for better terms the workers would always have the warm support of the people, but no such question arose in this case'. Instead, according to Condon, the strike had been 'forced upon them by the action of a few outsiders from England'.<sup>40</sup> Subsequent pronouncements by Irish Members closely followed this line: that, in principle, the Party supported the right of Irish trade unions to strike over legitimate grievances, but that the 'sympathetic' strike was not only an illegitimate means of protest, but one foisted on Irish workers by 'foreign' interests. Thus, Willie Redmond told a meeting in Clare that 'they in Ireland were not socialists or anarchists' (presumably in contrast to the 'English' union leaders he blamed the strike on), and that 'while the men had no doubt got bitter and severe grievances, the strike was causing great trouble and great cost and expense to all classes in the country'.<sup>41</sup> Redmond and Lynch both called for arbitration, with the latter expressing the hope that under Home Rule the rail system would be nationalized.<sup>42</sup> Two days later, at Maryborough, P.A. Meehan (who was a 'large and generous employer of labour')<sup>43</sup> moved a resolution to the effect that while he recognized 'that the conditions of service and wages in numerous cases require [adjustment]', and that trade unions 'conducted on just grounds and controlled by our own countrymen' were the appropriate vehicles to secure redress, the present rail strike was 'unjustifiable and merits the severe condemnation of the public' because it was 'engineered and controlled by English socialists'.<sup>44</sup> The next day, at Clonmel, John Cullinan added his voice, when he observed that unlike previous strikes which had won public sympathy, the current strike was the work of English trade union leaders and had seriously 'dislocated the trade and commerce of the country'.<sup>45</sup>

A more sympathetic note was, however, struck at the very end of the month when following the end of the strike the rail companies refused to reinstate those workers who had gone on strike. The *Freeman's* censured the Great Southern and Western Railway Company for its unreasonable attitude. The 'Dublin six' were also critical, as was P.A. Meehan, while Joe Devlin claimed that 'the railway workers acted in good faith and in a spirit of...loyalty to their class which does them infinite credit.' Arthur Lynch called for a settlement 'without any suggestion of vengeance or retaliation upon the men.'<sup>46</sup> Peter Ffrench, David Sheehy and William Delany subsequently made efforts to have some of

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<sup>40</sup> *Tipperary Star*, 16.9.11., 4.

<sup>41</sup> *FJ*, 26.9.11., 9.

<sup>42</sup> *Clare Journal*, 30.9.11., 6.

<sup>43</sup> *FJ*, 12.5.13., 6.

<sup>44</sup> *FJ*, 27.9.11., 8.

<sup>45</sup> *FJ*, 29.9.11., 8. Also see, *Tipperary Star*, 16.9.11., 4.

<sup>46</sup> *FJ*, 29.9.11., 6, 7; 2.10.11., 10.

those dismissed reinstated.<sup>47</sup> The following year, Stephen Gwynn criticized the Irish railway companies on the floor of the House of Commons for not accepting the findings of the Railway Commission.<sup>48</sup>

Despite the declared sympathy of Irish Members for labour's 'legitimate' grievances, the Party's marked hostility towards the sympathetic strike created a stronger impression on some observers in Ireland.<sup>49</sup> The strikes in Britain and Ireland during the following year further compounded the frustration some Members felt with what they regarded as the selfishness of organized labour. John Roche wrote to John Dillon in April 1912 'I suppose this coal strike has overshadowed everything else in England. Those fellows will not stop until they bring about a revolution.'<sup>50</sup> Speaking in Glasgow the month before, Willie Redmond expressed the hope that 'those engaged in this struggle would not interpose more than was strictly necessary any obstacle in the path of Home Rule',<sup>51</sup> while J.P. Farrell, shared similar fears with the Nationalists of Keighley: 'Personally, he (Mr Farrell) took leave to say to the workers of Great Britain that in hampering and hindering the Liberal government by strikes and lock-outs and other social upheavals they were not acting wisely in their own interest.'<sup>52</sup>

The response of the Irish Party, then, to successive strikes between 1907 and 1913 suggests that Irish Members were often far more concerned about the political and economic impact of industrial action than the grievances at issue. Moreover, the pattern of their interventions suggests that unless compelled, Members preferred to remain 'neutral' in industrial disputes. In part this was because Members' feared alienating sections of the nationalist community. But it also stemmed from a desire to avoid complicating the Home Rule cause with domestic associations. Working conditions and industrial relations could wait until the foundation of the nation-state; for however hollow it rang, the Party insisted that it 'represented not a class, but a nation'.<sup>53</sup>

In late September 1913, Jim Larkin's newspaper, the *Irish Worker*, drew attention to the fact that while Dublin was at that time embroiled in the largest strike in Irish history, the Irish Party was conspicuous only by its silence. 'The utter indifference of the Irish

<sup>47</sup> *FJ*, 18.11.11., 6-7.; 14.4.13., 8; 6.3.14., 7; 7.3.14., 6.

<sup>48</sup> *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. xxxviii, cols. 1859-60 (21.5.12.).

<sup>49</sup> *FJ*, 29.9.11., 10; 28.10.13., 9.

<sup>50</sup> John Roche to John Dillon, 4.4.12., TCD, DP, ms 6750/108.

<sup>51</sup> *FJ*, 18.3.12., 9.

<sup>52</sup> *FJ*, 19.3.12., 5. Also see, *FJ*, 4.6.12., 9.

<sup>53</sup> *FJ*, 20.3.11., 5.

Parliamentary Party to our most urgent needs has been unmistakably proved by the silence that must be taken as proof that they acquiesce in all the horrible atrocities and unsavoury doings of our declared enemies.'<sup>54</sup> Confirmation of this appeared to come in a speech delivered by David 'Judas' Sheehy that same week. Insisting that there was a 'common interest between labour and capital', Sheehy claimed that this relationship had been subverted by the personal dictatorship of the 'hideous monster' Jim Larkin: 'He (Mr Sheehy) did not know of any form of anarchy...[where] fine men [were] out of employment, not because they might have complaints about the remuneration for their labour, but simply and solely because Mr Larkin says "come out", and they come out.'<sup>55</sup> The *Irish Worker* responded to Sheehy's speech with alacrity. Observing that the Party as a whole had abided by the 'old proverb which tells us that "silence is golden"', the paper went on to mockingly praise Sheehy 'You alone of the Party were unwise enough to open your mouth...and you have put your foot in it!'.<sup>56</sup>

Further evidence of the apparent hostility of the Party towards the strike was forthcoming in the following weeks. Three days after Sheehy's speech, P.J. Meehan wrote an open letter to the Irish press which made clear his opposition to the strike. Meehan admitted that the living conditions of unskilled workers in Dublin were not 'what they should be in this progressive age' and that trade unions were essential in securing fair wages and proper working conditions. But he denounced Larkin personally as 'an adventurer who is exploiting the Irish workman for a livelihood' and condemned 'the syndicalist doctrines of continental anarchists as embraced in the wild and disastrous propaganda emanating from Liberty Hall...that aim[s] at a reign of terror and disorder, and tend[s] to subvert the faith and religion of our Catholic people'.<sup>57</sup> While Meehan ranted hysterically against the 'foreign anti-clerics and atheists' who were allegedly associated with Larkin, two weeks later, Richard Hazleton denounced Larkin as an apostle of 'anarchy and syndicalism and red ruin' and exhorted the workers of North Louth not to 'trust their souls to the false gods of anarchy'.<sup>58</sup> Addressing his constituents the following week, Dr John Esmonde was anxious that the Party should not be held responsible for the socio-economic conditions which had caused the strike: 'The poverty now existing in Dublin was worse than any other city he ever visited, but', he argued (adopting the classic nationalist formula), 'they as Irishmen could not be blamed; it was the Union which was to

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<sup>54</sup> *Irish Worker*, 27.9.13., 1.

<sup>55</sup> *FJ*, 23.9.13., 9; *Leinster Leader*, 27.9.13., 4.

<sup>56</sup> *Irish Worker*, 4.10.13., 4.

<sup>57</sup> *FJ*, 24.9.13., 9.

<sup>58</sup> *FJ*, 6.10.13., 8.

be blamed'.<sup>59</sup> William O'Malley, in his London letter for the *Connacht Tribune*, echoed this point, insisting that those on strike were not the habitually employed, but the unskilled 'submerged' class of workers. He described the claim that Dublin's employers had deliberately combined to crush the Transport Union as an 'invention',<sup>60</sup> and enthusiastically denounced the 'despotism' of the ITGWU and the 'autocracy' and 'wild egotistical fanatic[ism]' of Larkin.<sup>61</sup> In tackling the 'present labour unrest', John Cullinan acknowledged that it was a subject 'which many people did not care to deal'. However, Cullinan averred such hesitancy. While recognising the 'genuine grievances' of the workers, he condemned the strike action as jeopardising Ireland's 'commercial men' and for placing the faith of the deported children in 'the gravest danger'. Indeed, he denounced Larkin, whom he described as 'a man who came to Ireland from the other side of the water', for attacking the church, and concluded that they would 'have none of their socialistic innovations in this country'.<sup>62</sup> The following month, Tom Condon, made a point of praising the DMP (in the face of widespread criticism of police brutality) for preventing striking workers from 'intimidating free labour'.<sup>63</sup> The same week, J.P. Farrell observed that irrespective of whether 'the socialists were right or wrong in their fight, Ireland suffered'.<sup>64</sup> Finally, towards the end of November, Tom Lundon addressed his supporters in South Limerick, telling them that he had sympathy with the workers and that '[i]t was Larkin and his methods he condemned and found fault with' for 'tearing society to its foundations' and attacking 'church and state'.<sup>65</sup>

According to Pádraig Yeates, David Sheehy's speech can be seen as an attempt to ingratiate himself with his constituents, among whom there had been recent criticism of his stewardship, while Patrick Meehan's intervention reflected rural tensions between landless labourers and peasant proprietors.<sup>66</sup> Doubtless, personal explanations can be found for such outbursts (though not, perhaps, exactly those which Yeates ascribes).<sup>67</sup> However, these attacks should not be passed off as simply opportunistic or personal. As has been

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<sup>59</sup> *FJ*, 10.10.13., 7.

<sup>60</sup> *CT*, 8.11.13., 4.

<sup>61</sup> *FJ*, 10.11.13., 6.

<sup>62</sup> *FJ*, 28.10.13., 9. Cullinan struck a slightly more conciliatory note several weeks later. *Tipperary Star*, 29.11.13., 3.

<sup>63</sup> *FJ*, 11.11.13., 7.

<sup>64</sup> *FJ*, 12.11.13., 8.

<sup>65</sup> *Limerick Leader*, 14.11.13., 3; *FJ*, 22.11.13., 8.

<sup>66</sup> Yeates, 1913, p. 177.

<sup>67</sup> Leah Levenson and J.H. Natterstad, *Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington Irish Feminist* (Syracuse, 1986), p. 7; Meehan, *Laois and Offaly*, p. 77.

shown, Sheehy and Meehan's declarations were but two of a number made by Irish Members during the 1913 strike. Moreover, the ideas and prejudices which they articulated (the identification of Larkinism with continental anti-clericalism, anarchism and socialism) echoed the anti-strike rhetoric of many Catholic priests.<sup>68</sup> This is not to suggest that all these MPs were simply Catholic 'backwoodsmen'; they may not have shared clerical suspicions of urban life or of mainstream British trade unionism.<sup>69</sup> But, like the secular clergy, Sheehy *et al* were 'only interested in as much social change as was compatible with its [the Party's] limited social base', and this was already being provided by land purchase.<sup>70</sup> In fact, they feared that working class political radicalism might cross-infect the rural have-nots and so destabilize Irish society on the eve of self-government. And (not withstanding pieties about 'legitimate grievances') in reasserting the primacy of Home Rule, ultimately these Members had no more effective response to Larkinism than the church's admonition that the poor should 'fall back on the principles of the gospel'.<sup>71</sup>

The question of how typical of Irish backbench opinion the sentiments expressed by such MPs as Sheehy were, is difficult to answer. Although several of the MPs who condemned the strike in 1913 had previously been critical of militant trade unionism (such as Cullinan, Condon and O'Malley), others had not. That said, there is nothing conspicuous in these Members' backgrounds to suggest that they would have been more hostile to Larkin than their silent colleagues. All of them represented county constituencies (as did the great majority of Nationalist MPs), and, furthermore, they came from a cross-section of the Party: from Dr John Esmonde, scion of a County Wexford landed family and resident of Drominagh Castle, to Tom Condon, the Clonmel butcher and local worthy.

However, by no means all those MPs who were silent agreed with their more vocal colleagues. Writing in the third person, but clearly expressing his personal outlook, Stephen Gwynn, for example, told Archbishop Walsh in late October of the 'extraordinary difficulty in which Irish Members stand whilst such a matter, so intimately Irish, has to be dealt with by an alien government, which we cannot afford to weaken.'<sup>72</sup> Gwynn himself

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<sup>68</sup> Emmet Larkin, 'Socialism and Catholicism in Ireland', *Church History*, vol. xxxiii (1964), p. 469, 474. Larkin quotes Monsignor Murphy of Maryborough's anti-Larkinite speech at the Maynooth Union in 1912. Murphy was a close friend of P.A. Meehan.

<sup>69</sup> On this, see Tom Garvin, 'Priests and Patriots: Irish Separatism and fear of the modern, 1890-1914', *IHS*, vol. xxv, no. 97 (1986), pp. 67-81

<sup>70</sup> Patrick O'Mahony and Gerald Delanty, *Rethinking Irish History: Nationalism, Identity and Ideology* (Basingstoke, 2001), p. 70.

<sup>71</sup> Larkin, 'Socialism', p. 473.

<sup>72</sup> Stephen Gwynn to Archbishop Walsh, 29 October 1913), quoted in Keogh, *Working Class*, p.228.

was judged (along with P.J. Brady, J.P. Boland and Sir Walter Nugent) to be on the side of 'William "Murder" Murphy', by virtue of the fact that (through his wife) he was a large shareholder in Murphy's commercial empire.<sup>73</sup> In fact, Gwynn had long been sympathetic to Larkin.<sup>74</sup> Moreover, only a week after his meditation on the difficulties faced by MPs vis-à-vis the strike, he felt compelled to intervene in the crisis himself.

On November 1, 1913, at a meeting in the Albert Hall in support of the Dublin strike, George Russell denounced the 'Dublin Six' as 'miserable creatures', 'poltroons' and 'democratic blatherers' for deserting the workers and toadying to the church. In response to this 'orgy of abuse', the *Freeman's Journal* claimed that Russell was one of those manipulating the Dublin working class in the interests of 'international syndicalism and socialism' and 'anti-Christian as well as anti-Catholic sentiment.'<sup>75</sup> This elicited from Gwynn a letter of strongly worded protest (described by his colleague, William O'Malley, as 'spicy copy')<sup>76</sup> in which he took the *Freeman's* to task for its 'violent denunciation' of men of 'genius'. Gwynn clearly felt reluctant to break his silence on the strike, because, as he wrote 'Those of us who have felt very strong sympathy with Mr Larkin, even when we questioned the wisdom or the efficiency of his methods, have kept silence in order to avoid creating discussion in Ireland at this time'. But he felt that since Sheehy (the irony of whose latter-day conservatism he did not miss) and other Members had permitted themselves the liberty, that there should be some reciprocity.<sup>77</sup> The *Freeman's* politely dismissed Gwynn's views. Letters from Land League veterans such as Sheehy and Andrew Kettle rejected Gwynn's sympathetic comparison between the aims and methods of the Land War and those of the strike,<sup>78</sup> while some of Gwynn's parliamentary colleagues reproved him for his sympathies.<sup>79</sup> Gwynn was unrepentant,<sup>80</sup> and a letter of support from the former MP, Pierce O'Mahony, indicated that Gwynn was by no means completely alone in his sympathies.

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<sup>73</sup> *Irish Worker*, 20.9.13., 3.

<sup>74</sup> As early as April 1907, Gwynn had written to Redmond of his belief that Larkin 'is far more right than wrong' and warning him that '[George] Russell, [Shane] Leslie, [G.B.] Shaw and the like are a force...that is very undesirable to alienate.' Stephen Gwynn to John Redmond, 7.4.07., NLI, RP, ms 15,192 [9].

<sup>75</sup> Many Nationalists were hostile to Russell long before the strike, owing to his involvement with the IAOS. See, *Hansard, HC* (series 5), vol. xviii, col. 1890 (7.7.10.).

<sup>76</sup> *CT*, 8.11.13., 5.

<sup>77</sup> *FJ*, 5.11.13., 9.

<sup>78</sup> *FJ*, 22.11.13., 8; 24.11.13., 8.

<sup>79</sup> *FJ*, 10.11.13., 8.

<sup>80</sup> *FJ*, 21.11.13., 9.

Furthermore, although the 'Lab-Nat' MPs were largely quiet (though perhaps not entirely unsympathetic),<sup>81</sup> several other Irish Members expressed more progressive sentiments. At the end of October, an article in the *Freeman's* by Hugh Law, explained that up to the present, the condition of urban labourers had received little attention 'But, on certain admitted facts, the low wages too generally prevalent both there and elsewhere, and the abominable scandal of those 20,000 one room tenements, one may surely base the conviction that in this province there is room for immediate action by a Home Rule government.'<sup>82</sup> In particular, Law specified the need for a 'living wage', state-aid for re-housing the urban population and some form of profit sharing. Similar ideas were discussed by J.P. Boland in a lecture entitled 'Co-partnership and Labour Unrest' delivered to the Irish Literary Society at the end of December 1913.<sup>83</sup>

Sympathy for the strike was also privately expressed within Home Rule circles.<sup>84</sup> T.P. O'Connor, for instance, told Dillon that 'all my sympathies are with the workers', though he heeded Dillon's advice not to involve himself too closely with London-Irish efforts to raise funds for the families of the men on strike.<sup>85</sup> Another of Dillon's correspondents who expressed reservations about the Party's attitude towards the strike was the former Irish MP and Catholic newspaper proprietor, Charles Diamond. Diamond informed Dillon in mid October that 'you would be surprised at the amount of feeling that there is here [in Glasgow] amongst Irish people that the Party has not done anything in favour of the strikers. The Dublin employers are spoken of with positive hatred and contempt'. And two days later he again wrote to Dillon that 'there is a sort of feeling that many of the Irish Party are more in sympathy with the farmers and the shopkeepers than with the great body of the workers, whose condition is in many cases deplorable.'<sup>86</sup> Diamond added that if he owned a newspaper in Dublin it would be supporting the Larkin.

But undoubtedly the strongest representation made to Dillon on behalf of the Dublin workers was offered by another Member with strong British connections, Richard McGhee. In a letter written at the beginning of August, he strongly urged Dillon to publicly condemn the police's tactics on 'Bloody Sunday'.

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<sup>81</sup> See *FJ*, 9.9.13., 9; Yeates, 1913, p. 120, 175.

<sup>82</sup> *FJ*, 1.11.13., 8.

<sup>83</sup> *FJ*, 19.12.13., 6.

<sup>84</sup> This is discussed in Pádraig Yeates, 'The Dublin 1913 Lockout', *History Ireland*, vol. ix, no. ii (2001), pp. 32-3.

<sup>85</sup> Yeates, 1913, pp. 243-4.

<sup>86</sup> Charles Diamond to John Dillon, 13.10.13, TCD, DP ms 6753/297; Charles Diamond to John Dillon, 15.10.13, TCD, DP, ms 6753/297.

It will be a serious mistake for our entire Irish Party to remain silent as if we approved of the devilish work. The trades unions of Britain are stirred to the deepest indignation over the matter and I know nothing that will do our cause more injury than for the unionist to think that we...are indifferent to the conflicts between William Martin Murphy and his victims.<sup>87</sup>

This prompted the angry retort from Dillon that McGhee's first loyalty should not be to Larkin but to the Party, which he suggested McGhee wished to see 'dragged at his tail'. McGhee, in return, insisted that to condemn police violence was not to support Larkin, though personally, he added 'When a conflict between the working classes of Dublin even with Larkin at their head and such scoundrels as William Murphy takes place I am with the working classes every time.'<sup>88</sup> Dillon (who regarded Larkin 'to be a very dangerous enemy to Home Rule, the government and the Nationalist Party')<sup>89</sup> was unmoved, and instead took the first opportunity to publicly attack Larkin while ignoring how (in McGhee's words) the police 'savagely, brutally, murderously butchered...innocent men and women and children'. Following this, McGhee wrote again, strongly criticising Dillon's lack of compassion and the failure of any Irish MPs to condemn 'such devilry', though, in truth, he himself admitted that 'I have been too long working for the national cause not to be prepared to make some sacrifice even of my conscience when it conflicts with the safety of that cause.'<sup>90</sup>

The evidence suggests that well before the 1913 lock-out, the majority of Members were indifferent to the grievances of the Irish working class, and both hostile to and threatened by the radicalisation of Irish labour under Jim Larkin. Larkin became a hate-figure for many in the Party, and though the majority of Members remained silent, those who spoke out did so with a vehemence which, in the final analysis, did betray their class loyalties. By contrast, within the Party, only two groups stood out against the prevailing conservatism of its members: those MPs with Protestant or Irish revival backgrounds (Gwynn, Law, O'Mahony, and Boland) and those connected with the Irish in Britain (O'Connor, Diamond and McGhee). F.S.L. Lyons was surely right, then, when he observed in 1968 that the 'passivity' of Irish Members in 1913 'remains a dark blot on their record'.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Richard McGhee to John Dillon, 2.8.13., TCD, DP, 6757/1054.

<sup>88</sup> Richard McGhee to John Dillon, 11.8.13., TCD, DP, ms 6757/1055.

<sup>89</sup> Interview with John Dillon, No. 11 Downing Street, 17.11.13., Lloyd George Papers, HLRO, C/20/2/4.

<sup>90</sup> Richard McGhee to John Dillon, 11.8.13., TCD, DP, ms 6757/1055.

<sup>91</sup> Lyons, 'Decline and Fall', p. 57.



## **Chapter Two: Perceptions of the Irish Party**

### **Section Two: The Party and the Church**

The historiography of church-Party relations is not extensive and has tended to be written from a clerical perspective (and, more particularly, an episcopal one). Thus, Patrick O'Farrell has characterized the attitude of the church towards the late Victorian Party as one of distrust and 'at worst acid contempt'.<sup>1</sup> More recently, D.W. Miller has advanced a more nuanced consideration (one not based so exclusively on the undoubtedly hostile views of Archbishop Walsh, Cardinal Logue and the conservative *New Ireland Review*).<sup>2</sup> But, while allowing that the priesthood, on the whole, supported the Party, he concludes that 'the nationalism that captured their [the clergy's] affections was to be found not in the columns of *Hansard*, but in the columns of *The Leader*', and that though 'the average Bishop was content to continue endorsing [the Party]', such support was given in the same spirit 'as he might endorse the products of a manufacturer of vestments or stained glass.'<sup>3</sup>

This section will not seek to fundamentally challenge this interpretation of episcopal- 'cabinet' relations, but, instead, seeks to examine how backbench Irish MPs regarded the Irish Catholic church.

Although the Irish Party was not, first and foremost, a clericalist or confessional party (despite the claims of some priests),<sup>4</sup> in 1910, 90 per cent of its members professed to be Catholic. Indeed, with one or two exceptions (notably the invalid, James O'Kelly, and the erstwhile radical, T.P. O'Connor),<sup>5</sup> the Edwardian Irish Party was comprised of men of conventional faith. John Redmond, for example, attended mass every Sunday at the Catholic church in Kensington High Street, while, according to J.J. Horgan, his brother was 'most sincerely religious', and attended mass daily.<sup>6</sup> The faith of Redmond's protégé, J.P. Boland, 'was the taken-for-granted kind of the good born Catholic'; he jogged to seven o'clock mass 'every day of his life'. Boland was both the Party's parliamentary spokesman on English educational matters and Redmond's 'medium of communication with the British

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<sup>1</sup> Patrick O'Farrell, *Ireland's English Question: Anglo-Irish Relations, 1534-1970* (London, 1971), p. 253.

<sup>2</sup> D.W. Miller, 'The Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, 1898-1918', in Alan O'Day (ed.), *Reactions to Irish Nationalism* (London, 1987).

<sup>3</sup> Miller, 'Roman Catholic Church', p. 196; D.W. Miller, *Church, State and Nation in Ireland 1898-1921* (Dublin, 1973), p. 246.

<sup>4</sup> See the comments of Monsignor Kilkeny in *FJ*, 29.4.13., 6.

<sup>5</sup> F.H. O'Donnell, *A History of the Irish Parliamentary Party* (1910, Dallas, Tx., 1970), vol. ii, p. 325; Brady, *O'Connor*, p. 20; Horgan, *Parnell*, p. 153.

<sup>6</sup> Gwynn, *Literary Man*, p. 248; Horgan, *Parnell*, p. 199.

hierarchy'.<sup>7</sup> His work on behalf of Catholic education in Britain was recognized in 1918 when the Vatican appointed him a Knight of St Gregory.<sup>8</sup> According to his daughter, 'he was a man who had to have a cause', and after his parliamentary career ended, he became the general secretary of the Catholic Truth Society.<sup>9</sup> David Sheehy was also an assiduous attendant at mass.<sup>10</sup> According to William O'Malley, P.J. Power was 'a most devoted member of his church'.<sup>11</sup> When P.A. Meehan died in 1913, his parish priest and close friend, Monsignor Murphy, told his parishioners that Meehan had been a 'saintly man' who had been a daily communicant and that he had never known anyone 'who got so many masses said for the souls in purgatory'.<sup>12</sup> His son, P.J. Meehan, was forthright in condemning Larkinism in 1913 as preaching 'doctrines and principles at variance with the teachings of the church, which are now being assiduously promulgated with the assistance of subscriptions from foreign anti-clerics and atheists'.<sup>13</sup> When John Phillips died in 1917, he was described as 'a fervid and devoted Catholic'.<sup>14</sup> According to John Fitzgibbon's obituarist in 1919 'He was as earnestly devoted to his religion as to his country, and whether at home or abroad, if it were physically possible he never missed mass.'<sup>15</sup> Sir Thomas Esmonde counted among his friends Pope Leo XIII, Cardinal O'Connell of Boston and numerous other Irish and American prelates. In 1898 he was appointed Chamberlain of the Vatican Household, and served in this capacity during four papal reigns. He was also a grand officer of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre.<sup>16</sup>

Doubtless, many Irish MPs would have shared E.J. Kelly's conviction 'that there could be no more honourable career, *after the priesthood* [author's emphasis], than to strive to work out the political salvation of the country'.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, several Members of the Party had themselves originally intended to enter the church.<sup>18</sup> Many other had close family ties with the church; a fact unsurprising given that the 1901 census records that there were 12,901

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<sup>7</sup> Bridget Boland, *At My Mother's Knee* (London, 1978), p. 19; *FJ*, 29.9.13., 8.

<sup>8</sup> For instance, see *FJ*, 8.8.12., 6; 1.5.13., 6; 16.8.13., 7.

<sup>9</sup> Boland, *Mother's Knee*, p. 123.

<sup>10</sup> Ward, *Sheehy-Skeffington* (Cork, 1997), p. 49.

<sup>11</sup> *CT*, 11.1.13., 4.

<sup>12</sup> *Leinster Leader*, 17.5.13., 8.

<sup>13</sup> *FJ*, 24.9.13., 9.

<sup>14</sup> *Longford Leader*, 7.4.17., 1.

<sup>15</sup> *Roscommon Messenger*, 13.9.19., 3.

<sup>16</sup> *II*, 16.9.35., 7; *Times*, 16.9.35., 14.

<sup>17</sup> *FJ*, 23.11.11., 10.

<sup>18</sup> Unpublished Autobiography of J.F.X. O'Brien; *Drogheda Independent*, 24.12.32., 7; *PMG*, 'Extra', 1906, p. 129.

priests, monks and nuns in Ireland at the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>19</sup> John Phillips and Tom Lundon, for example, both had sisters who were nuns. John Redmond's sister and niece, respectively, were also nuns.<sup>20</sup> One of Stephen Gwynn's sons later became a Jesuit priest and his daughter a nun.<sup>21</sup> James O'Mara's brother was a Jesuit.<sup>22</sup> James Halpin's brother-in-law was a priest.<sup>23</sup> John Dillon's oldest son, Shawn, was a priest, as was one of John Fitzgibbon's sons and David Sheehy's brother, Eugene.<sup>24</sup> E.J. Kelly was the 'near kinsmen' of several Donegal priests.<sup>25</sup> One of E.P. O'Kelly's sons was a priest.<sup>26</sup> Michael Reddy's brother was an Archdeacon, Tim O'Sullivan was the nephew of Dr Charles O'Sullivan, Bishop of Kerry, John Hackett was the cousin of Dr Sheehan, Bishop of Waterford and Dr Phelan, Bishop of Sale,<sup>27</sup> and J.P. Boland was the nephew of an assistant Bishop of Dublin.<sup>28</sup>

Arguably, the catholicity of the rank and file was not a major influence on the relationship between the Irish hierarchy and the Party 'cabinet'. Indeed, according to Patrick O'Farrell, when, in 1906, Tim Healy sought to reassure Bishop O'Dwyer (who had then recently denounced the Party for supporting the Liberal government's Education Bill), that the 'ruck of our own MPs...[would not] consciously tolerate anything hurtful to the church', the clerical estimate was that this was 'not enough, not nearly enough.'<sup>29</sup> Still, it is worth noting that MPs interacted with religious not only in a public capacity, but as parishioners and as brothers, fathers, cousins, uncles and nephews. De Valera was not the only one to have lived all his life among priests.<sup>30</sup>

Although among the episcopacy, only Bishops O'Donnell of Raphoe and Kelly of Ross, publicly associated themselves with the Party, at a local level many Members were connected with the church. In their capacity as public men, for example, many MPs interacted with the episcopacy. In September 1904, P.J. O'Brien was part of the reception

<sup>19</sup> *Parliamentary Papers*, 1901, Vol. cxxix, HC, Cd. 1190, Census (Ireland) 1901, 'General Report'; Table 19, Occupations of Males in Ireland, p. 161; Table 20, Occupations of Females in Ireland, p. 169.

<sup>20</sup> *Longford Leader*, 7.4.17., 1; *FJ*, 21.11.10., 6; 19.3.13., 5; Maume, *Gestation*, p. 148.

<sup>21</sup> Gwynn, *Literary Man*, p. 250.

<sup>22</sup> Lavelle, *O'Mara*, p. 40.

<sup>23</sup> *FJ*, 27.7.09., 6.

<sup>24</sup> Lyons, *Dillon*, p. 472; *Roscommon Herald*, 13.9.19., 1; Ward, *Sheehy-Skeffington*, p. 4.

<sup>25</sup> *FJ*, 30.12.09., 8.

<sup>26</sup> *Wicklow People*, 1.8.14., 4.

<sup>27</sup> *FJ*, 31.7.19., 2; *II*, 16.8.50., 8; *FJ*, 17.6.14., 6; *II*, 17.6.14., 4.

<sup>28</sup> Boland, *Mother's Knee*, p. 30.

<sup>29</sup> Quoted in Farrell, *English Question*, p. 256.

<sup>30</sup> Coogan, *De Valera*, p. 108.

committee when the Bishop of Killaloe visited Nenagh.<sup>31</sup> The same month, Michael Flavin and John Murphy attended the consecration of Dr Murphy, Bishop of Ardfert and Aghadoe,<sup>32</sup> while in Donegal, J.G.S. MacNeill, Hugh Law and Edward McFadden attended the ceremonial founding of a new Catholic college in Letterkenny by Dr O'Donnell.<sup>33</sup>

At a lower level, many MPs seem also to have worked closely with the secular clergy in their constituencies. Some priests, for instance, worked with their local MPs on behalf of their parishioners. Father Brennan was, for example, an important source of constituency intelligence for James O'Mara. When Willie Redmond conducted a whistle-stop tour of Clare in October 1913, he called on, and consulted with, several of the county's senior clergy.<sup>34</sup> Others clerics played an important part at a divisional and branch level in the UIL. F.H. O'Donnell's list of Party meetings for 'an average ten days of an average month' in c.1910, shows that priests chaired 42 public meetings and that a further 21 clergyman attended.<sup>35</sup> O'Donnell also drew attention to the 13 priests who were members of the National Directory in 1910.<sup>36</sup> Priests and prelates also took an active part in the selection of parliamentary candidates. Indeed, the clergy were not only frequently consulted about potential candidates, but they seem often to have either sought advice or initiated discussion.<sup>37</sup>

Within the late Edwardian Party, only three MPs were openly critical of the priesthood's role in politics. In 1907, Stephen Gwynn published a novel, *The Glade of the Forest*, in which he described one of his characters (a Connaught priest) as 'a big, red-faced, coarse looking man...rolling out Latin words'. Some of his constituents protested, with the *Connacht Champion* in particular asking 'Do Mr Gwynn's constituents in this city intend to sit still under the foul libels that have been issued against their beloved and revered clergy?'.<sup>38</sup> Gwynn was unrepentant.<sup>39</sup> Arthur Lynch, also antagonized his local clergy after he wrote an article for an American magazine criticising the priesthood of Clare. At the first general election of 1910, Lynch was denounced as 'a traducer of the political character of the Irish priesthood'.<sup>40</sup> Despite a hasty retraction of his comments, Lynch

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<sup>31</sup> *FJ*, 13.9.04., 5.

<sup>32</sup> *FJ*, 19.9.04., 5.

<sup>33</sup> *FJ*, 23.9.04., 5-6.

<sup>34</sup> *FJ*, 7.10.13., 10.

<sup>35</sup> O'Donnell, *Irish Parliamentary Party*, vol. ii, pp. 351-3.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, p. 452.

<sup>37</sup> For instance, see John Roche to John Dillon, 1.3.04., TCD, DP, ms 6750/54.

<sup>38</sup> *Connaught Champion*, 25.1.08., 4.

<sup>39</sup> Stephen Gwynn, *A Holiday in Connemara* (London, 1909), p.116.

<sup>40</sup> *II*, 11.12.09., 7.

remained critical of Ireland's politicized priests.<sup>41</sup> William O'Malley also angered his local clergy by a speech he made in England (allegedly in the belief that the press were not present) denouncing clerical influence.<sup>42</sup>

Doubtless, other MPs may have harboured reservations about clerical influence in politics, but were sensible enough to be circumspect.<sup>43</sup> That said, given the prominent role some clergymen took in local politics, occasionally MPs and priests fell out over parochial questions. In 1908, for instance, Conor O'Kelly was involved in a bitter wrangle with Archdeacon Kilkenny over the Claremoriss waterworks. The struggle carried over into the county council elections of that year.<sup>44</sup> Although O'Kelly prevailed, so implacably hostile were the county's priests to his candidature for North Mayo in 1910, that even when O'Kelly stood for South Mayo instead, the local clergy supported the O'Brienite candidate, John O'Donnell, rather than see O'Kelly re-elected.

A smaller, but, nonetheless, significant dispute was that which developed between Michael Meagher and the chairman of the Clara UIL branch, Father Cahill, in the winter of 1911-12. The disagreement concerned the action taken by Meagher with regard to the case of an evicted tenant. Responding to a request for his assistance, Meagher had asked questions in Parliament, consulted John Redmond and commissioned his Party colleague, Pat White, to open negotiations with the landlord, with a view to restoring 'widow Nolan' to her property. Cahill, however, was unwilling to co-operate with Meagher, who then took it on himself to settle the matter. However, both the terms of the offer to the landlord and Meagher's alleged interference so angered the Clara branch, that at its meeting in mid December 1911, a resolution was passed censuring Meagher for acting 'behind his [Father Cahill's] back and the back of Mrs Nolan, and without any authority whatever from her or...the local Branch of the League'.<sup>45</sup>

This was the state of affairs when the matter came before the North Kilkenny UIL executive, whose meeting in January 1912 witnessed a memorable exchange.

Meagher 'When I wired for instructions, why didn't you reply? I was never invited to Clara to be consulted about this case.'

Cahill: 'You were never asked to interfere in the case, and I say that after Clarke [the landlord] you are the aggressor (cheers).'

Meagher (warmly) 'No matter what you may think, I say I was the only person entitled to settle the case as one between landlord and tenant. I claim that as my

<sup>41</sup> Lynch, *Life Story*, p.115.

<sup>42</sup> Sir Henry Robinson, *Memories: Wise and Otherwise* (London, 1923), pp. 278-9.

<sup>43</sup> As Parnellites, both J.P. Hayden and Michael Joyce clashes with the episcopacy during the 1890s. *PMG*, 'Extra', 1906, p. 124, 103.

<sup>44</sup> W.P. Ryan, *The Pope's Green Island* (London, 1912), pp. 116-121.

<sup>45</sup> *FJ*, 13.12.11.,10.

right. I don't interfere with you in your clerical duties, and I say that no man no matter who he is or what his position may be has a right to abrogate to himself my privileges as Member of the constituency (cheers).'  
 Cahill 'Nonsense. You might as well say that you are entitled to come and take my horse out of my stable. I may say that I never had any communication from you about this case. I hold that if Mrs Nolan is evicted Mr Meagher, after Clarke, will be responsible.'<sup>46</sup>

Of course, the fact that Meagher was what Roy Foster has termed one of the Party's 'respectable' ex-fenians, and that (like Conor O'Kelly) as a Parnellite he had been in opposition to the majority of the county's clergy during the 1890s, undoubtedly had a bearing on this incident.<sup>47</sup> However, this dispute reflected not only the continuing legacy of the Split, but also the friction created by the over-lapping spheres of influence of priest and politician. Meagher, it is noteworthy, both precisely conceived and articulated his right to act independently in such questions, on the basis that there was a clear distinction between his 'privileges' and the 'clerical duties' of the priesthood. But given the longstanding prominence of the clergy in politics and the overlapping jurisdictions involved in pastoral care and constituency service, clearly the 'privileges' Meagher abrogated to himself were not universally recognized.<sup>48</sup>

The complex relationship between the Irish Party and the church in the years between 1910 and 1914 is well illustrated by the Party's attitude towards successive papal ordinances on the one hand, and the Ancient Order of Hibernians on the other. In 1908, the *Ne Temere* decree, promulgated by Pius X, had stated that the church would not recognize marriages involving Catholics unless they was celebrated before a Catholic priest. This had potentially serious implications for mixed marriages and the children of such unions (and greatly alarmed those Unionists who feared that Home Rule would mean 'Rome Rule'). A test-case was provided within two years by the McCann family of Belfast. Normally so anxious to deny Protestant claims about Catholic intolerance, the Party and, in particular, Redmond (who only two year before had insisted that 'under a free Parliament Irish politics will not be dictated from Rome'),<sup>49</sup> ignored the issue.<sup>50</sup> By so doing, as Stephen

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<sup>46</sup> *Kilkenny People*, 20.1.12., 3.

<sup>47</sup> *Kilkenny People*, 3.2.12., 2.

<sup>48</sup> Another trivial, but revealing, dispute was that which arose in King's County in June 1910. Michael Reddy, whose brother was a senior Churchman, was censured by Father O'Reilly for the dismissive tone he had used in relation to the teachings of an 'eminent divine', who had claimed that cattle driving was both illegal and immoral. *Midland Tribune*, 18.6.10., 3.

<sup>49</sup> Bew, *Redmond*, p. 48; *FJ*, 4.1.11., 5.

<sup>50</sup> Redmond did seek the advice of the constitutional expert and Irish MP, J.G.S. MacNeill, as to the question of the Anglican Church's historical attitude towards mixed marriages. J.G.S. MacNeill to John Redmond, 29.6.11., NLI, RP, ms 15,205 [1].

Gwynn observed, Unionists were given ‘a formidable instrument for evoking the ancient distrust of Roman Catholicism’.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, the issue was used by Ulster Unionists during the December 1910 general election campaign as evidence of the inevitability of papal dictation under a Home Rule government. Ulster Unionists were also successful in having the matter debated in Parliament, thus forcing a (belated) response from the Party. Joe Devlin sought to present the matter as ‘a wretched domestic quarrel’ which the Unionists had cynically exploited for political purposes,<sup>52</sup> but this did not convince Unionists or even some in his own party.<sup>53</sup>

The unwillingness of the Party to openly differ with the Vatican was evident again in late 1911 when the pope issued a *motu proprio*, entitled *Quantavis diligentia*. According to the *Times*, it ‘subject[s]...to excommunication all private persons who, without permission from an ecclesiastical authority, summon ecclesiastical persons before a tribunal of laymen.’<sup>54</sup> The decree created ‘considerable excitement’ among Irish Unionists, who (once again) claimed that it foreshadowed clerical dictation under Home Rule. Redmond privately described the matter to Dillon as ‘a horrible business’ and declared his intention of consulting Bishop O’Donnell. Clearly, he was anxious that the Party should not take any part in the public debate (editorially the *Freeman’s* did not comment), and initially regarded Archbishop Walsh’s letter of December 29 as removing ‘the necessity for the Party taking any action with regard to the Papal *Proprio*.’<sup>55</sup> However, a week later Redmond was convinced that Walsh’s letters had not been sufficiently explicit, since he made ‘painfully obvious’ that he was expressing an opinion and nothing more. ‘This state of things’, as Redmond told Dillon, ‘is not good for English platforms or for the House of Commons’, and he suggested several possible options, among which he recommended that the Catholic members of the Party could address a memorial to the Vatican.<sup>56</sup> Perhaps on the advice of O’Donnell (who Redmond consulted over the matter), no such memorial was forthcoming. Once again, however, there were some within the Party who did not regard this policy as satisfactory. Stephen Gwynn made his own feelings clear in a letter to Dillon in mid January 1912: ‘I should like to put it that friendly non-Catholics in Ireland...are entitled to an explanation from representative Catholic

<sup>51</sup> Gwynn, *Last Years*, pp. 48-8. For instance, see the speech of J.H. Campbell. *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. xxxviii, col. 60 (6.5.12.).

<sup>52</sup> *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. xxi, cols. 169-171 (7.2.11.). Also see, Joe Devlin to John Redmond, 2.2.11., NLI, RP, ms 15,181 [3].

<sup>53</sup> Lynch, *Vital Hour*, p.142.

<sup>54</sup> *Times*, 27.12.11., 6.

<sup>55</sup> John Redmond to John Dillon, 26.12.11., TCD, DP, ms 6748/480; 30.12.11., ms 6748/481. For Walsh’s letters, see *FJ*, 30.12.11., 7; 4.1.12., 7; 6.1.12., 8.

<sup>56</sup> John Redmond to John Dillon, 5.1.12., TCD, DP, ms 6748/483.

laymen...This need not be in any sense a protest; it c[oul]d simply assert, what the Canonists admit, that the decree has no customary application to Ireland...I know that some risks attach to taking up this step but I think they are far outweighed by the risks of neglecting to take it.<sup>57</sup> In fact, the only MP who commented on the situation was Sir Walter Nugent, who, while certainly a representative Catholic layman, seemed more determined to explode Unionist claims that the *proprio* proved that Rome did not want Home Rule, than to allay Protestant fears.<sup>58</sup> Instead, it was left to Bishop O'Donnell, in a public letter to a political meeting in Letterkenny on February 17, to explain that *Quantavis diligentia* did not alter the relationship between the clergy and the civil authority in any way.<sup>59</sup> It was clearly hoped that this would end discussion, and Redmond (who was recuperating at Aughavanagh after an accident) wrote to Dillon shortly after the opening of the 1912 session that 'If [author's emphasis] the question of the decrees comes up I agree with your view that a strong and clear statement from our benches is essential'.<sup>60</sup> The matter did not arise and no statement was made.

Clearly, though under no misapprehension as to the potential damage papal ordinances were having on British public opinion, both Irish front and backbenchers felt unwilling to express dissent on a canonical issue. However, the limits of lay deference were also seen in these years, most obviously in the Party's association with the Ancient Order of Hibernians.

Although its origins lay in the Catholic defence associations of the early nineteenth century, the order itself was the product of mid century Irish-American immigrant culture. Ceremony was combined with mutual assistance, comradeship and benevolence in a mixture that was exported throughout the Irish Catholic diaspora, and to Ireland itself.<sup>61</sup> Finding purchase first in Ulster (where it was presented as a Catholic parallel to the Orange Order), in 1905 it was reorganized as the 'Board of Erin' with Joe Devlin as its president. Devlin's election signified both the 'capture' of the Order by the Party and the growing importance of Ulster Catholicism to constitutional nationalism.<sup>62</sup> Thereafter, it expanded beyond its north-eastern base and its membership grew; by 1909 it had reached

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<sup>57</sup> Stephen Gwynn to John Dillon, 12.1.12., TCD, DP, ms 6754/592. Also see Gwynn to Dillon, c. 1912, TCD, DP, ms 6754/ 591.

<sup>58</sup> *FJ*, 2.1.12., 6.

<sup>59</sup> *FJ*, 18.1.12., 7; *Times*, 19.1.12., 8.

<sup>60</sup> John Redmond to John Dillon, 18.2.12., TCD, DP, ms 6748/489.

<sup>61</sup> A.C. Hepburn, *A Past Apart: Studies in the History of Catholic Belfast, 1850-1950* (Belfast, 1996), pp. 158-9.

<sup>62</sup> *ibid.*, p. 161.



65,000 and it was to see further substantial growth after the Order was registered as an approved society under the 1911 National Insurance Act.

However, the Order's progress was not unmarked by controversy or opposition. Despite its self-avowed Catholicism, it was only in 1904 that the church lifted its ban on the organisation, and its only episcopal ally was Bishop O'Donnell. For, as a secret society under lay direction, it provoked clerical suspicion generally, while its social and recreational activities at a local level drew the personal attention of Cardinal Logue, who denounced the Tyrone AOH as practising a 'cruel tyranny, and an organized system of blackguardism.'<sup>63</sup> The Board of Erin also encountered certain difficulties in its relations with the order's parent organisation in America, the control of whose executive was contested by moderate and advanced nationalists. But, arguably, its staunchest critics were William O'Brien, Jim Larkin and Sinn Fein. To them, the AOH represented a brand of politics distinguished by 'bossism', institutionalized place-hunting and 'Tammany Hall' style politics. William O'Brien, in particular, was obsessed with the 'squalid tyranny of Molly Maguirism', and claimed that Irish Members were 'the mere slaves and hirelings of the Molly Maguires.'<sup>64</sup> Similarly, many Unionists saw the AOH as the 'Unknown Power' behind the Party.<sup>65</sup>

In the light of this criticism, it is interesting to note how backbench MPs regarded the Order. Overall, criticism within the constitutional movement of the AOH was muted. Many of the Young Ireland Branch seem to have found the methods of the AOH (particularly at the 1909 'baton' convention) highly distasteful.<sup>66</sup> Frank Sheehy-Skeffington told one meeting of the YIBs that 'He had nothing to say against the AOH in its proper place, but its proper place he thought was not in politics.'<sup>67</sup> However, within the constitutional movement, the YIBs criticism may have been discounted because of prejudice against the YIBs themselves. Certainly, the leadership never voiced any reservations, a fact that Lyons in his biography of Dillon attributes to his subject's sincere naiveté.<sup>68</sup> In fact, within the Party, only two Irish Members expressed anxiety about the rise of the AOH. The veteran nationalist Timothy Harrington voiced his concerns about the sectarian exclusiveness of the Order to John Redmond, while Stephen Gwynn told John

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<sup>63</sup> Maume, *Gestation*, p. 95; P.G. Cambray, *Irish Affairs and the Home Rule Question* (London, 1911), p. 120.

<sup>64</sup> *FJ*, 14.11.10., 9; 24.1.10., 9.

<sup>65</sup> F.O. Trench, *The Unknown Power behind the Irish Nationalist Party: its Present Work and Criminal History* (London, 1907).

<sup>66</sup> 'F.R.' to Frank Sheehy-Skeffington, 21.3.09., NLI, SP, ms 21, 260[1].

<sup>67</sup> *FJ*, 5.2.10., 11. The *Cork Accent* drew attention to YIB criticism of the AOH. *CA*, 19.3.10., 1.

<sup>68</sup> Lyons, *Dillon*, p. 324.

Dillon that while '[t]he Mollies are excellent people with Devlin at their head...their existence has always disquieted me a little about the future and you may take it as disquieting more than [a few]...good people.'<sup>69</sup>

Writing in 1915, Arthur Lynch remarked that '[m]any of the Irish Party, are, I believe, members of the Ancient Order of Hibernians', though he pointedly stated that he himself was not because the AOH did not admit Protestants.<sup>70</sup> In fact, the evidence suggests that at least 17 MPs (or just over 22 per cent. of the Party) were members of the organisation;<sup>71</sup> a number much larger than historians have formerly appreciated. Moreover, in Devlin, the Redmonds, Nugent, Muldoon, Donovan, Keating and London, the AOH numbered MPs who were senior and influential members of the Party. However, there is no evidence that these men worked as a bloc, or of the 'Hibernianisation' of the Party claimed by O'Brien. Several of these men (Boyle and Keating) were prominent members of the British AOH, while others seem to have joined the order first in London (suggesting that membership for some may have been as much social as political). Donovan and the Redmonds had joined the AOH while in Australia.

Another noteworthy fact about this group was that although the Order was strongest in Ulster, only three (Joe Devlin, W.A. Redmond and Vincent Kennedy) of the 16 Ulster Nationalist MPs were members of the AOH. Indeed, of the 17 AOH Members, six represented Munster constituencies, six Leinster and two Connaught, a fact which may reflect the spread of the organisation southwards. In part, the explanation for the low proportion of Ulster MPs was due to the fact that a number of the Party's Ulster representatives were Protestants, and thus precluded from joining. Others, such as Jerry MacVeagh were prepared to support the Order but not join it.<sup>72</sup>

However, several Ulster MPs had good reason not to be members of the AOH. J.C.R. Lardner had clashed with the Monaghan Hibernians during the by-election of 1907, while according to the *Independent*, the Donegal MP and crypto-Healyite, Philip O'Doherty was 'not a *persona grata* with the Hibernians' in December 1909.<sup>73</sup> Aversion

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<sup>69</sup> Bew, *Conflict and Conciliation*, p. 195; Stephen Gwynn to John Dillon, 12.1.12., TCD, DP, ms 6754/592.

<sup>70</sup> Lynch, *Vital Hour*, pp. 181-3.

<sup>71</sup> They were: Dan Boyle, John Cullinan, Joe Devlin, J.T. Donovan, William Doris, J.P. Farrell, Michael Flavin, Michael Joyce, Matthew Keating, Vincent Kennedy, Tom London, J.D. Nugent, F.E. Meehan, John Muldoon, W.A. Redmond, W.H.K. Redmond, Augustine Roche. The Cork Accent also claimed that P.A. McHugh and Tom Kettle had been or were members of the AOH. *CA*, 2.3.10., 1; *CFP*, 1.10.12., 4.

<sup>72</sup> *FJ*, 3.1.14., 7.

<sup>73</sup> *II*, 23.12.09., 5.

to the AOH was not though, confined to Ulster. At the same election, the Dublin MP, J.P. Nannetti had been threatened with Hib opposition in his Dublin constituency, as was the Limerick MP, P.J. O'Shaughnessy, who later sought to have the AOH excluded from electoral conventions.<sup>74</sup>

Such tension seems, on the whole, to have been locally oriented and did not result in the articulation of any broader critique of the Order's position within constitutional nationalism. Whether the fact that more MPs did not join the AOH was connected with episcopal disapproval is unknown. If so, the church's censure did not perturb senior Nationalists. Dillon (and perhaps Redmond) may have been naive with regard to the AOH, but they appreciated that (before the advent of the Irish Volunteers) the Order was one of the fastest growing nationalist organisations in Ireland. Unlike the UIL, it did not rely simply on tired agrarian and party political methods, and as such looked to have a future not only beyond the final settlement of the land question, but also of Home Rule.

According to Joe Devlin 'Our chief whip and most of the responsible officials of our Party, are Protestants.'<sup>75</sup> This, in fact, was something of an exaggeration. A.J.C. Donelan was chief whip, while E.H. Burke (who had been a member of the Protestant Home Rule Association in the 1870s) was a junior whip.<sup>76</sup> But none of the secretaries or treasurers were Protestants. Beyond the immediate Party, several Protestant Home Rulers held important positions within the broader Nationalist movement. Stephen Gwynn was the director of the Irish Press Agency, while William Abraham was a member of the executive of the UILGB and treasurer of the IPA.<sup>77</sup>

In fact, this claim was but one example of the propaganda use the Party made of its Protestant members. For these men were frequently cited as providing a 'convincing refutation of a[ny] charge of religious intolerance against Catholic and Nationalist Ireland'.<sup>78</sup> In the course of the two general elections of 1910, William O'Brien personally defeated William Abraham in North-East Cork and went on to unseat (though only after an election petition) Donelan in East Cork. However, O'Brien rejected the claim that these contests contradicted his policy of conciliation, since he claimed that the Party's non-Catholic Members constituted a 'little group of tame Protestant Home Rulers maintained

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<sup>74</sup> *II*, 6.1.10.,2; *FJ*, 12.2.10., 9.

<sup>75</sup> *FJ*, 8.12.13., 8.

<sup>76</sup> Maume, *Gestation*, p. 37.

<sup>77</sup> *Limerick Leader*, 4.8.15., 4; *FJ*, 13.10.14., 4.

<sup>78</sup> *FJ*, 11.1.10., 9. On this, see O'Brien, *Parnell*, p. 261.

for obvious reasons at Westminster as nominees of a 'Hibernian' party to whose inner rites their religion forbade their admission.<sup>79</sup>

Certainly, some of these men were aware that their faith had been a consideration in their election.<sup>80</sup> And there is no doubt that these Members were frequently used for propaganda purposes by the Party.<sup>81</sup> They were, for instance, often selected to speak on British platforms. Indeed, as the *Gaelic-American* described William Abraham 'In this work his Protestantism was of value...[whereas] in the House of Commons it went for naught', and so in Parliament he was a 'silent Member'.<sup>82</sup> To such MPs was also delegated the job of refuting the anti-Home Rule utterances of Anglican divines and senior nonconformists.<sup>83</sup>

Moreover, there is some evidence to suggest that O'Brien's claims regarding the quality of some of these Members' Protestantism may not have been so wide off the mark. O'Brien, for example, accused Stephen Gwynn of being a 'stage Protestant'.<sup>84</sup> Gwynn was the son of the Regius Professor of Divinity at TCD,<sup>85</sup> and the descendant of several generations of Anglican clergymen. But, after his wife converted to Catholicism, Gwynn decided that his children should be brought up in her faith, since (as he explained in 1926) 'I had neither opinions for or against the truth of Christianity, in any of its forms, but found that after much trial my mind remained wholly unresponsive.'<sup>86</sup> This did not, however, prevent him from claiming to be a 'Protestant representative', nor from being involved with the Irish Protestant Home Rule Committee (along with George Bernard Shaw, Arthur Conan Doyle and W.B. Yeats).<sup>87</sup>

Hugh Law told a meeting in Donegal in August 1910 that 'there was a growing tendency to lessen whatever breach might have hitherto existed between Protestant and Catholic.' In Law's own case this was very much the truth as he converted to Catholicism in 1912. This fact was not publicized by the Party.<sup>88</sup> Law was later made a Knight of Grace of the Sovereign and Military Order of Malta.<sup>89</sup> At his death, the *Times* described Law's colleague, the Sandhurst educated landlord, A.J.C. Donelan, as an 'ardent

<sup>79</sup> Bew, *Ideology*, p. 16; CA, 7.2.10., 1.

<sup>80</sup> Alfred Webb, *The Autobiography of a Quaker Nationalist* (ed.), Marie-Louise Legg (Cork, 1999), p. 36.

<sup>81</sup> See, for instance, FJ, 16.6.10., 8.

<sup>82</sup> *Gaelic-American*, 28.5.10., 3.

<sup>83</sup> A-C, 8.10.10., 1; FJ, 13.11.11., 10; 19.2.12., 5.

<sup>84</sup> FJ, 6.12.10., 9.

<sup>85</sup> *Dictionary of National Biography, 1912-1921* (London, 1927), p. 235.

<sup>86</sup> Gwynn, *Literary Man*, p. 248.

<sup>87</sup> FJ, 24.10.10., 7; 3.12.12., 6.

<sup>88</sup> FJ, 18.8.10., 5; 23.9.12., 9.

<sup>89</sup> II, 5.4.43., 2.

Protestant'.<sup>90</sup> Whether this had ever been the case is unknown, but he actually converted to Catholicism shortly before he died in 1924.<sup>91</sup>

In contrast, J.G.S. MacNeill's support for Nationalism did not involve any conversion to the majority faith. MacNeill's father and grandfathers had all been Anglican clergymen and he (in contrast to several of the other 'Protestant' Home Rulers) was publicly always unequivocal about his devotion to the disestablished church. As he declared in 1910 'I was born a Protestant, have lived a Protestant, and hope to die a Protestant.'<sup>92</sup> William Abraham also seems to have remained a practising Protestant. William O'Malley, whose particular friend he was, recalled of him that 'like most nonconformists he took his religion very seriously'.<sup>93</sup> In December 1913, for instance, he declared that he was 'a Congregationalist by religious conviction'.<sup>94</sup> The Wesleyan Methodist MP, Jeremiah Jordan, also seems to have been an active member of his church.<sup>95</sup> The spiritual conviction of the other three Protestant members of the Irish Party remains uncertain, as does the extent to which these men formed a distinct group. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some Protestant Members did associate with one another, but there is no suggestion that there was any sectarian prejudice within the Party.<sup>96</sup> Beyond it, however, many of the Party's Protestants were seen as closet Liberals: 'a liberal masquerading as a Nationalist' was how Jordan was described by one critic.<sup>97</sup> Law was described as having been 'tempted out of the path of whiggery which his father trod' by his interest in things Gaelic.<sup>98</sup> Swift MacNeill saw himself as both a Liberal and a Nationalist.

Some Nationalists suspected that while both Catholics and Protestants were welcome to join the Party, Redmond's preference was for the latter.<sup>99</sup> Certainly, he had been raised and educated among Protestants,<sup>100</sup> but it is noticeable that, despite some effort,<sup>101</sup> after the

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<sup>90</sup> *Times*, 17.9.24., 13.

<sup>91</sup> *Wicklow People*, 20.9.24, 4.

<sup>92</sup> *FJ*, 15.6.10, 8.

<sup>93</sup> William O'Malley, *Glancing Back, 70 Years' experience and reminiscences of Press man, Sportsman and Member of Parliament* (London, 1933), p.189.

<sup>94</sup> *FJ*, 17.12.13., 10.

<sup>95</sup> Gwynn, *Literary Man*, p. 278.

<sup>96</sup> Jeremiah Jordan to John Pinkerton, 1.3.02., PRONI, PP, D/1078/P/71.

<sup>97</sup> *Gaelic-American*, 2.4.10., 3.

<sup>98</sup> *PMG*, 'Extra', 1910, p. 66.

<sup>99</sup> Valentine, *Memories*, pp. 58-9.

<sup>100</sup> Bew, *Redmond*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>101</sup> For instance, see the correspondence relating to James Meredith's parliamentary ambitions. J.J. Clancy to John Redmond, 21.12.09., NLI, RP, ms 15,176; James O'Connor to John Redmond, 31.12.09., NLI, RP, ms 15,214 [2]; James Meredith to J.J. Clancy, 21.12.09., NLI, RP, ms 15,176; James Meredith to John Dillon, 7.12.18., TCD, DP, ms 6773/533. Some Protestant Nationalists were, however, beyond the pale. See *Gaelic-American*, 15.10.10., 3.

election of Stephen Gwynn, the Party failed to recruit any new Protestant Home Rulers. Indeed, Redmond had to personally intervene in early 1910 to ensure Abraham was returned for a Dublin constituency (where he was 'devoid of real connection'),<sup>102</sup> and similar acrobatics had to be performed in order to secure the re-election of Donelan, after he was unseated in 1911. As such by 1914, the Party's claim to a monopoly on tolerance (as measured by its membership) looked increasingly thin.

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<sup>102</sup> Keogh, *Working Class*, p. 228.

**Chapter Two: Perceptions of the Irish Party**  
**Section Three: The Irish Party, Crown and Empire**

The response of the Irish Party to the death of Queen Victoria in January 1901 was muted. Not only was she widely seen in Ireland as hostile to Home Rule,<sup>1</sup> but following the reunification of the Party the previous year, Irish Nationalism had exhibited a growing self-confidence. This renewed assertiveness was in no small part due to the 1798 centenary and nationalist support for the Boers in their on-going war with Britain, both of which lent Party rhetoric a particularly 'disloyal' edge (constitutional nationalists may also have had memories of having had their fingers burnt in 1900).<sup>2</sup> Thus, public expressions of loyalty to the crown would have been unwise and inappropriate. Instead, as the *Freeman's Journal* explained on the day following her death, while 'the Irish people [had] never lost their respect and admiration' for Victoria, nonetheless, Ireland stood 'aloof...from the attractive influence of the British throne and monarch'.<sup>3</sup>

In the days and weeks following her death, Nationalist MPs carefully avoided any mention of Victoria. However, several of those Members who sat on public boards felt compelled to publicly disassociate themselves from proposed resolutions of sympathy: Tim Harrington on the Dublin Corporation, Alderman Joyce on the Limerick Harbour Board and Conor O'Kelly on the Mayo County Council were three such.<sup>4</sup> In advance of the coronation the following year, the Party resolved not to attend the ceremony, and in August returned to Dublin and declared that until Home Rule was conceded, nationalist Ireland would abstain from participating in events which could be construed as indicating acquiescence in the Union.<sup>5</sup>

However, the opinions and attitudes of individual Irish Members suggest a rather more complex attitude than this resolution suggests. John Redmond's favourable attitude towards the proposed visit of Queen Victoria to Ireland in 1900 had angered Dillon.<sup>6</sup> As a member of the Dublin Corporation (though not of Parliament until 1910), W.F. Cotton had supported a resolution of sympathy on the death of Queen Victoria, and later supported the presentation of a loyal address on the visit of Edward VII to Ireland.<sup>7</sup> Tim Harrington's

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<sup>1</sup> *FJ*, 8.7.11., 6.

<sup>2</sup> On this, see Senia Pasetta, 'Nationalist responses to two royal visits to Ireland, 1900 and 1903', *IHS*, vol. xxxi, no. 124 (1999), pp. 488-97.

<sup>3</sup> *FJ*, 23.1.01., 4.

<sup>4</sup> *FJ*, 24.1.01., 2; 29.1.01., 5.

<sup>5</sup> *FJ*, 11.8.02., 4 -5.

<sup>6</sup> Lyons, *Dillon*, p. 208.

<sup>7</sup> Maume, *Gestation*, p. 66.

attitude towards the king's visit on this occasion was ambiguous, and he was denounced by advanced nationalists and even some constitutionalists.<sup>8</sup> Jeremiah Jordan allegedly decorated his shop with Union Jacks on Edward VII's coronation day,<sup>9</sup> while the former fenian and Gaelic Leaguer, William Duffy, observed that

In a day or two London would witness a marvellous outpouring of the nation's sympathy for the king. No matter what the views of hon. Members from Ireland might be in regard to the laws or the administration of Ireland, he ventured to say that they were glad to see that a good sportsman had been restored to health.<sup>10</sup>

Some Members went further still. In spite of the resolution of the Party, five Irish MPs (namely, Colonel Nolan, Sam Young, Dr Edward Thompson, Major Jameson and William O'Doherty) were, according to the *Times*, 'caught in *flagrante delicto*' in Westminster Abbey on the day of the coronation.<sup>11</sup> All these men were associated with Tim Healy,<sup>12</sup> and by 1910 (with the exception of Young) were no longer in Parliament. That said, Thompson claimed that the true figure was 'at least nine' MPs- a not implausible figure, since as the *Freeman's* London correspondent observed 'it was impossible to explore, *even with the aid of a good eyeglass* [author's emphasis], all the nooks and corners in which the representatives of the people were carefully stowed away by the Duke of Norfolk.'<sup>13</sup>

This was, in fact, not the first time several of these MPs had demonstrated their 'loyalty' to the crown. In 1890, Sam Young had been censured for attending a garden party at Buckingham Palace hosted by Queen Victoria. He also seems to have attended a similar event hosted by George V (though according to later reports he in fact gave the king a stern lecture on the misgovernment of Ireland by England).<sup>14</sup> Thomas Curran and James Carew (also both crypto-Healyites and no longer in Parliament by 1910), were similarly criticized.<sup>15</sup> Apparently unchastened, Young attended a luncheon hosted by the Lord Mayor of Belfast for the Lord Lieutenant in 1896.<sup>16</sup> Hugh Law was also involved in some

<sup>8</sup> Paseta, 'Nationalist responses', pp. 497-500.

<sup>9</sup> Maume, *Gestation*, p. 35.

<sup>10</sup> *Parl. Debs.* (series 4) vol. cxii, col. 852 (6.8.02.).

<sup>11</sup> *Times*, 12.8.02., 9.

<sup>12</sup> Maume, *Gestation*, p. 46. O'Doherty's relations with his Donegal constituency were placed under great strain as a result. See, John Dillon to John Redmond, 15.9.02., NLI, RP, ms 15, 182 [3].

<sup>13</sup> *Times*, 3.10.02., 4; *FJ*, 15.8.02., 4..

<sup>14</sup> *A-C*, 1.1.10., 4; *II*, 22.1.36., 11.

<sup>15</sup> Maume, *Gestation*, p. 33; *PMG*, 'Extra', 1900, p. 60

<sup>16</sup> Michael McCartan to John Dillon, 15.[?].96., TCD, DP, ms 6756/970.



controversy when, at an occasion in Londonderry, he drank the king's health.<sup>17</sup> That said, several Members proved immune to the lure of royal events and honours.<sup>18</sup>

Despite the purging of crypto-Healyites from the Party between 1900 and 1910, that a nascent Irish royalism continued to find a place within constitutional nationalism was seen on the death of Edward VII in May 1910. In contrast to nine years before, numerous Irish Members publicly expressed their sympathy and regret. Stephen Gwynn told a meeting in London that 'although there might be less ceremonial expression of sorrow...the sorrow of Ireland was nonetheless sincere and genuine'<sup>19</sup> William Duffy declared that 'he believed that his Majesty, if the opportunity had been given to him, would have been willing to concede to Ireland a measure of Home Rule'.<sup>20</sup> Thomas Smyth expressed similar sentiments.<sup>21</sup> John Phillips expressed his 'deepest sorrow' at the death of the king.<sup>22</sup> John Cullinan paid tribute to the king as '[a] great sportsman, a great peacemaker, and a great diplomatist',<sup>23</sup> while P.J. Brady delivered a speech in which he said that Edward VII had combined 'a goodness of heart and a breadth and tolerance of view which enabled him to understand and sympathize with a people who were frequently misunderstood and misrepresented.' Tom Condon mourned the death of the king and Michael Molloy presided at a meeting of the Carlow UDC at which a resolution of regret at the Edward's death was passed unanimously.<sup>24</sup>

However, some Members balked at such expressions of loyalty. Dick Hazleton, for instance, insisted that while he 'did not wish to refer in anything but terms of sympathy for the death of king Edward....they were determined no matter who reigned upon the throne of England [to secure Home Rule]'.<sup>25</sup> His friend and colleague, Tom Kettle, agreed, observing that 'he was sure many at that meeting followed the dead body of a kinglier king than ever wore the crown of England [i.e. Parnell]', and that 'he respected the royal house in which

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<sup>17</sup> *PMG*, 'Extra', 1910, p. 66.

<sup>18</sup> P.A. Meehan was twice offered a knighthood, in 1907 from Edward VII and again in 1912 from the Earl of Aberdeen. Tim Harrington also refused a knighthood from Edward VII, while J.G.S. MacNeill also withstood the attractions of ennoblement. In contrast, Laurence Waldron, formerly MP for Dublin, St. Stephen's Green, was made a Privy Councillor in the coronation honours list of 1911. Meehan, *Laois and Offaly*, p. 72; Niall C. Harrington, *Kerry Landing* (Dublin, 1992), p. 48; J.G.S. MacNeill, *What I have seen and Heard* (London, 1925), p. 240; *FJ*, 20.6.11., 7.

<sup>19</sup> *FJ*, 9.5.10., 10.

<sup>20</sup> *FJ*, 10.5.10., 5.

<sup>21</sup> *Leitrim Advertiser*, 19.5.10., 3.

<sup>22</sup> *Longford Leader*, 28.5.10., 4.

<sup>23</sup> *FJ*, 10.5.10., 7.

<sup>24</sup> *FJ*, 12.5.10., 9; 19.5.10., 9.

<sup>25</sup> *FJ*, 9.5.10., 2.

there was a death just as he respected the house of a fisherman in Ringsend on which the hand of death had been laid.<sup>26</sup> The Longford MP, J.P. Farrell declared that he 'would be long sorry to say anything that would reflect on the dead...They were all legally subjects of King George, but they should never forget that their little country had been the sport of kings and princes for generations'.<sup>27</sup> J.P. Nannetti declared that 'All kings of England were the same to Nationalist Ireland', while even John Redmond (though describing the late king as 'frank, manly and friendly'), called on his listeners 'not [to] let us Irishmen be guilty of the hypocrisy of pretending to the English people that we regard the demise of the sovereign as affecting Ireland in the same way as the demise of the sovereign affects the people of England.'<sup>28</sup>

Oratorical tributes from individual Members were one thing, but the funeral of the king and the coronation of his successor posed much bigger problems for the Party. Outwardly, this was not immediately apparent. According to the official report of the Party meeting at which the coronation was considered, Irish Members resolved to adhere to 'the settled practice' of the Party since its foundation, of 'stand[ing] aloof from all royal or imperial festivities or ceremonies, participation in which might be taken as a proof that Ireland was satisfied with...the Union'. However, as the Press Association reported, this apparently straightforward decision had taken two meetings and a total of four hours to arrive at.<sup>29</sup>

In fact, the Party had (albeit informally) already made a more conciliatory gesture in May 1910, when Pat O'Brien, Jerry MacVeagh, Pat White and William O'Malley accompanied other parliamentarians to Westminster Hall (where the king was lying in state) to pay their respects.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, a leaked account of the February meeting, reported in the *Independent*, alleged that Redmond had opened the Party meeting with an 'impressive speech' in which he recommended that 'it would be of untold benefit to the cause of Home Rule in English constituencies and in the House of Commons if the Irish Members took an official part...in the coronation ceremonies'.<sup>31</sup> Although the *Pall Mall Gazette* (which also reported the story) claimed that 'several other Members [including Pat O'Brien] backed up the chairman's view that it would help the cause if the Party were

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<sup>26</sup> *FJ*, 14.5.10., 8.

<sup>27</sup> *A-C*, 28.5.10., 3.

<sup>28</sup> *FJ*, 23.5.10., 8. Perhaps because of his position, Redmond seems to have been much more comfortable talking about abstract concepts like 'empire' than personal institutions such as the crown.

<sup>29</sup> *FJ*, 22.2.11., 7.

<sup>30</sup> *FJ*, 18.5.10., 6.

<sup>31</sup> *II*, 30.6.11., 5.

represented in the Abbey', David Sheehy, James Lardner, Willie Redmond and John Dillon were named among those strongly opposed to the idea. An informal vote was then taken, which revealed that 33 Members (as opposed to 29) were in favour of attendance, but on the advice of T.P. O'Connor, Redmond opted for caution and appointed a committee to draft the resolution which was later published.<sup>32</sup>

Difficulties of a similar kind were presented by the king's visit to Ireland in July 1911.<sup>33</sup> As early as January the same year, Redmond told Dillon that he was uneasy about the projected visit after the coronation, because 'Whatever we do....he will get a good reception...and if by our advice or silence he is slighted here or there the effect upon Home Rule will be serious'. Accordingly, he suggested that the Party pass a resolution calling upon Ireland to receive the king 'with proper respect, courtesy, and hospitality', though he added 'Of course I do not contemplate any of us taking any part in [the] celebrations'.<sup>34</sup> Accordingly, in its resolution of February 22, in which the Party announced its abstention from the coronation, it also called on Ireland to receive the king 'with the generosity and hospitality which are traditional with the Irish race.'<sup>35</sup> As Redmond had predicted, this did not extend to official participation and the Party was forced to suppress a proposal by a section of the Dublin Corporation to present a loyal address.<sup>36</sup> Otherwise, it took no part, and continued to boycott royal events,<sup>37</sup> (though the *Freeman's* reported the personal popularity of George V and his sympathy for Ireland).<sup>38</sup>

In the following years, Nationalist attitudes towards the new king were mixed. As Prince of Wales, George V had earned a reputation as a critic of the Liberal party and its policies.<sup>39</sup> However, his reputed desire to omit passages in the accession declaration oath offensive to Catholics was 'extremely gratifying' to many Home Rulers.<sup>40</sup> Certainly, in the following years, Irish MPs continued to refer to the crown in sympathetic terms. Tom Scanlan declared in 1911 that '[what] they actually wanted was a position within the British constitution...under the king, who, in his personality, and his exalted position,

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<sup>32</sup> *Pall Mall Gazette*, 30.6.11., 1. Redmond categorically denied the accuracy of the report. *FJ*, 1.7.11., 7.

<sup>33</sup> His visit in 1903 had also been awkward for some Nationalists. See, Gwynn, *Literary Man*, p. 296.

<sup>34</sup> John Redmond to John Dillon, 29.1.11., TCD, DP, ms 6748/469.

<sup>35</sup> *FJ*, 8.7.11., 6.

<sup>36</sup> Maume, *Gestation*, p. 121.

<sup>37</sup> For instance, see *FJ*, 19.7.12., 6.

<sup>38</sup> *FJ*, 8.7.11., 6.

<sup>39</sup> Kenneth Rose, *King George V* (London, 1983), pp. 118-9; John Halperin, *Eminent Georgians* (London, 1995), p. 28.

<sup>40</sup> *FJ*, 11.5.10., 7.

bound together, as the symbol of law and order, all the divisions of the world-wide empire'.<sup>41</sup> In Fermanagh in January 1912, Patrick Crumley told his audience that the Home Rule Bill would be signed by George V, at which point three cheers were given for the king.<sup>42</sup> The following month, John O'Dowd explained to his Sligo constituents that 'he believed that the king was inclined to give fair play to Ireland'.<sup>43</sup> Several other Members, while not quite as loyal in their tone, looked forward to the prospect of the king opening the Irish Parliament, thus inaugurating (as J.P. Farrell put it) '[an] era of peace, prosperity and contentment...for Ireland'.<sup>44</sup>

That said, during 1913 and 1914, Irish Members largely abstained from mentioning the king by name because of George V's widely publicized and controversial intervention in the Home Rule crisis, (though Redmond was 'a good deal impressed' by the George V's private intimation to him at the Buckingham Palace conference, 'that he was convinced of the necessity of Home Rule').<sup>45</sup>

That John Redmond believed not only that loyalty to the crown, but loyalty to the empire could be compatible with a sense of 'Irishness' once Home Rule had been secured, has been born out by a growing body of scholarship. George Boyce, for instance, has argued that 'Redmond saw himself as a potential imperial statesman, joining...the family of nations that formed the core of the British empire. Redmond was a kind of imperialist nationalist'.<sup>46</sup> Similarly, Paul Bew has dubbed Redmond a 'liberal imperialist',<sup>47</sup> and, more recently, Malcolm Campbell has argued that Redmond's 'goals and policies were [strongly] influenced by developments and experiences across the broader terrain of Britain's overseas empire and within Ireland's emigrant communities abroad'.<sup>48</sup> But what of the party Redmond led?

Historical assessment of the attitude of the Irish Party towards the empire underwent considerable revision in the 1960s. Erich Strauss asserted in 1951 that within Parliament, the Nationalist Party constituted 'the only compact representation of

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<sup>41</sup> *FJ*, 21.11.11., 7.

<sup>42</sup> *FJ*, 3.1.12., 9.

<sup>43</sup> *Sligo Champion*, 3.2.12., 8.

<sup>44</sup> *FJ*, 8.4.13., 8.

<sup>45</sup> *II*, 4.2.14., 4; 17.2.14., 4; 28.2.14., 4; 7.3.14., 4; Lyons, *Dillon*, p. 345, 348. Rose, *George V*, pp. 147-57; *Manchester Guardian*, 21.7.14., 8.

<sup>46</sup> D.G. Boyce, *Ireland 1828-1923: From Ascendancy to Democracy* (Oxford, 1992), p. 80.

<sup>47</sup> Bew, *Redmond*, p. 12.

<sup>48</sup> Malcolm Campbell, 'John Redmond and the Irish National League in Australia and New Zealand', *History*, vol. 86 (2001), pp. 348.

unprivileged class and subject nations in the British empire'.<sup>49</sup> Certainly this was how some Irish Members saw themselves in the 1880s. F.H. O'Donnell, for example, regarded Irish MPs as the 'natural representatives and spokesman of the unrepresented nationalities of the empire' because 'English tyranny in Ireland was only a part of that general system of the exploitation of suffering humanity which made the British empire a veritable slave empire.' Other Irish Members (notably Willie Redmond) also saw themselves as 'virtual representatives' of the empire.<sup>50</sup> I.M. Cumpston has shown how late Victorian Irish Members did take an interest in the Bantu of South Africa, the inhabitants of the Indian sub-continent and the Boers of the Transvaal.<sup>51</sup> However, so far as Irish interest in India was concerned, the same historian has elsewhere characterized it as a '*mariage de convenance* for [Irish] parliamentary purposes',<sup>52</sup> while Bernard Porter has claimed that Irish Members were so preoccupied with the Irish question that they 'rarely looked further than their own noses'.<sup>53</sup>

In the early 1970s, Alan O'Day advanced a more complex analysis, which depicted the MPs of the 1880s not as insular and opportunistic, but as 'Parnellite imperialis[ts]'. According to O'Day, Irish MPs demonstrated a 'remarkable and consistent' interest in colonial affairs founded on 'pride and enthusiasm' for the empire. Although often critical, backbenchers primarily objected to the inadequacies of imperial administration, to expansionist wars and the suppression of 'other *white* peoples'. Beyond these reservations 'they neither detested the empire nor wished to see the position of Great Britain in the world decline'.<sup>54</sup>

Like their Parnellite predecessors, some Edwardian Irish MPs were highly critical of British rule in India, Egypt and South Africa, and censured Britain's expansionist tendencies in central Asia. However, this should not be exaggerated. J.P. Farrell's claim that 'in the course of...thirty years the Irish Party in the House of Commons had ever been the defenders of the poor and oppressed, whether it was...oppressed Egyptians, or the

<sup>49</sup> Strauss, *Irish Nationalism*, p. 187.

<sup>50</sup> *Parl. Debs.* (series 3) vol. cclxvi, col. 1066 (17.2.82.); (series 3) vol. cclxxxvii, col. 723 (25.4.84.); Denman, 'lonely grave', p. 287.

<sup>51</sup> I.M. Cumpston, 'The discussion of Imperial Problems in the British Parliament, 1880-85', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 13 (1963), pp. 37-38.

<sup>52</sup> I.M. Cumpston, 'Some early Indian Nationalists and their Allies in the British Parliament, 1851-18906', *English Historical Review*, vol. lxxvi, no. ccxcix (1961), pp. 279-297.

<sup>53</sup> Bernard Porter, *Critics of Empire: British Radical Attitudes to Colonialism in Africa, 1895-1914* (London, 1968), p. 312. A similar conclusion has been reached by R.V. Comerford concerning Butt's party in the 1870s. See, Comerford, *Fenians*, p. 219.

<sup>54</sup> O'Day, *English Face*, pp. 158-166.

robbed Indians, or the defeated Boers of South Africa' was to embellish the past and misrepresent the present.<sup>55</sup> For, as F.S.L. Lyons has argued, by 1910 Dillon 'was virtually the only Irish Member to concern himself with such esoteric matters as Persia and Egypt'.<sup>56</sup>

Yet in so doing, even Dillon acted from liberal rather than nationalist instincts. Indeed, for all his interest and rhetoric, he seems to have no more identified with other struggling nationalities in the British empire than his backbench colleagues. Granted, during the Anglo-Boer War, he and others deposed on 'our hatred of imperialism',<sup>57</sup> but the imperialism he (like Parnell) decried seems to have been more 'an expansionist attitude rather than the structure of colonial power itself'.<sup>58</sup> In fact, Dillon told Wilfred Scawen Blunt nearly a decade later that he supported the principle of 'colonial federation' because of the threat posed by the 'asiatics' to the southern hemisphere dominions.<sup>59</sup>

In holding such a world-view, Dillon was certainly not alone in early twentieth century Ireland. For, as S.B. Cook has argued, although Ireland was neither 'a crown colony nor a white settlement colony' and though, like other indigenous subject peoples in the British empire, it possessed an ethnic, cultural and religious identity distinct from the 'colonizing elite', Irish Nationalists nonetheless identified 'not with the Amerindians of Canada or the aboriginals of Australia but with the British settlers in those places who had displaced them'.<sup>60</sup> In part this was, as Cook argues, because the white dominions 'had won for themselves the kind of representative and responsible government that many sought for Ireland.' The Dublin MP, P.J. Brady, for example, demanded to know 'Why should we be the only [white] people under the British crown who are...denied the right of managing our own affairs?', while Irish Members on British platforms often pointed to the existence of 28 'Home Rule' governments within the empire as proof of the compatibility of self-government and the empire.<sup>61</sup> But, arguably, the principal reason for Nationalist identification with the colonizers as against the colonized, was due to the fact that Ireland

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<sup>55</sup> *FJ*, 29.1.13., 8.

<sup>56</sup> Lyons, *Dillon*, p. 322.

<sup>57</sup> Keith Jeffrey, 'The Irish Soldier in the Boer War', in John Gooch (ed.), *The Boer War: Direction, Experience and Image* (London, 2000), pp. 144-5.

<sup>58</sup> Stephen Howe, *Ireland and Empire: Colonial Legacies in Irish History and Culture* (Oxford, 2000), p. 47.

<sup>59</sup> Blunt, *Diaries*, vol. ii, p. 202.

<sup>60</sup> S.B. Cook, *Imperial Affinities: Nineteenth Century Analogies and Exchanges between India and Ireland* (London, 1993), p. 21.

<sup>61</sup> *FJ*, 26.10.11., 7.

had been the 'mother country' of many of the soldiers, administrators and settlers who built the British empire.<sup>62</sup>

The Party itself bore testimony to the role of the Irish in the empire. For, at least in part, the Irish Party's attitude towards the empire was influenced by the personal experience of its members. Over the course of its forty year history, for example, it recruited a considerable number of Irishmen from among Britain's colonies and dominions, among them Kevin Izod O'Doherty, Edward Blake, Charles MacVeigh, Thomas and T.B. Curran, James Hogan and Arthur Lynch.

Quite a number of Irish MPs also had personal links with the empire. Joseph Nolan's sister, for instance, lived in Brisbane for many years.<sup>63</sup> J.P. Boland's wife was Australian and Matt Keating was married to a New Zealander.<sup>64</sup> John Fitzgibbon's brother lived in Canada,<sup>65</sup> as did Sir Walter Nugent's brother (who worked for the Canadian Pacific Railway Company).<sup>66</sup> Edward Kelly's brother was the manager of a tea company in Ceylon,<sup>67</sup> while William Abraham's son was in the east India trade.<sup>68</sup>

Like the Redmonds, several Members of the Party were also personally familiar with various parts of the empire. A.J.C. Donelan, for example, had served in South Africa as an officer in the British army. J.G.S. MacNeill had visited the Cape in 1887. John Dillon and J.J. O'Kelly had visited Egypt, while John O'Connor and Sir Thomas Esmonde had toured in Canada. This was in addition to those Members who had travelled among the Irish diaspora raising funds for the Party. Redmond was not alone among Irish Members in having been impressed by the empire countries he visited; Dillon was very taken by the 'vigour', 'forthrightness' and 'progress' of Australia when he visited it in 1888-9, while Swift MacNeill had been moved by the loyalty to Ireland shown by second and third generation Irish immigrants in South Africa.<sup>69</sup>

Clearly, the success of the Irish in Britain's colonies and dominions enormously impressed some Irish Members. Indeed, the fact that (as D.G. Boyce has put it) through Irish participation in Britain's imperial endeavours 'there is a corner of most foreign fields that

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<sup>62</sup> D.G. Boyce, *Decolonisation and the British Empire, 1775-1997* (Basingstoke, 1999), p. 70.

<sup>63</sup> *FJ*, 16.11.12., 7.

<sup>64</sup> Boland, *Mother's Knee*, p. 9; *FJ*, 28.5.13., 5.

<sup>65</sup> *FJ*, 10.7.12., 6.

<sup>66</sup> *II*, 5.6.14., 3.

<sup>67</sup> *FJ*, 6.8.13., 6.

<sup>68</sup> *Limerick Leader*, 4.8.15., 4.

<sup>69</sup> Lyons, *Dillon*, p. 103; J.G.S. MacNeill, 'Home Rule and Imperial Unity', *Contemporary Review*, vol. ciii (1913), p. 646.

is forever Celtic',<sup>70</sup> led some Irish MPs to look upon the empire as in some way distinctively Irish. Speaking during the Home Rule debates in 1912, Sir Thomas Esmonde explained that 'We Irish people have no rooted antipathy to the empire. The empire is quite as much our empire as yours...But we must be allowed a proper position in [it]'.<sup>71</sup> Similarly, Willie Redmond, speaking some days later, told the House of Commons that the Irish in the dominions were among the 'the most loyal [to], and the most respected in the British empire'.<sup>72</sup> Sam Young expressed much the same sentiment when he said 'We want to glory in the success of the empire, in the building of which we played so great a part.'<sup>73</sup>

These men were clearly not 'closet imperialists'; they openly took pride in the empire and inspiration from its self-governing dominions.<sup>74</sup> To Esmonde *et al*, Home Rule would convert Ireland from a colony to a dominion, thus allowing it to take its 'proper place' in the empire. The fact that Ireland's position under Home Rule would not be analogous to the other dominions (because it was a constituent part of the United Kingdom, would continue to have representation at Westminster, would not have control over its taxation, etc.,) was never fully addressed by Irish MPs.<sup>75</sup> A handful of Nationalists (such as Redmond, O'Connor and Tom Scanlan) did refer to 'imperial federation' as a possible solution to the difficulty of being at one and the same time a dominion and a part of the 'mother country'. But it seems likely that, like 'most of those who sympathized with this vague ideal [they] did not really believe that utilisation of the federal principle meant superimposing on the empire the full paraphernalia of a federal constitution'.<sup>76</sup> There is no indication that Irish Members desired a 'more binding regulated empire', rather, they seem to have conceived of it very much as a 'great family of self-governing nations' linked (as T.P. O'Connor enumerated) by 'the same language, the same laws, the same general ideas, the same devotion to the mother country'.<sup>77</sup> As John Dillon explained in 1912, Ireland would endeavour 'to make that empire what it ought to be- a missionary of freedom for the whole world...The glory of England in the future would be, not an empire based on force and coercion, but on the willing association of all the states that acknowledged one flag and one king.'<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Boyce, *Decolonisation*, p. 2.

<sup>71</sup> *Hansard, HC*, (series 5) vol. xxxvi, col. 1490 (11.4.12.).

<sup>72</sup> *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. xxxvii, col. 146 (15.4.12.).

<sup>73</sup> *Hansard, HC*, (series 5) vol. xxxvii, col. 2770 (30.4.12.).

<sup>74</sup> Roy Foster, *Paddy and Mr Punch: Connections in Irish and English History* (London, 1993), p. 271.

<sup>75</sup> Michael Burgess, *The British Tradition of Federalism* (London, 1925), p. 87.

<sup>76</sup> *ibid*, p. 24.

<sup>77</sup> *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. lx, col. 1431 (2.4.14.).

<sup>78</sup> *FJ*, 23,5,12., 7.



Excluding the Party leadership (all of whom made speeches sympathetic to Ireland's future place in the British empire at one time or another), during the period 1910-14, at least 12 Irish Members expressed some support for continuing the imperial connection. Swift MacNeill, for instance, declared that he took 'pride in a common empire', while Matt Keating described himself as a 'citizen of the empire'. Sir Walter Nugent insisted that 'a man cannot be an imperialist in the true sense of the word and at the same time oppose the principle of national self-government'. Tom Scanlan explained that Ireland 'wanted a position within the British constitution, within the British empire under the king'.<sup>79</sup>

Of course, the fact that such sentiments were invariably delivered to British audiences cannot be overlooked. Moreover, it remains a fact that though equally anxious to conciliate British opinion, the majority of MPs did not incorporate enthusiasm for the empire into their platform oratory. On the other hand, few Irish Members were openly hostile towards the empire. Before 1900, the Irish-Australian MP, James Hogan was highly critical of Britain's sentimental and patronising view of Australia (though he supported imperial federation).<sup>80</sup> His compatriot, Arthur Lynch, acted as self-appointed guardian for Australia's interests in the House of Commons; he was particularly sensitive about Australia being described as a 'colony'.<sup>81</sup> Still, Lynch was not ready to sever the connection between the two countries entirely.<sup>82</sup> Among native Irish Members criticism was muted. The sentiments of the university educated lawyer, E.J. Kelly, expressed at a lecture in 1911 ('A man should be loyal to his better self and to his country before he starts being loyal to an indistinct idea, such as the British empire')<sup>83</sup> were not echoed by other MPs.

Anti-colonialism was even further off the Party agenda after August 1914, since for a number of Irish Members, the outbreak of war provided the first opportunity to express, in unqualified terms, their newly confirmed imperial identity. As the *Freeman's* editorialized 'The fiction that imperial patriotism and the national flame were irreconcilable has been finally and irrevocably shattered'.<sup>84</sup> P.J. Brady, for example, declared with pride that 'when the history of the present crisis was written there would be a bright page to the effect that Ireland was not found wanting in the days of the empire's need.'<sup>85</sup> The following

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<sup>79</sup> *FJ*, 21.11.11., 7.

<sup>80</sup> James Hogan, *The Australian in London and America* (London, 1889), pp. 271-2.

<sup>81</sup> A.B. Keith, *Responsible Government in the Dominions* (Oxford, 1912), vol. iii, p. 1512.

<sup>82</sup> *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. xviii, col. 976 (29.6.10.).

<sup>83</sup> *FJ*, 24.10.11., 5.

<sup>84</sup> *FJ*, 5.8.14., 6.

<sup>85</sup> *FJ*, 13.8.14., 5.

month, Stephen Gwynn appealed to his constituents to 'enlist in order to help the empire to which we belong',<sup>86</sup> while later the same month, the former imperial sceptic, E.J. Kelly, spoke of Ireland being in the war 'just as Australia, Canada, South Africa and that great family of nations which made up the British empire [was]'.<sup>87</sup> William O'Malley announced in Galway that 'we mean to be loyal sons of the empire, of which we are now, for the first time, a willing partner',<sup>88</sup> while in Donegal, Hugh Law also described the Irish as 'having been recognized as adult citizens of the empire'.<sup>89</sup> However, such rhetoric did not play well everywhere. Tom Scanlan reference to Home Rule having bound Ireland 'indissolubly to the British empire', was received with anger by a section of his constituents in Sligo.<sup>90</sup>

Although John Redmond might accurately be described as a 'liberal imperialist' or an 'imperial nationalist', to describe the Party he led in such terms would be inaccurate. Stephen Howe is surely correct in his conclusion that mainstream Irish Nationalism was not anti-colonial in outlook,<sup>91</sup> but while the Party included men who considered themselves imperial as well as Irish citizens, they constituted a vocal minority- rendered highly visible by the fact that it was from among this group that many of the IPAs British speakers were drawn. Indeed, the need to impress British audiences of the essential moderation of the Irish demand (and to placate Unionists) may have led Irish Members on British platforms to exaggerate Ireland's enthusiasm for the empire.<sup>92</sup> In the final analysis, the majority of MPs expressed no such sympathy, though it seems likely that all would have accepted (either with enthusiasm or indifference) Ireland's dominion status within a Home Rule framework. Doubtless, also, the vast majority of MPs would have accepted the continuing connection between Ireland and the British crown (though by the same token, the majority of MPs- including Redmond- did not make 'royalist' statements). The opening of a Dublin Parliament in 1915 by the king would have surely strengthened this connection both symbolically and (perhaps more importantly) personally.

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<sup>86</sup> *FJ*, 25.9.14., 6.

<sup>87</sup> *FJ*, 1.10.14., 6.

<sup>88</sup> *FJ*, 3.10.14., 6.

<sup>89</sup> *FJ*, 28.10.14., 6.

<sup>90</sup> Bew, *Ideology*, pp. 120-1.

<sup>91</sup> Howe, *Ireland and Empire*, p. 43. For Howe's definition of anti-colonialism, see Stephen Howe, *Anti-colonialism in British Politics* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 1-2.

<sup>92</sup> O'Mahony and Delanty, *Rethinking Irish History*, p. 70.

## **Chapter Two: Perceptions of the Irish Party**

### **Section Four: The Irish Party and the Gaelic Revival**

Traditionally, the Irish Party has been seen in opposition to, or at least out of sympathy with, 'Irish Ireland'.<sup>1</sup> Undoubtedly, this perception reflects (at least in part) the attitude of the Party itself. A.M. Sullivan, for instance, wrote of how 'There was no love lost at any time between the Parliamentary Party and the Gaelic League, whose activities were felt to be an attack on...the Party['s] policy of keeping the country at a standstill until Home Rule should be granted.'<sup>2</sup> J.J. Horgan wrote of one of the most senior members of the Irish Party that 'in spite of his Irish blood and sentiment, [T.P. O'Connor] was quite indifferent to, and indeed, ignorant of, the new Ireland represented by Sinn Fein and the Gaelic League'.<sup>3</sup> O'Connor's brother-in-law, William O'Malley, dismissed Gaelic Leaguers as 'idealists', 'cranks' and 'fanatics',<sup>4</sup> while J.P. Boland wrote that 'the greater number of its [the Gaelic League's] actual members were bitterly hostile, in their individual capacities, to the constitutional demand for Home Rule and, above all, to the Irish Party.'<sup>5</sup> Similarly, Stephen Gwynn recalled of the Gaelic League and the GAA that 'the bulk of these bodies were always antagonistic to the parliamentary movement',<sup>6</sup> though he later wrote that, in turn, the Party's 'rank and file had little sympathy with the new movements which were manifesting themselves.'<sup>7</sup> Yet, all five men were writing in the wake of the League's abandonment of its policy of political neutrality in 1915, and the pivotal role some of its members had taken in the Easter Rising of the following year. The effect of these events was to make the admittedly already close relationship between the IRB and some elements of the Gaelic revival (in particular, the GAA) practically indistinguishable, and to backdate this synonymity in the popular mind to the period before the Great War.<sup>8</sup>

Yet, as Alvin Jackson has argued, 'there are dangers in positing too complete a separation between the Irish Party and the Gaelic League' in the Edwardian period. In fact, as Jackson points out, there were several 'gestures of solidarity' on the part of the Party with the Gaelic revival, such as Tom O'Donnell's famous defiance of the Speaker's ruling of 1901 that speeches could not be made in Gaelic or the efforts of John Redmond to

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, see O'Farrell, *English Question*, p. 258.

<sup>2</sup> A.M. Sullivan, *Old Ireland, Reminiscences of an Irish KC* (London, 1927), p. 143

<sup>3</sup> Horgan, *Parnell*, p. 153.

<sup>4</sup> O'Malley, *Glancing Back*, p.112.

<sup>5</sup> Boland, *Irishman's Day*, p. 132.

<sup>6</sup> Gwynn, *Last Years*, p. 164.

<sup>7</sup> Gwynn, *Literary Man*, p. 279.

<sup>8</sup> Marcus de Burca, *The GAA: A History* (1980, Dublin, 1999), p. 94.

recruit Douglas Hyde to the Party.<sup>9</sup> However, closer scrutiny of the careers of Irish Members of Parliament would strongly suggest that their involvement in and engagement with the Gaelic revival amounted, in fact, to something even more substantial than Jackson's 'gesture' politics.

Although most Irish Members would probably, like T.P. O'Connor, have exhausted their Gaelic vocabulary after twenty words,<sup>10</sup> still, a not insignificant number of the Party after 1900 spoke Gaelic. Stephen Gwynn,<sup>11</sup> J.P. Boland, P.J. Meehan and James O'Connor had learnt the language as adults, the last while in prison.<sup>12</sup> T.C. Harrington spoke 'the vernacular fluently'.<sup>13</sup> Matt Keating (who also spoke Welsh), Tom O'Donnell, William O'Malley, and Philip O'Doherty were all native speakers. Tom Lundon probably learnt the language from his father. Arthur Lynch had grown up in Australia 'knowing a few words of Gaelic', while John O'Connor had learnt a little as a boy from his Irish speaking parents.<sup>14</sup> Michael Flavin also possessed some knowledge of the language.<sup>15</sup>

Some MPs, as well as speaking the language, also took part in efforts to promote it. Tom O'Donnell was a member for a time of the Gaelic League's Coiste Gnotha, as was Stephen Gwynn. Whereas O'Donnell (along with J.P. Boland) supported the cause of compulsory Irish for matriculation at the new National University of Ireland, Gwynn joined John Dillon in opposing it.<sup>16</sup> Gwynn always regarded the efforts of the League somewhat critically,<sup>17</sup> while even O'Donnell was referring to the 'poison of the Gaelic League' by 1914.<sup>18</sup> At least at the beginning of the twentieth century, O'Donnell had been something of a 'celebrity' in League circles following the incident of 1901, and was prominent in both the Kerry League (of whose executive he was president), and at a national level, as Redmond's spokesman at many League meetings.<sup>19</sup> Michael Molloy was a long-standing

<sup>9</sup> Alvin Jackson, *Ireland 1798-1998: Politics and War* (Oxford, 1999), p. 180

<sup>10</sup> *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. xlii, col. 2022 (22.10.12.).

<sup>11</sup> Stephen Gwynn took lessons from a London-Irish policeman. He later recalled 'One of the little primers was always in my pocket and in buses and trains my study progressed.' Gwynn, *Literary Man*, p. 213.

<sup>12</sup> *FJ*, 20.9.13., 8; Meehan, *Laois and Offaly*, p. 75; *Wicklow People*, 19.3.10., 4. During the 1870s, James O'Connor taught Irish at the Mechanics' Institute, Dublin. *II*, 14.3.10., 6.

<sup>13</sup> *II*, 3.3.10., 5.

<sup>14</sup> *FJ*, 29.5.11., 8; *Kilkenny People*, 29.5.37, 7; Gaughan, *Odyssey*, p. 14; *FJ*, 24.4.12., 6; *II*, 6.2.26., 6; Lynch, *Life Story*, p. 12; *Times*, 2.11.28., 19. *FJ*, 25.11.12., 10; *Leinster Leader*, 3.10.14., 8..

<sup>15</sup> *Hansard, HC* (series 5), vol. xlii (22.10.12.).

<sup>16</sup> Bew, *Ideology*, p. 86.

<sup>17</sup> Gwynn, *Holiday in Connemara*, p. 41.

<sup>18</sup> Tom O'Donnell to John Dillon, undated (1914?), TCD, DP, ms 6758/1439.

<sup>19</sup> Gaughan, *Odyssey*, pp. 17, 29, 32, 45.

member of the Carlow branch. Richard Hazleton and William Field were members of the Blackrock Gaelic League (Field had also been its first president), P.A. Meehan helped form the Portlaoise League, James O'Mara, Stephen Gwynn and J.P. Boland were members of the London branch of the League, and Willie Redmond was also a member of the organisation.<sup>20</sup> During the 1870s, Dillon resolved on two occasions to learn Irish.<sup>21</sup> As early as 1877, he was a member of the Council for the Preservation of the Irish Language. He later joined the League,<sup>22</sup> but owing to personal and political differences subsequently fell out with the organisation.<sup>23</sup> In 1909 he opposed mandatory Irish for university matriculation, and in 1912 compulsory Irish in schools. Dillon was accused in early 1913 of having bullied Redmond into not signing a League appeal for funds.<sup>24</sup> He exacted some revenge, however, when the Galway League (which had criticized his statement that under Home Rule teachers would not be compelled to teach in Gaelic) showed itself divided on the issue.<sup>25</sup>

Many other MPs (if not members of the League) expressed support for it. J.J. O'Shee, for instance, told his constituents in March 1910 that 'He was always a strong supporter of the Gaelic League, and he hoped to see the day when the people of Ireland, like the people of Wales, would be bilingual.'<sup>26</sup>

According to William Field 'Many of them could not learn the Irish language but they could all wear Irish clothes.'<sup>27</sup> Certainly, many Irish Members paid at least lip-service to another Irish Ireland preoccupation: the need to foster native industries. J.P. Nannetti appealed to Dublin workers to 'make some little sacrifice amongst ourselves and support industries of our country'.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, T.F. Smyth told an audience in January 1909 'It is the duty of every Irishman who is deserving of the name to support home industry...I do say that when a man can get goods as cheap and as serviceable [in Ireland] he should buy no other (cheers)', while William Field told a meeting of the Dublin Industrial Development Association a year later that 'it was not enough for the people to ask for Irish

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<sup>20</sup> *FJ*, 11.1.10., 9; 19.9.10., 5; *PMG 'Extra'*, 1910, p. 79; McGahon, "Light of the Village", p. 88; Meehan, *Laois and Offaly*, pp. 71-2; Boland, *Irishman's Day*, p. 44; London Gaelic League to James O'Mara, Aug. 1905, OMP, NLI, ms 21,544 [5]; *FJ*, 29.9.11., 8.

<sup>21</sup> Lyons, *Dillon*, p. 20.

<sup>22</sup> Michael Tierney, 'John Dillon and the Home Rule Movement', *Studies*, vol. lviii, no. 229 (1969), p. 65.

<sup>23</sup> Bew, *Ideology*, pp. 85-6.

<sup>24</sup> *FJ*, 12.3.13., 8.

<sup>25</sup> *FJ*, 31.7.13., 6.

<sup>26</sup> *FJ*, 16.3.10., 9.

<sup>27</sup> *FJ*, 22.8.10., 4.

<sup>28</sup> *FJ*, 17.1.10., 4.

manufactured goods, but they must insist on getting them'.<sup>29</sup> Doubtless, some of this rhetoric was simply political flannel, but some Members not only preached but also practised the 'buy Irish' motto. Field, in particular, was a tireless advocate of industrial development. He lectured and wrote pamphlets on the industrial revival, and lobbied successive governments to establish a receiving depot in Dublin.<sup>30</sup> Field was also personally involved with establishing the Blackrock Laundry Co., and the Blackrock Hosiery co.<sup>31</sup> J.P. Phillips sent the wool from his own sheep to a nunnery in Foxford, County Mayo, to be made into clothes for himself and others.<sup>32</sup> Vincent Kennedy urged his constituents to buy Irish in March 1910, and pointed to himself by way of example 'I never wear anything but Irish stuff and I am nothing the worse of it: it does not cost any more and it is far better than shoddy'.<sup>33</sup> Willie Redmond and Sir Thomas Esmonde were leading advocates of the Irish tobacco industry.<sup>34</sup>

Some MPs sought to directly encourage local industries in their constituencies. As well as being one of the organizers of the annual London Aonach, J.P. Boland, for example, sought to establish a lace industry in Kerry, while in 1914, Dr John Esmonde reportedly entered into an agreement with an English syndicate to grow Jerusalem artichokes to manufacture cellulose.<sup>35</sup> Occasionally, the credit for such initiatives could be the subject of disagreement, suggesting perhaps that while modest these projects could be of some local importance.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, while none of these ventures was commercially successful, they nonetheless won praise for their promoters from many nationalists (both orthodox and heterodox), who were equally prepared to criticize those Members whose business interests were less Irish oriented.<sup>37</sup>

Although they inhabited two capital cities contemporaneously, there seems to have been very little contact between Ireland's political and literary elites. Stephen Gwynn observed that in the 1880s many of those later associated with the literary revival were 'not in Parnell's movement: they stood deliberately and consciously apart from it'.<sup>38</sup> However, in the 1890s (and after), Yeats, Katherine Tynan and others were 'enthusiastic for the

<sup>29</sup> A-C, 2.1.09., 10; FJ, 9.12.09., 8

<sup>30</sup> FJ, 1.11.10., 10; *Leader*, 4.12.09., 371; 'M.A.' and Reid, *Field*, p. 55.

<sup>31</sup> McGahon, "Light of the Village", p. 87.

<sup>32</sup> A-C, 2.1.09., 10.

<sup>33</sup> A-C, 19.3.10., 5.

<sup>34</sup> *Hansard*, HC (series 5) vol. xxiii, cols. 1541-50 (30.3.11.).

<sup>35</sup> Boland, *Mother's Knee*, p. 48-9; FJ, 19.2.14., 6; 25.2.14., 6.

<sup>36</sup> FJ, 30.8.10., 6; *Kilkenny People*, 26.11.10., 4.

<sup>37</sup> *Sinn Féin*, 10.12.10., 1

<sup>38</sup> Gwynn, *Literary Man*, p. 62.

Parnellite cause' and so John Redmond (as leader of the Parnellite rump) mixed among the revival crowd.<sup>39</sup> Tynan, in particular, was quite close to Redmond. However, after 1900 these connections faded, though not entirely.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, Redmond, who was always a keen theatregoer, occasionally attended plays at the Irish National Theatre, though according to W.B. Wells, he did so out of a sense of 'patriotic duty' and found 'little or no significance in what is called the Celtic Renaissance.'<sup>41</sup>

Arthur Lynch may have shared this view, though perhaps for different reasons. Lynch seems to have first met Yeats in the early 1890s, having been introduced to him by Tynan. Though he found Lynch's ideas about literature 'vile', initially he seemed to like the Irish-Australian 'pretty well' and introduced Lynch to 'some literary folk he wanted to meet'.<sup>42</sup> Among those to whom he introduced him were the members of the Rhymers Club, a group of young poets who met weekly in London. Perhaps stung by the reception which had greeted his book *Modern Authors*, Lynch subsequently published prose and poetry scathing 'of the artificiality and self-satisfaction of the members and their proceedings.'<sup>43</sup> In response, Yeats reprimanded Lynch for his breach of trust, later describing him to a friend as 'a disappointed, tongue tied fellow half or whole mad with vanity & deserves no worse than pity'.<sup>44</sup> Lynch recalled that 'I had had the portals of fame opened before my eyes, and nearly all those young men who were critics 'knifed' me when subsequently I produced my own books.'<sup>45</sup> Later, when he lived in Paris, Lynch was again connected with Yeats, both of them being members of Maude Gonne's Young Ireland Society.<sup>46</sup>

Stephen Gwynn was on better terms with many of the leading members of the literary revival, since this was 'the group with which I was associated in...[younger] days' via his cousins, the Stockleys.<sup>47</sup> Although he 'stood apart from the fame and influence of the Abbey Theatre', Gwynn himself was (according to Oliver St. John Gogarty) 'a considerable poet' whose work was distinguished for its humour and metrical skill.<sup>48</sup> He

<sup>39</sup> Wells, *Redmond*, p. 54. Dora Sigerson, *The Sad Years* (London, 1918), pp. ix-x.

<sup>40</sup> John Kelly and Ronald Schuchard (eds.), *The Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats, 1901-1904* (Oxford, 1994), vol. iii, p. 467.

<sup>41</sup> Wells, *Redmond*, p. 26

<sup>42</sup> W.B. Yeats to Katherine Tynan, late July 1891, qu. in John Kelly and Eric Doherty (eds.), *The Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats, 1865-1895* (Oxford, 1986), p. 254.

<sup>43</sup> Kelly and Doherty, *Letters of W.B. Yeats, 1865-1895*, p. 506.

<sup>44</sup> W.B. Yeats to Richard Le Gallienne, 4.10.94, qu. in Kelly and Doherty, *Letters of W.B. Yeats, 1865-1895*, p. 400, 506.

<sup>45</sup> Lynch, *Life Story*, p. 104.

<sup>46</sup> Gonne, *Servant of the Queen*, p.170.

<sup>47</sup> Gwynn, *Literary Man*, pp. 62-3.

<sup>48</sup> *DNB, 1941-1950* (Oxford, 1959), p. 335.

also wrote several novels and biographies, though little in the way of drama. As secretary of the Irish Literary Society, he was, however, involved with arranging the early visits of the INTS to London.<sup>49</sup> Larry Ginnell, James O'Mara, J.P. Boland and Hugh Law were also associated with the ILS. Law was the assistant secretary of the ILS for a time,<sup>50</sup> and a close friend of the dramatist George Moore.<sup>51</sup> Law's cousin, the novelist and children's writer Grace Rhys, was married to the poet and editor Ernest Rhys (who had helped Yeats found the Rhymers's Club).<sup>52</sup> Law was (along with Yeats and Tynan) among the 'Irish group' who occasionally met at their house on Golder's Hill.<sup>53</sup> Boland was a member of a sub-committee (of which Yeats was the chairman) appointed by the ILS to bring to the notice of Parliament matters of Irish cultural importance, such as the funding of the Royal Hibernian Academy.<sup>54</sup>

Although not a frequent event in the constituency diaries of most Irish Members, some MPs were involved with the Gaelic League and the GAA at a local level. In August 1902, for example, Sir Thomas and Lady Esmonde judged the singing and dancing at the Castlebellingham Feis, while Tom O'Donnell was one of the adjudicators for recitation storytelling, conversation and oratory at the Kerry Feis.<sup>55</sup> Even as late as 1915, Tom Lunden attended a meeting of the GAA in Limerick, while Gussy Roche was present at an Association function in Cork city.<sup>56</sup>

Irish MPs were also involved in a ceremonial capacity. In November 1910, for example, J.P. Hayden presented a set of medals for the Roscommon hurling championship. The same year the Louth County Board resolved to return a presentational cup donated by Tim Healy.<sup>57</sup> William Field presented the Dublin County Silver Cup and at various times paid for competition medals.<sup>58</sup> Donal McGahon has insisted that Fields involvement with the Dublin GAA was 'more than a politico nursing the public'.<sup>59</sup> Marcus de Burca,

<sup>49</sup> Kelly and Schuchard, *Letters of W.B. Yeats, 1901-1904*, vol. iii, p. 254, 302, 305, 423; Gwynn, *Literary Man*, pp.203-10.

<sup>50</sup> W.B. Yeats to Hugh Law, 16.3.01., qu. in Kelly and Schuchard, *Letters of W.B. Yeats, 1901-1904*, vol. iii, p. 49.

<sup>51</sup> Francis Law, *A Man At Arms* (London, 1983), p. 32.

<sup>52</sup> Grace was married to the poet and editor, Ernest Rhys, who had helped found the Rhymers' Club. Kelly and Schuchard, *Letters of W.B. Yeats, 1901-1904*, vol. iii, p. 54.

<sup>53</sup> Ernest Rhys, *Wales England Wed* (London, 1940), p. 176.

<sup>54</sup> J.P. Boland, *Irishman's Day: A Day in the Life of an Irish MP* (London, 1944), pp. 62-3.

<sup>55</sup> *FJ*, 16.8.02., 6. For other examples, see, *FJ*, 30.8.04., 6; 3.9.04., 6; 11.8.08., 7; *A-C*, 30.7.10., 9; *CT*, 13.8.10., 3; *FJ*, 19.5.13., 10.

<sup>56</sup> Marcus de Burca, *The GAA: A History* (1980, Dublin, 1999), p. 96.

<sup>57</sup> *FJ*, 7.3.10., 6. On this, see de Burca, *GAA*, p. 73.

<sup>58</sup> McGahon, "Light of the Village", p. 88.

<sup>59</sup> *ibid.*, p. 87.



however, has characterized such attempts by MPs to associate themselves with the Association as essentially cynical.

As soon as it became clear to the Irish Party that the GAA was rapidly becoming an influential force in the nationalist movement steps were taken by individual MPs to show their sympathy for native games- steps in some cases quite as crude, and probably not as sincere, as those taken earlier by fenians in rushing to join the Association.<sup>60</sup>

Assuredly, much of this activity was opportunistic, in so far as Irish Members (like their later Dail successors) calculated that it was in their local interests to be publicly associated with such a popular organisation. However, this involvement also needs to be understood in terms of the wider interaction between MPs and many different clubs, societies and associations within their constituencies. For, as in contemporary England (though to a much lesser extent), Members of Parliament were expected to patronize local agricultural, charitable, cultural and sporting organisations. Indeed, local GAA clubs and County Boards actively sought the support of MPs and solicited donations from them. Thus, in attending sports meetings or donating prizes, Irish Members were often simply responding to the expectations of their constituents.

Contrary to the impression conveyed by De Burca, the involvement of many Irish MPs with the GAA went beyond a ceremonial capacity. James Halpin, who died in 1909, was, for example, a prominent member of the Clare GAA.<sup>61</sup> Eugene O'Sullivan had at an early age joined the GAA and played for Kerry in the all-Ireland football championship of 1905, and later became a member of the Kerry County Board, a member of the Munster Council and the organisation's Central Council.<sup>62</sup> John Cullinan was also a member of the Central Council, and was involved in organising a fund-raising tour to America in 1889.<sup>63</sup> William Field held the position of treasurer to the Central Council from 1891 to 1895, where he was seen as a moderating influence because of his opposition to those within the GAA opposed to the admission of the police.<sup>64</sup> Eugene Crean was the president of the Cork County Board in 1890. Tom Lundon described himself as having been 'connected from infancy' with the League. He was a member of the Association's Limerick County Board

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<sup>60</sup> de Burca, *GAA*, p. 72.

<sup>61</sup> *FJ*, 27.7.09., 6.

<sup>62</sup> *II*, 20.5.42., 4; *PMGazette 'Extra'*, 1910, p. 90.

<sup>63</sup> de Burca, *GAA*, p. 32; *FJ*, 29.12.13., 8.

<sup>64</sup> Mandle, *Gaelic Athletic Association*, p. 93, 96-98, 103; de Burca, *GAA*, pp. 51-2

and was elected as its vice-president in 1904.<sup>65</sup> In 1914 he acted on behalf of the Association in opposing the Weekly Rest Day Bill, which would have prohibited the playing of Gaelic games on Sundays.<sup>66</sup> His colleague in the representation of Limerick, Michael Joyce, was a member of the St Michael's Hurling Club in the 1880s, and in 1886 attended the executive meeting of the GAA at Thurles, where he was the only dissident to the resolution that players of rugby could not join the Association.<sup>67</sup> In 1889, P.A. Meehan was elected to the Central Council of the GAA and he was the first chairman of the Queen's County Board.<sup>68</sup> Like Meehan, William Duffy was a former member of the IRB and in this capacity was one of the men Michael Cusack consulted when he first campaigned for the revival of Gaelic games. He subsequently became the secretary of the Galway County Board and remained throughout his life associated with the organisation.<sup>69</sup>

Of course, ultimately, the relationship between the Irish Party and the Gaelic revival was not determined by the goodwill or participation of individual MPs. In part this was because, with several exceptions, the not inconsiderable participation of Irish Party Members (particularly in the GAA) occurred during the 1880s and 1890s. By 1910, few MPs appear to have been in close contact with the League or the Association at the grass-roots; had the Party recruited more men under 30 this fact might, perhaps, have been ameliorated.<sup>70</sup> As things stood, the absence of parliamentary participation in the revival was keenly felt.<sup>71</sup> Douglas Hyde, for instance, remarked in 1910 that 'the language gets little help from the MPs'; despite the fact that (as Hyde claimed in 1914) 'The great bulk of Gaelic Leaguers through the country are pretty much [supporters of] the ordinary type of politics current in their respective counties.' However, while Hyde insisted that the League was not a political organisation, and that 'each individual Gaelic Leaguer has a perfect right outside of the...League to take part in any politics he wishes', he could not but

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<sup>65</sup> Meehan, *Laois and Offaly*, p. 64; *Limerick Leader*, 3.11.51., 2.

<sup>66</sup> *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. lxii, cols. 2272-4 (22.5.14.).

<sup>67</sup> J.P. Kelly, *History of the Limerick GAA from earliest times to the present day* (Tralee, 1937), p. 34, 64-5; Mandle, *Gaelic Athletic Association*, p. 35. Joyce's opposition to the resolution may have been because he was a leading member of the Garryowen Rugby Football Club, and played in the first fifteen for both Garryowen and Limerick County. See, Donnelly, 'Michael Joyce', p. 43.

<sup>68</sup> Mandle, *Gaelic Athletic Association*, p. 72; Meehan, *Laois and Offaly*, p. 71.

<sup>69</sup> Mandle, *Gaelic Athletic Association*, p. 8, 17, 132; *CT*, 14.8.09., 3.

<sup>70</sup> Tom Kettle, for one, was not uncritical of the League. See, Ward, *Sheehy-Skeffington*, p. 33.

<sup>71</sup> The League also complained about the lack of coverage of Gaelic nationalism in the Party press. *FJ*, 14.8.12., 8; 15.8.12., 5.

acknowledge the fact that ‘many [prominent] supporters of the Gaelic League are...politicians of what...might [be] call[ed] an advanced type.’<sup>72</sup>

But, it is important to recognize that the alienation and resentment felt was mutual and not simply one-sided (as is so often implied). In March 1904, for instance, Redmond wrote to Dillon that he suspected that Hyde might accept his offer of a seat in Parliament. ‘I have the highest possible confidence in him’, wrote Redmond, ‘as a friend of our Party and [his presence]...would certainly minimize any chance of friction between us and the Gaelic League in the future.’<sup>73</sup> However, by 1908, Redmond’s goodwill towards the League (though not Hyde) had dissipated somewhat,<sup>74</sup> owing, among other things, to the hostility of the League towards Redmond at a public meeting some years earlier.<sup>75</sup> A similar account was reported by the Gaelic League teacher, Seamus O’Mulloy, who, in 1905, had been selected by the UILs standing committee to address political meetings in Irish speaking districts. In 1910 he complained publicly that many Leaguers ‘rather betray an abject apprehension of my presence on the Gaelic League platform at all, and have apparently such ideas about “politicians” that to their minds there is always an impending danger that a “politician”, if not forewarned, would talk politics in church instead of saying his prayers.’ He attributed this squarely to the fact that ‘the great majority of individual Gaelic Leaguers are also Sinn Feiners’.<sup>76</sup>

Despite the longstanding bad feeling, Marcus de Burca has noted that, in ‘[o]ne final effort to exploit the GAAs popularity’, Redmond and Dillon both (unusually) attended Gaelic football matches in 1913, and that Willie Redmond identified himself closely with Clare’s victory in the all-Ireland hurling final the following year.<sup>77</sup> In fact, in attending a national sporting event, Redmond was seeking to do more than pacify revivalists, for, arguably, he desired by such appearances to present himself, in effect, as prime minister in waiting. Moreover his new found interest in things Gaelic was directed not simply at the GAA, but was arguably part of a broader ‘charm-offensive’ launched at ‘Irish Ireland’ as a whole, to counter the impression (created by its opposition to compulsory Irish) that the leadership was out of touch with grass-roots nationalist opinion. In July 1911, for instance, J.G.S.

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<sup>72</sup> Quoted in George Grote, *Torn Between Politics and Culture: The Gaelic League 1893-1993* (Munster, 1994), p. 111.

<sup>73</sup> John Redmond to John Dillon, 7.3.04., TCD, DP, ms 6747/72.

<sup>74</sup> J.E. Dunleavy and G.W. Dunleavy, *Douglas Hyde: A Maker of Modern Ireland* (Berkeley, CA., 1991), p. 310.

<sup>75</sup> Gaughan, *Odyssey*, p. 46.

<sup>76</sup> *FJ*, 31.8.10., 10.

<sup>77</sup> de Burca, *GAA*, p. 96.

MacNeill attended the Feis Thirchonaiill in Donegal and deposed upon his Celtic ancestry, and later the same month, Joe Devlin uttered the (for him) uncharacteristic sentiment that 'We want to revive the Irish language and to cultivate Irish music and song and Irish art and literature.'<sup>78</sup> Two months later, at a meeting of the Blackrock branch of the Gaelic League, Willie Redmond related his 'distress' at the 'painful efforts [of many Dubliners] to mimic and copy the manners and even the accent of the English people',<sup>79</sup> and the same month, at the fourth annual Feis Aughrim in County Wicklow, John Redmond also unburdened himself of a hitherto unarticulated regret at the inability of many of his houseguests at Aughavanagh to enjoy the 'grand old Irish dances'.

They never could be a great nation in Ireland unless everything was Irish from top to bottom; they had got to follow their own glorious customs...they had to rely on themselves, and they could believe him that it was teaching of that kind, which has been going on in Ireland, which is laying the foundation by which alone a self-governing and self-reliant Ireland can be built in the future...Learn your Irish language, play your Irish music, read your Irish history...<sup>80</sup>

Doubtless, for some League members, such declarations would have seemed both too little and too late. Yet, the real problem with such sentiments (which were undoubtedly sincerely meant) was that they were predicated on a very particular reading of the recent past and the imminent future. For as Redmond explained

You will find that those of us who today have our energies and our time fully occupied over the struggle for a national Parliament, who have neither time nor the opportunity to do much, will be when we get the power in this country the most determined advocates for all the ideals for which the Gaelic League stands.

A very similar (ostensibly functional) explanation for the absence of MPs from League platforms was given by his brother Willie: 'It was not...[in 1881], merely a question of reviving the glories of the Celtic language. The people were [then] being hunted out of the country.' Clearly, for Redmond and his brother, the political function of the Party took immediate priority over (what they saw as) the 'cultural' role of the League. As the older brother had explained in 1901 'Those who confine their efforts to that educational movement [should]...take care that there are any Gaels left to speak the language in Ireland.'<sup>81</sup> Similarly, William O'Malley argued succinctly that 'the Irish language would never be revived until they had their own Irish Parliament. It would take the genius of an

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<sup>78</sup> *FJ*, 1.7.11., 10; 19.7.11., 5.

<sup>79</sup> *FJ*, 29.9.11., 8.

<sup>80</sup> *FJ*, 26.9.11., 7.

<sup>81</sup> K.B. Nowlan 'The Gaelic League and other National Movements', in Séan Ó Tuama (ed.), *The Gaelic League Idea* (Dublin, 1972), p. 50.

Irish Parliament to revive the Irish language'.<sup>82</sup> John Dillon fully shared this analysis 'the Irish people ought...not', he argued, 'be compelled to cultivate idealism on an empty stomach.'<sup>83</sup> Nor could he or the Redmonds agree with those Gaels who 'regarded no man as an Irishman who did not speak, or at least desire to speak, Gaelic for his mothertongue.'<sup>84</sup> In fact, at odds here were two contrasting conceptions of nationality: the political (or statist) and the ethnocentric. For the Party, statehood was the validation of nationality; it did not regard 'de-anglicisation' or 're-hibernianisation' as a necessary precursor to nationhood. Indeed, in some ways it regarded the preoccupation with such cultural forms as retrogressive. Instead, Redmond ultimately envisioned an educative role for the League under Home Rule, doubtless with the aim of buttressing his highly conservative vision of Ireland as a rural arcadia.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> *FJ*, 27.9.13., 9.

<sup>83</sup> *FJ*, 24.8.13., 7. Also see, *FJ*, 12.10.10., 10; 13.12.11., 8.

<sup>84</sup> Stephen Gwynn, *Irish Books and Irish People* (Dublin and London, 1920), p. 3.

<sup>85</sup> Bew, *Ideology*, p. 124.

## **Chapter Two: Pereptions of the Irish Party**

### **Section Five: The Party and the Volunteers**

The apparent indifference of the Party towards the foundation of the Irish Volunteers in November 1913 only partially disguised its confusion and hostility towards the new movement. The tone of Michael Davitt junior's speech at the inaugural meeting of the Volunteers, for instance, was heavily influenced by John Dillon, whom he had consulted and who had 'made it his business to impress...Davitt's son with the seriousness of the situation.'<sup>1</sup> The speech as delivered seemed ambivalent about the formation of a volunteer force, and came as an 'odd anti-climax' to the preceding speeches of Eoin MacNeill and Patrick Pearse.<sup>2</sup> Dillon also canvassed the opinions of two of his colleagues, John Muldoon and Joe Devlin, as to whether it would be necessary for the Party to bring 'this new army' under its influence. Both men felt the organisation would be short-lived, but in a letter to Redmond, Dillon revealed how unsettled he was by the new turn of events.<sup>3</sup> This was also evident in the correspondence that passed between Muldoon and the leading Cork Nationalist, J.J. Horgan. Horgan had written to Muldoon at the beginning of December 1913 asking him what approach Redmond recommended with regard to the Volunteers, since in Cork '[t]he local supporters of the National party were anxious to help them'. Muldoon responded that 'Redmond does not like this thing, but they [the leadership] are loathe to move at present. It will frighten the English Home Rulers...Dillon is much more against it. It could not be controlled, and if the army met some day and demanded an Irish Republic where would our Home Rule leaders be?''<sup>4</sup> Despite such concerns, it seems that some of the parliamentary leaders were still taken by surprise at the popularity of the Volunteers. Darrell Figgis, for example, was struck by Redmond's 'amazing incredulity...[at] the news of the spread of the movement' in the early months of 1914.<sup>5</sup>

Whatever the attitude of the Party leadership, some backbench Members were initially more enthusiastic. Over a week before the Rotunda meeting, P.J. O'Shaughnessy was present at a meeting of the West Limerick UIL executive which called for the formation of

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<sup>1</sup> Gwynn, *Last Years*, pp. 245-6, quoted in Michael Tierney, *Eoin MacNeill: Scholar and Man of Action, 1867-1945*, ed. F.X. Martin (Oxford, 1980), p. 122.

<sup>2</sup> Tierney, *MacNeill*, p. 122.

<sup>3</sup> Lyons, *Dillon*, p. 350.

<sup>4</sup> Horgan, *Parnell*, p. 229.

<sup>5</sup> F.X. Martin (ed.), *The Howth Gun-Running and the Kilcoole Gun-Running 1914* (Dublin, 1964), p. 29.

a Volunteer corps.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, J.P. Farrell- ever with his finger on the pulse of Longford- expressed support for the new movement and claimed that the ‘time must come...when the young men of Ireland must be given the rights of citizenship to learn drilling and martial exercise like the young men of any other nation.’<sup>7</sup> However, a more cautious note was sounded (at the behest of Redmond) by Richard Hazleton in an open letter to the *Freeman's* in mid December 1913. Hazleton claimed that the Volunteers were an ‘ill-considered and muddle-headed’ organisation, and he insisted that though the ‘vitality’ that animated it was admirable, the Liberal government would not tolerate the formation of a second armed force.<sup>8</sup> The following month, the Tipperary Member, John Cullinan also sought to disparage Nationalists from joining the Volunteers, claiming that it was a ‘most injudicious move at the present critical time (hear, hear). Nothing could give more joy to their enemies and nothing could be more risky to the success of their cause’.<sup>9</sup> Later the same month, Tom Landon told the East Limerick executive that local Nationalists should remain aloof from the new organisation, pending ‘orders from their leaders’,<sup>10</sup> and this remained the official policy of the Party.

But despite the apparent hardening of attitudes among the Party in the months immediately following the establishment of the Volunteers, nationally the position of constitutional nationalists was less inflexible. Granted, (in addition to the speeches of several MPs) there were numerous public displays of opposition to the new movement. A Volunteer meeting in Cork city hall, for example, resulted in an (apparently deliberate) ‘outburst’ after Eoin MacNeill called for three cheers for the UVF. J.J. Horgan was in the audience and called for three counter-cheers for Redmond, which were ‘enthusiastically given’, whereupon the platform was stormed by members of the Cork AOH.<sup>11</sup> Letters in the *Freeman's* called on Nationalists to avoid indulging in an ‘orgy of misplaced militarism’, while individual UIL branches refused to commit themselves publicly in light of the Party leaders’ apparent coolness towards the Volunteers.<sup>12</sup>

However, from its inception, elements of the constitutional movement were associated with the Volunteers. At the original Rotunda meeting, along with Michael Davitt junior, were Tom Kettle, Denis Gwynn and T.P. O’Brien (‘a well known figure in

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<sup>6</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Politics*, p. 104.

<sup>7</sup> *FJ*, 26.11.13., 5.

<sup>8</sup> *FJ*, 17.12.13., 8.

<sup>9</sup> *FJ*, 10.1.14., 7. Cullinan repeated his comments at a meeting several days later, *FJ*, 14.1.14., 9.

<sup>10</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Politics*, p. 104.

<sup>11</sup> *FJ*, 15.12.13., 7; Tierney, *MacNeill*, pp. 125-6.

<sup>12</sup> *FJ*, 15.12.13., 10; 17.12.13., 8.

AOH circles'), while among the groups from which the stewards were drawn, were the Dublin AOH and UIL.<sup>13</sup> In the following months, the *Freeman's* reported on the growth of the organisation in often complimentary terms, as when in late December 1913 it reported the 'enthusiastic scenes' at a Volunteer meeting in Enniscorthy.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, as early as January and February 1914, Members who had only then recently criticized the Volunteers, delivered speeches which seemed to suggest some sort of repositioning if the government wavered (as was then feared) over Home Rule.<sup>15</sup> Certainly, this was the interpretation T.M. Kettle, one of the organisation's principal advocates and the Provisional Committee member who worked hardest to align it with mainstream nationalism, placed on a speech made by Devlin in April 1914: 'Mr Devlin, in a recent speech, said, in an extraordinary significant sentence, that when an Irish Parliament had been created by Act of Parliament, it would be the duty of 250,000 Irish Volunteers to see that that Parliament stayed with us when we had got it'.<sup>16</sup> In fact, Devlin had actually told a meeting in Belfast that 'If the necessity arose a quarter of a million volunteers...would respond to the call of Ireland'.<sup>17</sup> This was not quite the same thing as Kettle claimed, but he may not have been so very far off the mark, for Devlin's comments came at a crucial juncture in negotiations between the Provisional Committee of the Volunteers and the leaders of the Party .

It is not intended here to provide an account of the negotiations which were conducted between the Irish 'cabinet' and the Provisional Committee between March and June 1914. The role of the rank and file in these discussions was minimal. During early May, Willie Redmond was commissioned by the leadership to make public statements supportive of the Volunteers. Before the meeting between Redmond and MacNeill, Casement and Kettle on May 9, Willie Redmond announced at a Home Rule meeting in Wales, that 'it was useless for anybody to deny that if there were volunteers in the north there would certainly be the same in the south.'<sup>18</sup> MacNeill left this meeting having been informed that the Party would make its position known within 48 hours. This was forthcoming in the form of a letter from Willie Redmond, published in the *Westminster Gazette*, in which he warned that with the

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<sup>13</sup> *FJ*, 24.11.13., 5. Denis Gwynn, 'Thomas M. Kettle, 1880-1916', *Studies*, vol. lv (1966), p. 389.

<sup>14</sup> *FJ*, 25/26.12.13., 8.

<sup>15</sup> *FJ*, 7.1.14., 7; 17.2.14., 9.

<sup>16</sup> *FJ*, 20.4.14., 8.

<sup>17</sup> *FJ*, 15.4.14., 7.

<sup>18</sup> *FJ*, 4.5.14., 9. Redmond had long been a supporter of an Irish volunteer force. See Denman, 'lonely grave', p.288.



advent of the Volunteers, Ireland would not tolerate disappointment on the Home Rule question for a third time.<sup>19</sup> MacNeill was also lobbied (at the behest of the leadership) by several MPs with close links with the Gaelic League. On May 19, he received the first of two letters from Stephen Gwynn, who expressed the opinion that 'the Party made a mistake in not taking hold of the Volunteer movement from the first' and who argued that the Volunteers should do nothing to jeopardize Home Rule. In his second letter (dated May 21), Gwynn urged MacNeill to accept Redmond's nominees for a reformed executive committee. MacNeill also received a similar letter from J.P. Boland.<sup>20</sup> Both MPs seem to have been unaware that they were 'pushing at an open door', suggesting that they were not privy to the negotiations then ongoing. A third MP, Tom Landon, seems to have been allotted a slightly different role. In his speech of May 16, to the Limerick County Council, he announced that the Volunteers had arisen 'to show to any government, whether Liberal or Tory, that there would be no withdrawal of a measure so dearly won' and that the movement would 'be faithful to their parliamentary leaders'.<sup>21</sup> The robustness of Landon's speech, and the fact that he was a Dillonite who had formerly been critical of the movement, suggests that his speech may have been deliberately intended as marking a policy shift for the consumption of both the Liberal government and the Provisional Committee.<sup>22</sup>

Landon's speech has further importance because it indicates that by mid May, the Party leadership had resolved to take hold of the Volunteers. Only weeks before, another Party loyalist, J.P. Farrell, had advised his Longford supporters to remain aloof from the Volunteers as 'for the present I think the time is not opportune.' Paul Bew has claimed that Farrell was trying to 'hold the line' against the new movement.<sup>23</sup> Instead, it seems more likely that Farrell (who had initially welcomed the foundation of the Volunteers) knew negotiations were in progress, but that he could not pre-empt them without instructions. This would seem to suggest that while Redmond may (as he claimed in his June 9 letter) have privately instructed the Party's supporters to involve themselves in the Volunteer movement in March,<sup>24</sup> the final decision to commit the Parliamentary Party to the *putsch* was only made during the first half of May.

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<sup>19</sup> Quoted in *FJ*, 9.5.14., 7.

<sup>20</sup> Tierney, *MacNeill*, pp. 132-3.

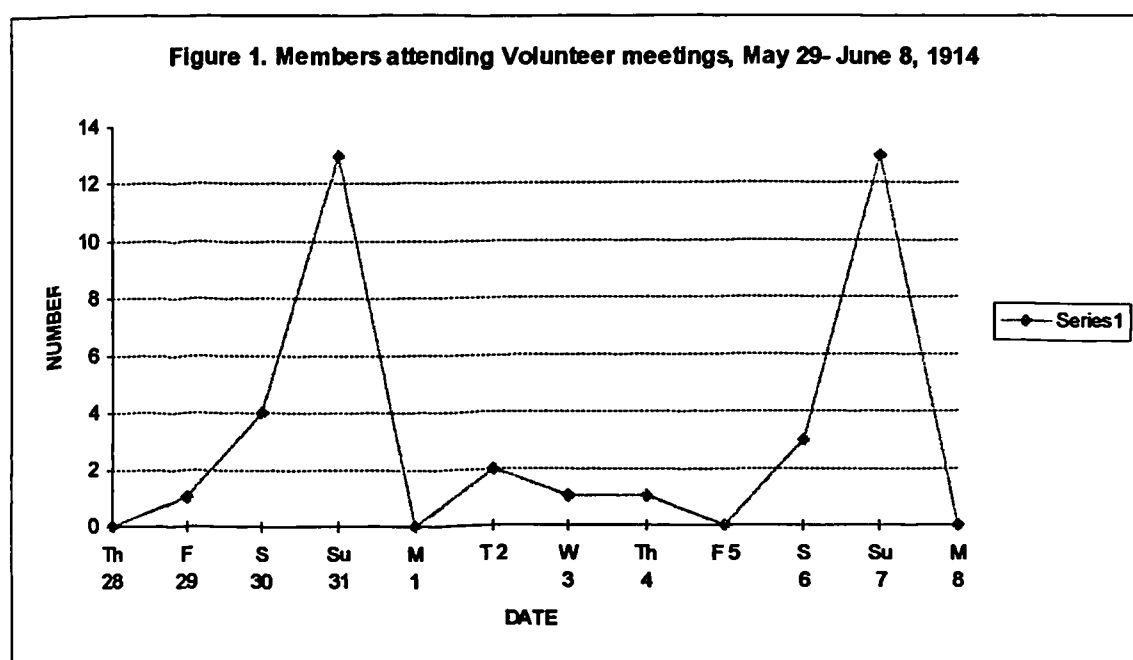
<sup>21</sup> *FJ*, 18.5.14., 8.

<sup>22</sup> Tierney, *MacNeill*, p. 131.

<sup>23</sup> Bew, *Ideology*, p. 113.

<sup>24</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p.104.

At the end of May, the rank and file became actively involved in the Volunteer movement. Michael Tierney claimed that in the last ten days of May, Irish Members 'made a spectacular effort, in speeches all over the country, to claim the movement as their own'.<sup>25</sup> In fact, with a several exceptions, the great majority of Members did not address meetings in Ireland until Sunday May 31.<sup>26</sup> The Whitsuntide recess began on May 25, and Irish MPs were present up to the adjournment owing to the third reading of the Home Rule Bill being before Parliament. J.J. Clancy, for instance, had to telegram a Volunteer meeting in Skerries on May 24 'Cannot leave here just now, for reasons known to all, but I admire the spirit shown and wish you all success.'<sup>27</sup>



As figure 1 illustrates, the weekends of May 29-31 and June 5-7, saw a co-ordinated campaign, with MPs addressing meetings up and down the country in support of the Volunteer movement. In addressing their constituents during this fortnight, some MPs sought to explain their sudden conversion. Richard Hazleton, (who perhaps more than most MPs needed to justify his change of heart), told his listeners at the unveiling of a memorial to a Tipperary fenian, that his views had been 'profoundly modified' by the Curragh 'mutiny' and the Unionist response to it.<sup>28</sup> However, rather than engaging in soul-bearing,

<sup>25</sup> Tierney, *MacNeill*, p. 137.

<sup>26</sup> Arthur Lynch addressed a meeting on Clapham Common in support of the Volunteers on May 17. *II*, 18.5.14., 4.

<sup>27</sup> *FJ*, 25.5.15., 7.

<sup>28</sup> *FJ*, 2.6.14., 4.

the majority of Irish Members busied themselves instead in an impressive display of collective legerdemain. For the Irish Party sought to 'capture' the Volunteers not simply by intimidation, but by the deft manipulation of the truth. The key-note of the Party's version of the past six months was that the Volunteers, as Tom Scanlan put it, were a 'spontaneous uprising'.<sup>29</sup> As John Dillon told his constituents

having witnessed the effect of the bullying and threatening of Carson's Volunteers on the government and on English opinion, and in view of the mutiny of the cavalry officers at the Curragh, he was not surprised that a feeling should have spread through the Nationalists of Ireland that the time had come when they should enrol themselves, drill and arm.<sup>30</sup>

No mention was made here of the existence of the Volunteers since November 1913, the long negotiations between the Party and the Provisional Committee or of the fact that (as T.M. Kettle put it in April 1914) it was made up of '[m]en who were long separated in political tactics'.<sup>31</sup> Instead, the myth was popularized that 'Begun in Athlone, as an answer to the mutiny in the Curragh camp, the movement [had] spread from the centre to the sea'.<sup>32</sup> Certainly, an organisation called the Midland Volunteer Force, comprising of reservists and professing support for the Party (and the king) had been founded in Athlone, but in September 1913, not spring 1914.<sup>33</sup> By deploying this 'counter-factual' version of the Volunteers' origins, MPs not only side-stepped awkward questions about their belated support, but were able to present the new organisation as a spontaneous, grass-roots response to the events of Spring 1914. This was a key part of the Party's strategy; allowing MPs to recast the Volunteers as the enterprise of Party supporters committed to an orthodox constitutional agenda. This had not been apparent in November 1913, when MacNeill had abrogated to himself the right to initiate policy, normally exercised by the Party, or when Pearse had implied that the Volunteers and not the Party would in future be the vehicle of Ireland's destiny. However, in the speeches of Irish Members during the Whitsuntide recess, the function and purpose of the Irish Volunteers was reoriented so that

emergencies, not for attack, not for defiance, but for the defence of a constitutional right which had already been granted to them by the British Parliament.’<sup>34</sup> Given this fact, Members were equally firm as to the need for the Party and the country to have confidence in the commanders of the Volunteers. As J.P. Hayden told a Roscommon meeting called to form a Volunteer corps ‘[they regarded the movement] with the greatest possible friendliness, and desired to see it successful, but they hoped that like every other organisation in Ireland it would act in co-operation [with], and would take its directions from, the leaders of the [constitutional] movement.’<sup>35</sup>

Of course, the Party’s attempt to wrest control of the Volunteers was not completely without incident. Tom Landon, for example, encountered some criticism of his ‘interference’ in the Volunteers, to which he responded bullishly by insisting that ‘in any movement got up by his constituents he would be at the head of it.’<sup>36</sup> In Galway city, the local Volunteers refused to turn out officially to welcome Stephen Gwynn on his return to the constituency.<sup>37</sup> However, elsewhere in Ireland, Volunteers raised no such objections and were incorporated into local political ceremonies. In Leix, P.J. Meehan was escorted to his residence by Nationalists, including the local Volunteer corps in ‘military array’. In neighbouring Ossory, William Delany was met on his arrival by 300 Volunteers who formed a ‘guard of honour’. In North Sligo, Tom Scanlan was met at Sligo town station by local Volunteers and carried ‘shoulder high’ through the streets.<sup>38</sup>

Redmond’s ultimatum of June 9 and the subsequent (short-lived) capitulation of the Provisional Committee are beyond the concern of this section. However, it is important to recognize that the brief two-week campaign conducted by rank and file members of the Irish Party played an important part in Redmond’s bid to control the Volunteers. The mobilisation of ‘pivot men’ in the provinces was doubtless significant. But equally so was the high-profile efforts of individual Members to place themselves at the head (even if only symbolically) of their local Volunteer units, thereby projecting the impression that they, and not the Dublin based Provisional Committee, had energized the movement in the provinces.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> *FJ*, 5.6.14., 7.

<sup>35</sup> *FJ*, 2.6.14., 8.

<sup>36</sup> *FJ*, 1.6.14., 10.

<sup>37</sup> *FJ*, 30.5.14., 10.

<sup>38</sup> *FJ*, 2.6.14., 8; 3.6.14., 5, 9.

<sup>39</sup> There was some truth in this claim, since the Volunteers grew from approximately 50,000 in late May to 100,000 in mid-June, and reached about 150,000 by mid July. See, David Fitzpatrick, *The Two Irelands, 1912-1939* (Oxford, 1998), p.49.

In contrast to the events of May and June 1914, historians have proven less interested in the participation of Irish MPs in the months before the outbreak of War, concentrating instead on Redmond's commitment of the Volunteers to home defence in August and the events which followed. In truth, the involvement of the Party was much more limited in the summer of 1914. In part, this may have reflected Redmond's pragmatism; Tierney claims that the majority of the 25 men Redmond nominated to the new Provisional Committee were 'nonentities', and that this indicates that he intended to 'smother' the Volunteers. Historians have also drawn attention to the unwillingness of some Members to organize the Volunteers in their constituencies. Within months of the outbreak of war, Colonel Maurice Moore was complaining of the lethargy of some MPs in relation to the Volunteers. In February 1915 he wrote to Tom Scanlan requesting his assistance in forming a county board for the Sligo Volunteers, as the county had been slow to organize. He added 'The Irish Parliamentary Party undertook to manage the Volunteers and caused a revolution. We must ask them now to go to their counties and do some solid work. You are capable of doing the whole thing in no time if you will buckle to'. Scanlan, however, could or would not find the time and continued to absent himself from the meetings of the county board.<sup>40</sup>

In fairness, however, it seems that some rank and file MPs were genuinely enthusiastic about the movement. The *Independent's* parliamentary correspondent, reported at the beginning of June that Irish MPs returned to Westminster 'with glowing accounts of the National Volunteer movement. Some of them made no secret of their amazement at the extraordinary strength and fervour of their new spirit sweeping over the country.'<sup>41</sup> In fact, the limited involvement of MPs with the Volunteers probably had as much to do with the necessity for MPs to be in close attendance in the House.<sup>42</sup> As a result of the Party's standing order for its members to be at Westminster, the majority of MPs were removed from their constituencies (and thus involvement with the Volunteers) from the start of May until the beginning of the summer recess on September 18.

Although parliamentary service interfered with the ability of many Members to participate in the Volunteer movement after June 1914, some MPs still managed to be closely involved with their local Volunteer organisations. In July, the 67 year old MP for North County Dublin, John Clancy, made the trip from Westminster to his constituency three times to

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<sup>40</sup> Farry, *Sligo 1914-21*, p. 50.

<sup>41</sup> *II*, 10.6.14., 4.

<sup>42</sup> For instance, see William Delany's letter to the Ballacolla corps. *Leinster Leader*, 25.7.14., 6.

organize his local movement.<sup>43</sup> J.P. Farrell was the president of the Longford Volunteers.<sup>44</sup> John Cullinan and his three colleagues in the representation of Tipperary were members of their county board,<sup>45</sup> while the MP for the Leix division of Queen's county, P.J. Meehan, was a member of the Queen's county board of the Volunteers.<sup>46</sup> Meehan and Jerry MacVeagh were closely involved in organising the administration of the Volunteers nationally.<sup>47</sup> Tom O'Donnell went to considerable lengths to organize the Volunteers in Kerry, though in large part this was because there was considerable support in the Kerry movement for the Provisional Committee.<sup>48</sup>

Members also presided at the reviews and drill inspections of local Volunteer units. William O'Malley even conducted the drill of the Clifden corps on one occasion!<sup>49</sup> Other Members presented colours to Volunteer units,<sup>50</sup> while many Members 'inspected' local Volunteer units. Joe Devlin, for example, took the salute when 2,000 Belfast Volunteers marched past him in June,<sup>51</sup> and when William Field inspected the James Street (Dublin) Corps in August, he presented them with a song he had composed, entitled 'God Save Ireland's Volunteers'.<sup>52</sup>

Clearly, some Irish MPs were involved with the Volunteer movement following Redmond's take-over. That said, much of the evidence suggests that MPs participated in the Volunteers much as they customarily did with any organisation in their constituency. Yet the Volunteers were not like the UIL, AOH, GAA, the society of St Vincent de Paul or any other Irish organisation, since (as MPs repeatedly proclaimed after June 1914) 'The Irish Volunteers were founded to *defend* [author's emphasis] Home Rule.' This distinction is important and prompts the question as to whether in the summer of 1914 Irish MPs really did believe that the Volunteers might shortly be engaged in fighting a civil war?

During the years of the third Home Rule crisis, the discrediting of the Ulster Unionist capacity to wage war was a major theme of the extra-parliamentary speeches made by Irish MPs in Britain and Ireland. One tactic employed was to focus on the person of Sir Edward Carson. Among the many personal attacks on him, was his depiction as an

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<sup>43</sup> *FJ*, 13.7.14., 7.

<sup>44</sup> *FJ*, 20.10.14., 6.

<sup>45</sup> *FJ*, 9.11.14., 6.

<sup>46</sup> *Leinster Leader*, 12.9.14., 5.

<sup>47</sup> Jerry MacVeagh to John Redmond, 12.7.14., NLI, RP, ms 15,205 [9].

<sup>48</sup> Gaughan, *Odyssey*, p. 98.

<sup>49</sup> *FJ*, 10.6.14., 9.

<sup>50</sup> *FJ*, 5.10.14., 4; 28.10.14., 6; 23.11.14., 5.

<sup>51</sup> *FJ*, 8.6.14., 7.

<sup>52</sup> *FJ*, 20.8.14., 4.

ambitious 'London lawyer', formidable in the dock but ridiculous at the head of an army.<sup>53</sup> His physique (just under eleven stone and 6.2") was also cited as showing that he was not built for fighting.<sup>54</sup> Scorn was also heaped on his supporters. Jerry MacVeagh referred scathingly to 'Sir Edward Carson's phantom army of chocolate soldiers',<sup>55</sup> John O'Dowd described the Ulster Volunteers as 'feather-bed warriors',<sup>56</sup> A.J.C. Donelan referred dismissively to 'north-east theatricals', while other MPs sneered at the 'wooden guns' with which the Ulster Volunteers trained.<sup>57</sup>

The lampooning of Ulster's military capacity continued unabated throughout the Home Rule crisis. However, as the crisis deepened, Irish Members sought to leave Unionists in no doubt that nationalist Ireland would fight if compelled to. Typical of such war-like speeches was that given by E.H. Burke in August 1913: 'He was not seriously frightened by Sir Edward Carson's threats of civil war in the North. If the worst came to the worst he was sure himself or Mr Delany or Mr Meehan could raise as good bodies of mounted men as Sir Edward Carson'.<sup>58</sup> The following December, J.C.R. Lardner declared that 'If there was to be a row, and it is left to the Nationalists of Ulster to settle...they would do it in a very short time'.<sup>59</sup> In July 1914, Matt Keating proclaimed to a meeting of Volunteers that '[t]hey were prepared to spill their blood and lose their lives if necessary', while Joseph Nolan expressed the sentiment that 'if civil war is forced upon us, we are prepared to do our duty'.<sup>60</sup>

Burke (whose statement was greeted with 'laughter and cheers') was a journalist in his late forties, Lardner was a solicitor in his mid thirties, Keating was a manufacturer's agent in his mid forties and Nolan was a former brewer's agent in his mid sixties. Several of these men (like the majority of the Party) would have been too old to fight, and none of them had military backgrounds (though Nolan had been a fenian and Burke had been a war correspondent). As the middle aged barrister, J.J. Clancy, told the Jamestown Volunteers 'He never thought, up to very recently, that he should...end his days as a sort of military man (laughter), but events had proved too strong for men like him who had relied on constitutional action for the redemption of Ireland.'<sup>61</sup> Moreover, it is notable that with the

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<sup>53</sup> *FJ*, 9.10.11., 8.

<sup>54</sup> *FJ*, 26.10.11., 8.

<sup>55</sup> *FJ*, 29.1.12., 9.

<sup>56</sup> *Sligo Champion*, 27.1.12., 12; *FJ*, 18.1.12., 8.

<sup>57</sup> *FJ*, 7.10.12., 4; 7.3.13., 9; 28.4.13., 7; 20.10.13., 8; 6.11.13., 8.

<sup>58</sup> *FJ*, 26.8.13., 8.

<sup>59</sup> *FJ*, 11.12.13., 8.

<sup>60</sup> *FJ*, 20.7.14., 8; 9.6.14., 9.

<sup>61</sup> *FJ*, 28.7.14., 9-10.

exception of John Dillon, who was made an honorary Colonel in the Dublin Volunteers,<sup>62</sup> the only MPs known to have joined the organisation (in an active capacity) are Dr John Esmonde, who was a Volunteer Colonel, Willie Redmond and Vincent Kennedy.<sup>63</sup>

The available evidence certainly does not suggest that in 1914 Irish Members seriously believed that they were preparing for war. In part, this may be because Nationalists did not conceive of civil war in terms of two standing armies confronting one another on the field of battle.<sup>64</sup> Rather, many MPs expected any conflict to resemble the Belfast rioting of 1912.<sup>65</sup> As William O'Malley explained 'Although they may kill a few Papists in shipyards, there is no danger whatever, that the rebels will be guilty of a general slaughter.'<sup>66</sup> But, arguably, much the most important reason was that the Party saw the Volunteers in terms not of their fighting capacity, but their deterrent value, and it is in this light that the Party's arming of the Volunteers is best understood.

As early as May 30, one Irish MP had announced that 'they were going to get rifles into Ireland'.<sup>67</sup> After J.J. O'Shee addressed approximately 1,300 Volunteers some weeks later, a conference was held as to how they could procure enough rifles 'to ensure that every young man would be a sharp-shooter in three months'.<sup>68</sup> O'Shee told the assembled meeting that he would seek to have the arms proclamation of December 1913 (which had prohibited the importation of arms or ammunition for 'warlike purposes') revoked.<sup>69</sup> Similar claims were made by other Members. However, a group of more advanced nationalists simply ignored the proclamation and on July 26 landed guns and ammunition at Howth.<sup>70</sup> The Party knew nothing of these plans (indeed, Kettle was deliberately kept in the dark), though they sought and secured a share of these rifles for their supporters.<sup>71</sup> Meanwhile, the Party had its own arms procurement scheme. As early as June,<sup>72</sup> Redmond told John Gore and George Walsh (both of them Redmondite members

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<sup>62</sup> *FJ*, 19.11.14., 6.

<sup>63</sup> *FJ*, 15.9.14., 6; *Clare Champion*, 31.10.14., 3; *A-C*, 22.8.14., 8.

<sup>64</sup> There was also uncertainty among the Ulster Volunteers as to the kind of action they were being trained for. Timothy Bowman, 'The Ulster Volunteer Force and the formation of the 36th (Ulster) Division', *IHS*, vol. xxxii, no. 128 (2001), p. 499.

<sup>65</sup> For instance, see *FJ*, 18.5.12., 8; 23.5.12., 7; 30.7.12., 6; 12.3.14., 7.

<sup>66</sup> *FJ*, 2.12.13., 8.

<sup>67</sup> *FJ*, 1.6.14., 10.

<sup>68</sup> *FJ*, 10.6.14., 9.

<sup>69</sup> *FJ*, 6.12.13., 6.

<sup>70</sup> At the time, the *Freeman's* claimed that 3,500 rifles had been landed. The actual figure was lower, estimates ranging from under 1,000 to 1,500. *FJ*, 27.7.14., 6; Jacqueline Van Vorris, *Constance de Markievicz* (Amherst, MA., 1967), p. 135; Tierney, *MacNeill*, p. 142.

<sup>71</sup> Maume, *Gestation*, p. 146.

<sup>72</sup> *FJ*, 19.6.14., 6.



of the Provisional Committee) that he had purchased 4,000 rifles with ammunition at a cost of £10,000, the balance of which had to be paid before they could be delivered. Apparently, Redmond wanted the new Committee to 'run' the guns and strongly hinted that 'the government might relax the precautions so as to convenience us'.<sup>73</sup> At the beginning of August, the arms proclamation was withdrawn, and on August 16 Redmond publicly announced that he had secured 'several thousand rifles'.

The procurement of weapons by the Party was a complex operation (covertly assisted by the British government), involving Tom Kettle, Willie Redmond, John O'Connor (who had formerly been a gun-runner for the IRB) and Richard McGhee travelling to Belgium to purchase the rifles.<sup>74</sup> A complicating factor was that war was declared between Britain and Germany on August 4, with the consequence that the weapons were held up in Ostend and Antwerp. Kettle and O'Shee lobbied the Foreign Office and T.P. O'Connor contacted the Belgium legation,<sup>75</sup> but apparently to no avail, as O'Connor was still pressing the War Office for the return of the 'Belgian Rifles' over a year later.<sup>76</sup> Clearly, though, some rifles were brought into the country by Kettle and O'Connor, for at the beginning of September Devlin distributed rifles to 'first line troops' in Antrim, Down, Armagh, Derry, Tyrone and Belfast.<sup>77</sup> Second line troops were also provided for. At the end of the month O'Connor visited his constituency 'with a full equipment of rifles' for the Kilcock Volunteers,<sup>78</sup> while in Tipperary, John Cullinan motored with his wife from Dungarvan 'and brought with them a supply of rifles for the Tipperary Battalion of the Galtee Regiment.'<sup>79</sup> In fact, Members of Parliament seem to have been central to the Party's scheme for distributing arms to the Volunteers. When Tom Condon, for instance, visited Cashel in mid October he brought with him a sample rifle for inspection by the local Volunteer committee, who ordered 100.<sup>80</sup> Several days later, the Longford Volunteers requested that J.P. Farrell solicit 500 rifles from the Provisional Committee.<sup>81</sup> In Wexford, Peter Ffrench was kept busy during the recess arming the Wexford Town Corps and other units in the county,<sup>82</sup> while in Kerry, Tom O'Donnell was

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<sup>73</sup> Martin, *Howth*, p. 54.

<sup>74</sup> T.M. Kettle to John Redmond, [before Aug. 10] 1914, NLI, RP, ms 15,199 [5]; T.M. Kettle to John Redmond, c. Aug. 1914, NLI, RP, ms 15,199 [5].

<sup>75</sup> T.M. Kettle to John Redmond, 13.8.14., NLI, RP, ms 15,199 [5]

<sup>76</sup> John O'Connor to John Redmond, 26.7.15.; 27.8.15.; 3.9.15., NLI, RP, ms 15,214 [3].

<sup>77</sup> *FJ*, 3.9.14., 2.

<sup>78</sup> *FJ*, 30.9.14., 6.

<sup>79</sup> *FJ*, 1.10.14., 7.

<sup>80</sup> *Tipperary Star*, 10.10.14., 8; *FJ*, 16.10.14., 4.

<sup>81</sup> *FJ*, 20.10.14., 6.

<sup>82</sup> *FJ*, 2.11.14., 6.

responsible for distributing weapons to those Volunteers loyal to Redmond.<sup>83</sup> However, this system was not entirely satisfactory; the rifles distributed had to be paid for, and according to Joe Devlin 'In cases where we sent the rifles to Members of Parliament without receiving cheques first, we have had tremendous difficulty in getting payment.'<sup>84</sup>

The involvement of Irish MPs in the arming of the Volunteers, *after* the outbreak of war, has not hitherto been fully acknowledged. It reflected in part the analysis (shared by John Dillon and others) that Nationalist Ireland's confrontation with Unionist Ulster had been postponed not concluded, thus requiring preparation in order to 'win the peace'.<sup>85</sup> However, the fact that several thousand rifles (of questionable use) were distributed among 100,000 or more Volunteers (and not without logistical problems) suggests a symbolically important gesture more than a serious military plan. Moreover, the strategy (enlistment) pursued by Redmond after August 1914 made maintaining the Volunteers extremely difficult. J.P. Hayden, for example, writing to a friend proudly revealed that 180 men (from a population of 1,800) had enlisted. Most, he claimed, were Volunteers, which had meant that the local corps had been 'reduced almost to the vanishing point'.<sup>86</sup> In Galway, Stephen Gwynn found a similar problem: 'The pick of the young and keen who were with us went off to war'.<sup>87</sup>

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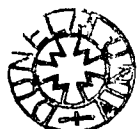
<sup>83</sup> Gaughan, *Odyssey*, p. 97.

<sup>84</sup> Joe Devlin to Tom O'Donnell, 9.12.14., NLI, ODP, ms 15,458 [5].

<sup>85</sup> Bew, *Ideology*, p. 129.

<sup>86</sup> *FJ*, 24.11.14., 6.

<sup>87</sup> Gwynn, *Last Years*, p. 166.



## Chapter Two: Pereptions of the Irish Party

### Section Six: The Party and the First World War, (August- December, 1914)

Citing John Redmond's support for Britain during the First World War, historians have assumed that 'the unquestioning and unquestioned allegiance of the Home Rule Party...to Britain in its war on Germany' followed automatically.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, Irish Members of Parliament have been depicted (both by contemporaries and later commentators) as having served as 'recruiting sergeants' for the British army during the First World War.<sup>2</sup> Certainly, there is no reason to doubt that the majority of the Party agreed with Redmond's policy in August 1914.<sup>3</sup> For although Redmond only consulted those of his most intimate colleagues to hand in the chamber, when on August 3 he offered the Volunteers for home defence, it seems probable that what the *Freeman's* London correspondent described as 'the most striking feature of the demonstrations which marked the speech [of Sir Edward Grey]', namely, the cheering and waiving of handkerchiefs by the Boer War commando Arthur Lynch, the chairman's brother Willie Redmond and the former fenian, Michael Reddy, was broadly representative of the immediate feelings of the Party as a whole.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, Lynch claimed in 1915 that 'in [subsequently] advising the Volunteers to go to the front...to assist in defeating the common enemy', 'Mr Redmond adopted a course which the great majority of Irish representatives considered wise'.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, up to Christmas 1914, only two Irish MPs publicly dissented from the Party's support for the war. In South Longford, the ex-fenian John Phillips was, according to J.P. Farrell, 'pro-German mad and...fiercely denouncing Redmond in all directions', while two months later, the MP for North Kilkenny, Michael Meagher (another former fenian), stated that he had no intention of going 'out with a ribbon in his hat and becom[ing] a recruiting sergeant, telling unfortunate Irishmen to sacrifice their very existence for the purpose of promoting British commerce'.<sup>6</sup> Presumably these were the same 'extreme men' Stephen Gwynn referred to as thinking it 'too hard' that they should have to publicly support the war.<sup>7</sup>

But if the majority of Irish Members did not express dissent, nor can their attitude be described as having been wholly enthusiastic. For example, with the outbreak of war

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<sup>1</sup> C.J. O'Donnell and Brendan Clifford, *Ireland in the Great War* (Belfast, 1992), p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *FJ*, 6.10.14., 6; Allen, *James Connolly*, p. 132; *Irish Times*, 20.4.[19]92., 10.

<sup>3</sup> But, see *II*, 5.8.27., 5.

<sup>4</sup> *FJ*, 4.8.14., 4.

<sup>5</sup> Lynch, *Vital Hour*, p. 189.

<sup>6</sup> J.P. Farrell to John Dillon, 8.10.14, TCD, DP, 6753/430; *II*, 3.12.14., 4.

<sup>7</sup> Gwynn, *Last Years*, p. 167.

those British Members who were reservists (about 100) were called to the colours,<sup>8</sup> while many other MPs volunteered.<sup>9</sup> In fact, over 150 MPs served during the war,<sup>10</sup> and one of the first parliamentary casualties was the Member for Mid Antrim, Captain Arthur O'Neill, in early November 1914.<sup>11</sup> Even among those British Members apparently ineligible for military service, the desire to serve was still strong. As the Conservative MP Sir Ellis Hume-Williams explained 'for me the problem with which every other middle-aged man in the country was at once faced, namely, "How to get a job of some sort at the front."'”<sup>12</sup>

Nationalist Members do not seem to have been actuated by the same impulse. In total six Irish Members, out of a Party of 74, joined the British army. Stephen Gwynn was a Captain in the Connaught Rangers, Willie Redmond was a Captain in the Royal Irish Regiment, and his nephew, W.A. Redmond, served with the 10th Irish Division (and later the Dublin Fusiliers and Irish Guards).<sup>13</sup> Dr John Esmonde served as a Captain in the Royal Army Medical Corps,<sup>14</sup> while his son Lieutenant John Esmonde served with the 16th (Irish) Division (Redmond's 'Irish Brigade'). Having tried to enlist at the beginning of the War,<sup>15</sup> Arthur Lynch was commissioned a Colonel in 1918 for the purposes of recruiting. Additionally, the O'Brienite MP, Daniel Sheehan, served as a Captain with the Royal Munster Fusiliers.<sup>16</sup>

However, the Party's commitment to the war was (indirectly) leavened by the enlistment of various Members' male relatives. John MacBride declared at the beginning of the war that in the light of the Party's attitude towards the conflict, he expected to see Redmond and Dillon's sons joining the army.<sup>17</sup> Dillon's did not, but Redmond's did, along with the male relatives of nine other MPs. The sons of three Irish Members were killed during the War.

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<sup>8</sup> *FJ*, 5.8.14., 6.

<sup>9</sup> *FJ*, 28.10.14., 4.

<sup>10</sup> Martin Pugh, *Electoral Reform in War and Peace, 1906-18* (London, 1978), p. 121.

<sup>11</sup> *FJ*, 10.11.14., 4.

<sup>12</sup> Sir Ellis Hume Williams, *The World, The House and the Bar* (London, 1930), p. 73

<sup>13</sup> Some thought Redmond's physique would debar him from active service, but during the war he was decorated for bravery. Frank McDermott to John Dillon, 24.2.15., TCD, DP, ms 6772/504; Maume, *Gestation*, p. 242. For the initial difficulties connected with Redmond's commission, see Terence Denman, *Ireland's Unknown Soldiers: the 16th (Irish) Division in the Great War* (Dublin, 1992), p. 48.

<sup>14</sup> Esmonde's links with the Corps pre-dated the First World War. See, *Hansard*, HC (series 5) vol. lvi, col. 659 (30.7.13.).

<sup>15</sup> Lynch, *Life Story*, pp. 70-85, 119-25, 265-74.

<sup>16</sup> Maume, *Gestation*, p. 149.

<sup>17</sup> *Mayo News*, 29.6.14., 4.

The reasons for the apparent lack of enthusiasm for military service on the part of Irish MPs are several. No doubt, in part, the very small number of Irish Members with a military background made some difference. Whereas in December 1910, 18 Liberal Members and 56 Conservative MPs, had served or were serving with the armed forces,<sup>18</sup> only one Irish Member had had a military career, and by 1914 he was 68.<sup>19</sup> As Stephen Gwynn later explained, '[by 1914] we were the section of the House of Commons which had least touch with what was thought and felt in barrack-rooms and regimental messes.'<sup>20</sup> In fact, the Irish Party had never attracted many men from orthodox military backgrounds,<sup>21</sup> (perhaps because such a career-change could result in being socially ostracized by fellow-officers),<sup>22</sup> and the Party of 1914 probably had as many Members with some military experience (albeit not always of a conventional type),<sup>23</sup> or military connections,<sup>24</sup> as any since 1885. Doubtless, also the Party's, and indeed nationalist Ireland's, long-standing political 'estrangement from the forces which upheld a detested

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<sup>18</sup> J.A. Thomas, *The House of Commons, 1906-1911* (Cardiff, 1958), p.44.

<sup>19</sup> Captain A.J.C. Donelan was the chief whip of the Irish Party. He came from a military family, his grandfather, Colonel Charles Donelan, commanded the 1st Battalion of the 48th Northamptonshire Regiment of Foot in 1809 at the Battle of Talavera during the Peninsula War. Colonel Donelan's son also served with the regiment. After Sandhurst, his son, A.J.C. Donelan was commissioned ensign in 1863 with the 1st Battalion, 9th East Norfolk Regiment of Foot ('The Fighting Ninth'). In 1866 he was gazetted Lieutenant, but in 1871 the Army Lists record him as having retired on half-pay as a Lieutenant, a situation which continued until mid 1874, whereupon he appears to have left the regular army. The cause of his retirement is unknown. His battalion was not involved in any fighting between Sevastapol in 1855 and the Second Afghan War in 1879, but it was in South Africa in 1869, where it survived an outbreak of Cholera. This may explain his retirement. It also seems on the strength of this evidence that his Captaincy was a militia rank. See, Russell Gurney, *A History of the Northamptonshire Regiment, 1774-1934* (Aldershot, 1935), vol. i, pp. 109-10, 132, 141; *Army Lists*, (1869-74); Tim Carew, *The Royal Norfolk Regiment* (London, 1967), pp. 63-6; Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum to author, 17.10.00; Museum of the Northamptonshire Regiment to author, 2.11.00. Interestingly, his military background was almost never referred to in public. For the single known exception between 1910 and 1914, see *FJ*, 13.5.13., 7. This silence may have been because some nationalists were prepared to contrast his service in the British army unfavourably with the records of fenian veterans. See, *CA*, 1.1.10., 1.

<sup>20</sup> Gwynn, *Last Years*, pp. 106-7.

<sup>21</sup> O'Day, 'Irish Parliamentary Party', pp. 272-3.

<sup>22</sup> *FJ*, 31.1.12., 7; *PMG*, 'Extra', 1900, p. 69.

<sup>23</sup> Sir Thomas Esmonde had been a Lieutenant in the Royal Artillery (Militia) between 1880-86, while Willie Redmond was a Lieutenant in the City of Wexford Militia. J.J. O'Kelly served in North Africa and Mexico with the French Foreign Legion, and later was appointed a Colonel in the French army during the Franco-Prussian War. Arthur Lynch had served with the Irish Brigade during the Anglo-Boer War.

<sup>24</sup> John Redmond's uncle was Lieutenant-General T.P. Redmond, a veteran of the Indian mutiny. Hugh Law's brother was a senior staff officer at the War Office and Law's three daughters all married officers. The Esmonde's had close family links with the army. Sir Thomas Esmonde's brother-in-law was a retired colonel. Sir Walter Nugent's brother had been an officer in the 6th Battalion of the Rifle Brigade. T.P. O'Connor's paternal grandfather was a non-commissioned officer in the Connaught Rangers. *FJ*, 19.3.13., 5; Law, *Man At Arms*, p.28, 38; *FJ*, 12.2.13., 6; 7.3.14., 6; 4.6.14., 6; Brady, *O'Connor*, pp. 4-5.

system of government' played a part, though as Stephen Gwynn acknowledged this was at times combined with a 'deep-seated pride in the exploits of Irish troops'.<sup>25</sup>

But probably of equal significance for why more Irish Members did not volunteer, was not the professional make-up of the Irish Party, but its generational profile. For by 1914, the Party had 'the largest proportion of men over military age' within Parliament. In fact, in 1910 the average age of the Party was 50.4 years, while there were just four men in the Party who were thirty years old or younger. As Tom Condon, the 64 year old former fenian, explained to one Tipperary audience in October 1914 'If he were a young man tomorrow, he would volunteer for service with the allies, for if ever there was a just and holy war, this war by the Allies against the Prussian Huns was one'.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, even this problem of age might have been overcome, as was done in the cases of both Willie Redmond and Stephen Gwynn (albeit after much lobbying), had the War Office been more amenable.<sup>27</sup> For, according to one historian, there was strong pressure on the military authorities to commission Irish MPs as officers for the 16th (Irish) Division (though whether this came from the Members themselves or from the Party leadership is unclear).<sup>28</sup> Whichever, to the regret of Stephen Gwynn, the War Office refused to 'waive a regulation or two to facilitate matters', so that 'the rigour of the rules was maintained'.<sup>29</sup>

Yet, as Patrick Maume has commented, even after these arguments are made, 'several MPs of military age conspicuously abstained from enlistment'.<sup>30</sup> In some cases the reasons are more apparent than others. Joe Devlin, for instance, was 42 in 1914, but was apparently persuaded by John Redmond not to apply for a commission in the interests of the Party.<sup>31</sup> Richard Hazleton had 'personal' problems,<sup>32</sup> while Tom Lundon, who told an audience of Limerick Volunteers that 'They were eager, they were ready to lay down their lives for the cause of Irish liberty', may have been influenced by John Dillon's doubts concerning the war (though his father's fenianism may also have played a part).<sup>33</sup> Despite his evident enthusiasm for the war, Tom O'Donnell (who Paul Bew describes as the 'stay at home MP'), may have held back from joining up because of his large family.<sup>34</sup> His

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<sup>25</sup> Gwynn, *Last Years*, p. 107

<sup>26</sup> *FJ*, 8.10.14., 6.

<sup>27</sup> Denman, *Unknown Soldiers*, pp. 47-8.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, p. 47

<sup>29</sup> Gwynn, *Last Years*, p. 168.

<sup>30</sup> Maume, *Gestation*, p. 153.

<sup>31</sup> Gwynn, *Last Years*, p. 183.

<sup>32</sup> John Redmond to Lloyd George, 25.5.14., HLRO, LGP, C/7/3/10.

<sup>33</sup> *FJ*, 26.10.14., 6. Dillon, writing to Tom O'Donnell in October 1914, observed that 'recruiting so far as it is necessary and desirable will take place naturally'. John Dillon to Tom O'Donnell, 18.10.14., NLI, ODP, ms 15,458 [5].

<sup>34</sup> Gaughan, *Odyssey*, p. 108, 135.

colleague in the representation of Kerry, J.P. Boland was also criticized for not practising what he preached.<sup>35</sup> Both men's cases may reflect the difficulties even men in their early forties could encounter in volunteering, if they were Nationalist MPs.<sup>36</sup> This may also explain why Vincent Kennedy (whose brother was wounded while fighting),<sup>37</sup> J.C.R. Lardner, P.J. Meehan, and Timothy O'Sullivan did not volunteer, as all had been born in or after 1875, and thus would have been border-line cases.

Even if the overwhelming majority of Irish MPs were ineligible for military service on the grounds of age or health, these disabilities did not necessarily preclude them from recruiting others to fight. Yet, many did not. The difficulty they faced here was not a physical impediment, but ultimately a psychological one. As Stephen Gwynn recalled

the political organisation of which he [Redmond] was head had inculcated an attitude of aloofness from the army because it was the army which held Ireland in force. Enlistment had been discouraged, on the principle that from a military point of view Ireland was regarded as a conquered country.<sup>38</sup>

However, as Terence Denman has shown, historically, the Party's hostility towards recruitment was more implied than explicitly stated. During the Anglo-Boer War, for instance, although the Irish Party supported the Boers, it did not on the whole support the advanced position of the Irish Transvaal Committee, which denounced enlistment as 'treason', and campaigned against recruitment.<sup>39</sup> Of course some MPs, such as P.J. O'Brien, J.G.S. MacNeill, Dick McGhee, David Sheehy, James Gilhooly, Michael Joyce and John Dillon, disparaged enlistment (a fact which was later recalled by Unionists during the Home Rule debates),<sup>40</sup> but this still fell well short of criticising serving Irish regiments. Indeed, in the House of Commons, John and Willie Redmond, Patrick Power and William Abraham expressed pride in the gallantry of Irishmen serving in South Africa, and insisted that, having enlisted, Irish soldiers were simply doing their duty in fighting.<sup>41</sup>

Although in the years between the Anglo-Boer War and the First World War opposition to recruiting was a central and unifying issue among advanced nationalists, the

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<sup>35</sup> *Kerryman*, 10.10.14., 1.

<sup>36</sup> According to Gwynn 'One of my colleagues, a man in the early forties, offered to join as a private; he was refused.' Gwynn, *Last Years*, p. 168.

<sup>37</sup> See, Maume, *Gestation*, p. 153.

<sup>38</sup> Gwynn, *Last Years*, pp. 140-1; Gwynn, *Literary Man*, pp. 300-1.

<sup>39</sup> Terence Denman, "'The Red Livery of Shame': The campaign against army recruitment in Ireland, 1899-1914", *IHS*, vol. xxix, no. 114 (1994), pp. 212-14.

<sup>40</sup> For instance, see *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. xlii, cols. 2319-22 (23.10.12.).

<sup>41</sup> Denman, 'Red Livery', pp. 214-16.

Irish Party did not publicly endorse or participate in these campaigns, though some Members continued to express their individual opposition to enlistment. By 1913-14, with the important role reservists were playing in the Irish Volunteers and the high-profile support among Irish enlisted men for Redmond,<sup>42</sup> Nationalist MPs no longer even occasionally spoke of soldiers as 'loafers', but instead directed their criticism towards the 'arrogant' upper-class cavalry officers of the Curragh.

However, if moderation meant that Irish Members rarely criticized those 'who were willing to take England's shilling', before August 1914 this toleration certainly did not extend to supporting recruitment. Even after the outbreak of war, the fact that initially only home defence was proposed, that this was at odds with Kitchener's wish to recruit Irishmen directly into the regular army, and that there was some uncertainty as to whether the Home Rule Bill would be passed, meant that most Irish MPs were reluctant to address the question of military service.<sup>43</sup> Thus, while P.J. Brady and William Field might attend a meeting, along with the Lord Mayor, the Viceroy and T.W. Russell, in support of soldiers' dependants in mid August, when Patrick White found himself several days later sharing a Volunteer platform with Lord Fingall and Lord Dunsany, with the latter encouraging the audience to enlist immediately, he felt compelled to insist firmly that Irish Nationalists would take instructions from Redmond alone and that 'they did not...abandon one iota of the principle which brought us [first] together'.<sup>44</sup>

Matters changed though when on September 17 (the day before the Home Rule Bill was enacted), Redmond issued a manifesto stating the attitude of the Party in relation to the war and employing many of the arguments which were to become familiar over the coming months. 'A test to search men's souls has arisen. The empire is engaged in the most serious war in history. It is a just war, provoked by the intolerable military despotism of Germany. It is a war for the defence of the sacred rights and liberties of small nations'.<sup>45</sup> In his statement, Redmond proposed the creation of an 'Irish Brigade' (drawing on continental historical precedents), composed of county battalions and officered by Irishmen, and the simultaneous training and arming of the Volunteers for home defence. However, the question of how the Irish Brigade was to be recruited was not addressed. Three days later, at Woodenbridge, Redmond expanded on his manifesto, when he told a group of Volunteers (in what the *Freeman's* called 'a stirring little speech') that it would be a 'disgrace' if Irishmen remained at home 'to defend the shores of Ireland from an

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<sup>42</sup> *FJ*, 23.7.14., 7.

<sup>43</sup> *II*, 15.8.14., 4.

<sup>44</sup> *FJ*, 14.8.14., 5; *Leinster Leader*, 22.8.14., 2.

<sup>45</sup> *FJ*, 17.9.14., 5.



unlikely invasion' and that they should be prepared to serve not only in Ireland itself, but 'wherever the firing line extends, in defence of right, of freedom and religion in this war (cheers).'<sup>46</sup>

Redmond's Woodenbridge declaration has often been seen as a recruiting speech.<sup>47</sup>

In fact, it resembles more a notice for Irishmen to place themselves in a state of readiness, since he had already made it clear that if Irishmen were to serve abroad it would only be in recognisably Irish and nationalist formations. Instead, because of the government's confused position as to training and arming the Volunteers,<sup>48</sup> the delay in the passing of Home Rule,<sup>49</sup> and the opposition of Kitchener and the War Office to the creation of distinctively nationalist formations within the army, Redmond did not publicly recognize the existence of the 'Irish Brigade' (in the form of the 16th (Irish) Division) until late October.<sup>50</sup> Arguably, this fact is important in explaining the behaviour of many MPs in the months leading up to Christmas 1914.

On platforms in Ireland and Britain, Irish Members entered fully into the demonisation of the enemy- some more literally than others. T.P. O'Connor, for example, described the Germans as practising the 'gospel of the devil'.<sup>51</sup> Other Irish MPs were equally convinced that the Allies had God on their side. Tom Condon claimed that 'if ever there was a just and holy war, this war by the Allies against the Prussian Huns was one'.<sup>52</sup> William Field claimed that the Allies were fighting for 'Civilisation and Christianity', as did Willie Redmond.<sup>53</sup> Stephen Gwynn claimed that Ireland should take its place along with the rest of 'Christendom', while Sir Walter Nugent argued that in fighting against Germany they were fighting for 'religion, for civilisation and for the rights of small nations'.<sup>54</sup>

One 'small nation' in particular attracted attention, namely Belgium. Michael Joyce spoke of the 'gallant little Belgians' and P.J. Meehan claimed that it was 'an honour for any honest Irishman to be fighting in the trenches of gallant Belgium'.<sup>55</sup> In Kerry, the anglophile and devoutly religious MP, J.P. Boland, told his audience that Ireland would

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<sup>46</sup> *FJ*, 21.9.14., 5.

<sup>47</sup> For instance, see Allen, *Connolly*, p. 134.

<sup>48</sup> *FJ*, 12.9.14., 7.

<sup>49</sup> In an internal memorandum between Redmond and Dillon, this was described as having had a 'chilling effect' on 'rapid recruiting'. Memorandum, 14.11.14., TCD, DP, ms 6748/537.

<sup>50</sup> *FJ*, 19.10.14., 6..

<sup>51</sup> *FJ*, 20.10.14., 5.

<sup>52</sup> *FJ*, 8.10.14., 6.

<sup>53</sup> *FJ*, 24.9.14., 6; 1.10.14., 6.

<sup>54</sup> *FJ*, 20.11.14., 6; 14.10.14., 6.

<sup>55</sup> *FJ*, 28.10.14., 6.

avenge 'the destruction of gallant Belgian lives and hearths...and [would] put an end to the hideous despotism of Prussian militarism.'<sup>56</sup> Similarly, at a meeting in Mayo, William Doris condemned the Prussians 'who had butchered innocent women and children, and who had destroyed the world famous monuments of piety and learning in Rheims and Louvain'.<sup>57</sup> When William Duffy returned to Loughrea following the enactment of Home Rule, he addressed the local residents and Volunteers who met him from the train, telling them that 'Glorious little Belgium...was being ruined and deluged in blood, her priests and religious being shot down like dogs, her monasteries and cathedrals reduced to ruins.'<sup>58</sup> 'Long John' O'Connor also claimed that German troops shot defenceless women and children.<sup>59</sup>

Willie Redmond expressed reservations about the veracity of such extreme statements, but he was in a minority.<sup>60</sup> Many Members were eager to depose on the wickedness of the Germans. Michael Reddy spoke of 'brutal Germany', while Stephen Gwynn denounced the enemy's 'calculated barbarism'. Sir Walter Nugent also condemned the 'barbarity' of German methods. Tom Lundon lambasted the 'military dictatorship' of the German war machine, and Joe Devlin damned the 'Hessian Hordes' for seeking to place Europe under the 'iron heel of German oppression'.<sup>61</sup>

Several Irish MPs sought to imagine what Ireland's future under Germany would entail. William Doris claimed that if the Allies lost the war Ireland might become a 'second Prussian Poland under the iron heel of the Kaiser', while William Field claimed that Germany coveted Ireland essentially for 'Lebensraum'.<sup>62</sup> Similarly, John Redmond described the suffering of Prussian Poland and predicted a new 'plantation' of Ireland if Germany won the war.<sup>63</sup> Others emphasized the immediate threat posed by Germany to Ireland. Michael Reddy, for instance, warned that 'If the Germans succeeded in the war of conquest it would not be long before they reached these countries too, so that in fighting for England we were fighting for Ireland also'.<sup>64</sup> Many Members emphasized the fact that Britain's army and navy protected not only the mainland, but the southern coast of Ireland.

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<sup>56</sup> *FJ*, 30.9.14., 6.

<sup>57</sup> *FJ*, 30.9.14., 6.

<sup>58</sup> *FJ*, 25.9.14., 3.

<sup>59</sup> *Leinster Leader*, 3.10.14., 8.

<sup>60</sup> *FJ*, 1.10.14., 6.

<sup>61</sup> *FJ*, 23.9.14., 6; 20.11.14., 6; 14.10.14, 6; 13.6.14., 6; 10.10.14., 6.

<sup>62</sup> This is the author's expression. *FJ*, 24.9.14., 6.

<sup>63</sup> *FJ*, 5.10.14., 5.

<sup>64</sup> *FJ*, 23.9.14., 4.

Irish war rhetoric was, then, just as emotive and aggressively partisan as in Britain. However, unlike on the mainland, such graphic descriptions of the enemy and the threat it posed were, on the whole, not followed by any automatic exhortation for those listening to enlist 'for king and country'. This is not to suggest that Nationalists did not address the issue of service abroad, but that when they did it was with studied care. The *Freeman's Journal*, for instance, in an editorial at the end of September, which supported the Allies and emphasized Ireland's historical connection with Belgium, insisted that 'The Volunteers must decide for themselves whether they will stay at home or engage in foreign service'.<sup>65</sup> A similar attitude was adopted by many Irish Members. When Hugh Law, for example, addressed a meeting of Donegal Volunteers on September 27, he echoed John Redmond's Mansion House speech of some days before when he claimed that the European conflict was Ireland's war, but that no man could be compelled to serve in the army against his will, and that for those remaining at home, joining the Volunteers was just as valid.<sup>66</sup> The following month, E.J. Kelly also addressed the matter directly, at a rally in Letterkenny, stating that 'A test has arisen to search men's souls, and it must be a question for each individual to settle whether he will volunteer for the Irish army corps or not.'<sup>67</sup> Several days later, Willie Redmond told a Wexford demonstration that 'Men might form their own opinion as to whether they would go to the front to fight as many good Irishmen already had'.<sup>68</sup> On the same day, in Mayo, John Dillon insisted on the freedom of Irishmen to act as their conscience saw fit, although he added that this was not a luxury enjoyed elsewhere in Europe.<sup>69</sup> In South Fermanagh, Patrick Crumley encouraged local Nationalists to 'bury the hatchet and...take up the rifle to fight for Ireland, and also for the cause of freedom throughout Europe'. But he also explained that 'He had not come there to say to any man that he would force him against his will to do anything in connection with the war which was contrary to his own opinions.'<sup>70</sup> Similarly, Tom Condon told a Tipperary meeting that 'if any Irishman felt he would be serving the cause of Ireland and of liberty on the plains of France or Belgium as much as he would be on the slopes of Slievenamon, as he (Alderman Condon) believed he would, then he was free to go'. But, once again, he added that 'there was not a man in the Volunteers who could be compelled to fight for their Allies in the great European war'.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> *FJ*, 28.9.14., 4.

<sup>66</sup> *FJ*, 29.9.14., 6.

<sup>67</sup> *FJ*, 1.10.14., 6.

<sup>68</sup> *FJ*, 5.10.14., 5.

<sup>69</sup> *FJ*, 6.10.14., 5.

<sup>70</sup> *FJ*, 7.10.14., 8.

<sup>71</sup> *FJ*, 8.10.14., 6.

Clearly, though these MPs supported the Allied war effort, they felt unable to explicitly endorse enlistment. In part, this probably owed much to the desire to avoid legitimating widespread fears that the Volunteers were to be incorporated wholesale into the British army. It also, perhaps, indicates an unwillingness to take recruiting to its logical conclusion: not only encouraging enlistment, but criticising those who held back. Redmond came closest to this, when, in mid October 1914, he observed that ‘to say...we will only defend Ireland by remaining at home at ease without undertaking any risk or any danger is, I say plainly here, a contemptible policy’.<sup>72</sup> The majority of his colleagues, however, felt either unable or unwilling to advance this argument. Indeed, even those Members who individually supported the Allied war effort were anxious not to be seen as ‘recruiting sergeants’. As Tom Lundon told a Galway meeting ‘They had not come there that day as recruiting servants for the British army, but recruiting servants for the army of Ireland’<sup>73</sup>. Many nationalists (including many of Lundon’s colleagues) were unable to appreciate this distinction; some because they remained unsure as to what ‘the army of Ireland’ was, others because they felt unhappy encouraging others to do what they themselves could not, and yet more who knew that in a culture where “‘gone for a soldier” was a word of disgrace for a farmers’ son’, to unequivocally endorse enlistment (even in the unprecedented circumstances of a European war) would alienate grassroots supporters.

There was, however, a small group of Irish Members who proved willing not only to bash the Hun, but also to beat the drum. Undoubtedly the most prominent of these was Stephen Gwynn.<sup>74</sup> As early as September 25, he strongly supported a resolution of the Galway UDC, which stated that ‘it is our duty to try and assist by every means in our power Mr Redmond’s present campaign by inducing the young men of Connaught to enlist in order to help the empire to which we belong.’<sup>75</sup> At a meeting in Galway at the beginning of October, he appealed to his listeners to ‘Bury the hatchet and take up the rifle, for Ireland first, but for England also, and for the cause of freedom throughout Europe’.<sup>76</sup> A week later, an article by Gwynn entitled ‘Ireland’s Interest in the War’ appeared in the *Freeman’s Journal*, in which he dealt candidly with the fact that Ireland had provided less than half the number of recruits which had been expected. Attributing this variously to agricultural buoyancy, the traditionally low esteem in which the ‘soldier’s trade’ had been

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<sup>72</sup> *FJ*, 19.10.14., 6.

<sup>73</sup> *FJ*, 12.11.14., 6.

<sup>74</sup> Bew, *Ideology*, p. 133.

<sup>75</sup> *FJ*, 25.9.14., 6; *Galway Pilot and Vindicator*, 26.9.14., 2.

<sup>76</sup> *FJ*, 3.10.14., 6.

held, and the fact that Irish homes were not directly threatened, Gwynn, while admitting that the British fleet could probably be relied on to stop Germany from invading Ireland, argued that German victory in Belgium would mean tax increases and probably conscription, so that the personal liberty enjoyed by Ireland was being jeopardized by the country's inaction.<sup>77</sup> Over a month later, Gwynn wrote another article for the *Freeman's*, entitled 'Ireland and Christendom', in which he again admitted (uniquely) that 'Ireland does not yet see that her national existence, her right to choose her own way of life is involved in the present struggle'. He insisted that though 'short-handed', Ireland had a 'moral obligation', as part of 'Christendom', to support Belgium, and that this obligation fell on the whole country, rather than just the 'professional classes and the landlord class...[and] the class from which the rank and file is drawn in ordinary times.'<sup>78</sup>

Although Gwynn was certainly the leading Irish MP involved in recruiting work before December 1914, a number of other Members also proved willing to advocate enlistment. According to his biographer, Tom O'Donnell was strongly committed to the recruitment campaign, although in this he encountered some opposition within his constituency.<sup>79</sup> Gwynn's close friend, John O'Connor, also endorsed enlistment, emphasising the notion of Home Rule as a binding moral contract (an argument employed by so many Irish MPs at this time).

we have undertaken greater responsibilities. (Dr Grogan, Ballymore-Eustace, from the crowd: "We have not.") Mr O'Connor (vehemently) I say we have, sir. I don't care who denies it. I say it here for you, for whom I have spoken on many a British platform to win you those rights (loud cheers). I say we have, and we are not so mean or so contemptible as to ask others to fight for the responsibilities which are properly ours. We are not going to skunk behind the fleet which preserves our shores and keeps them from being attacked by the greatest military monster that has lived since the days of Napoleon Bonaparte...<sup>80</sup>

Another former physical force nationalist, Arthur Lynch, proposed at the beginning of the War to recruit and lead a force of Irish Volunteers to fight with the French at the front,<sup>81</sup> however, his effectiveness as a recruiter in Clare was probably undermined by a bitter dispute with the *Clare Champion* during the first half of 1914. Gwynn's colleagues in the representation of Galway, William Duffy and William O'Malley shared a platform with Gwynn at which (despite the disturbance of anti-war campaigners) all three called on their

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<sup>77</sup> *FJ*, 9.10.14., 6.

<sup>78</sup> *FJ*, 20.11.14., 6.

<sup>79</sup> Gaughan, *Odyssey*, p. 96, 102.

<sup>80</sup> *Leinster Leader*, 3.10.14., 8.

<sup>81</sup> *II*, 26.8.14., 4.

constituents to join 'Redmond's Brigade'.<sup>82</sup> O'Malley's strong support for the war was influenced by his son's enlistment (despite his poor health), and perhaps also by the enthusiasm of his brother-in-law, T.P. O'Connor.<sup>83</sup> At a recruiting meeting in Galway at the beginning of October, O'Malley claimed that 'England's difficulty is Ireland opportunity', in that the war provided Ireland with an opportunity to demonstrate that 'we mean to be loyal sons of the empire'.<sup>84</sup> The following month, at a recruiting meeting in Durham among the Irish of the north-east of England, O'Malley explained that 'If they were to participate in the fruits of victory, if they wanted to see their country in a position to hold up its head with dignity and honour, then every man of them who could handle a rifle must be prepared to play a man's and a patriot's part'.<sup>85</sup>

Another Member whose support for enlistment seems to have been influenced by the attitude of family members was John Fitzgibbon, who told a Mayo audience in November that 'He had a proud boast to make, and he certainly considered it a boast, that his youngest son was preparing for the front'.<sup>86</sup> Similarly, Hugh Law (whose brother was a career soldier and senior staff officer in the War Office) had been against his young son joining up, but when he did, Law supported the allied cause, as, for instance, when he told a meeting in Donegal that 'If...any young Irishman,- there were many such already and he hoped there would be many more- were willing to fight in the common cause, let him understand that Ireland would be proud of him'.<sup>87</sup> P.J. Brady, (whose brother was in the Royal Naval Reserve), also expressed strong support for the war against Germany, and declared that 'It was a proud thing for many of them to know that they had sons and brothers (hear, hear) fighting at the front'.<sup>88</sup> Sir Walter Nugent (whose brother had been an army officer) called on Irishmen in October not to shirk their duty: 'what would be said of them when the war was over...[if] they had stood aside and let England fight their battles for them'.<sup>89</sup>

Clearly, the great majority of those Members who either themselves joined up or who were vocal supporters of those who did, had family members fighting in the war, which would suggest that family traditions of military service and/or family commitment to

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<sup>82</sup> *Galway Pilot and Vindicator*, 3.10.14., 2.

<sup>83</sup> O'Malley, *Glancing Back*, pp. 163-4; *Leader*, 7.12.18., 448.

<sup>84</sup> *FJ*, 3.10.14., 6.

<sup>85</sup> *FJ*, 24.11.14., 6

<sup>86</sup> *FJ*, 11.11.14., 7.

<sup>87</sup> Law, *Man at Arms*, p. 38;

<sup>88</sup> *FJ*, 28.10.14., 5; 10.11.14., 4.

<sup>89</sup> *Westmeath Independent*, 17.10.10., 8.

the war, may have been just as important determinants of MPs' attitudes towards enlistment as age or experience.

Writing in late 1915, James Hannay (otherwise known as the author George A. Birmingham) noted with regret that the Irish Recruiting Committee had received little help from the 'great bulk' of Irish Members, and that 'Without overestimating the influence which the Irish Parliamentary Party has in this country we cannot but recognize that their help, if given whole-heartedly, would be of real value.'<sup>90</sup> Indeed, the Irish Party as a whole chose not to participate in any formal recruiting organisations, such as the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee.<sup>91</sup> How much value Irish Members would have been to Irish recruiting had they engaged in it wholeheartedly is unclear. Anecdotal evidence, of which there is little, would seem to suggest that Irish Members did have some influence on their supporters. For instance, at a recruiting meeting in Galway at the beginning of October, William O'Malley asked 'All those who are prepared to go to the front and fight against Germany, put up their hands?'. According to one newspaper report this request met with a 'unanimous response'- though it is unclear how many of these men subsequently joined up.<sup>92</sup> Six months later, D.D. Sheehan, newly commissioned a Captain in the Royal Munster Fusiliers, was recruiting in Cork for his regiment. By the Monday following one Kilrush speech (that of Saturday, March 27), over 200 men had volunteered, (although Martin Staunton has questioned this figure, suggesting that many of these men may have been subsequently rejected at the medical inspection stage).<sup>93</sup> According to Terence Denman, the 'incredible efforts' of Joe Devlin in Belfast 'provided much of the manpower for the 16th Division', while Pauline Codd has claimed that the number of Wexford Volunteers who enlisted may have been influenced by the 'strong sense of loyalty' to the Wexford born John Redmond.<sup>94</sup>

However, the work of T.P. Dooley on recruiting in Waterford would seem to provide strong evidence that the influence of MPs was in fact limited. For having examined in detail the daily enlistment figures from August 1914 through to April 1915, Dooley concludes that 'Redmond's public statements did not have an obvious and direct impact on

<sup>90</sup> James Hannay, 'Ireland in Two Wars (ii) Recruiting in Ireland Today', *Nineteenth Century and After*, vol. cccclxvii (1916), pp. 179.

<sup>91</sup> Roy Douglas, 'Voluntary Enlistment in the First World War and the work of the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee', *Journal of Modern History*, no. iv (1970), p. 574.

<sup>92</sup> *FJ*, 13.10.14.

<sup>93</sup> Martin Staunton, 'Kilrush, Co. Clare and the Royal Munster Fusiliers: The experience of an Irish town in the First World War', *Irish Sword*, vol. xvi, no. 65 (1986), p. 270.

<sup>94</sup> Denman, *Unknown Soldiers*, p. 49; Pauline Codd, 'Recruiting and Responses to the War in Wexford', in David Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Ireland and the First World War* (Mullingar, 1988), p. 21.

recruiting.<sup>95</sup> Dooley argues that if any MP could have influenced enlistment, it would have been Redmond; he had been the city's Member since 1891, was a politician of national stature, had a 'strong rapport with the majority of his constituents' and his meeting in Waterford in mid October was reportedly attended by 5,000 Volunteers and many thousands more civilians. That said, the fact that there is no apparent correlation between his public statements and patterns of recruiting, does not necessarily provide conclusive proof that the advocacy of MPs had little impact. Redmond was an absentee MP, in that he normally visited his constituency once or at most twice a year. He was held in affection, but he had neither been born nor did he live in his constituency. He was, in short, a 'distant and exotic' figure. For Dooley's case to be conclusive, the examination of the recruitment figures for a constituency whose MP was a popular local man would have to be examined. That said, the (admittedly limited) research on the recruiting work of the PRC, suggests that the efforts of British Members of Parliament were limited, and diminished as the war progressed.<sup>96</sup>

Had the War been over by Christmas (or even within the 'number of years' predicted by the *Freeman's*),<sup>97</sup> the Party's carefully balanced strategy of combining aggressively pro-war rhetoric with the avoidance of directly endorsing enlistment, might have come off. As it was, its prolongation left the Party emotionally identified with (though in no way responsible for) the British war effort by separatists and the general public, while at the same time vulnerable to criticism by Unionists and the government for not fully committing itself to defeating Germany.

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<sup>95</sup> T.P. Dooley, 'Politics, Bands and Marketing: Army Recruitment in Waterford City, 1914-15', *Irish Sword*, vol. xviii, no. 72 (1991), p. 207.

<sup>96</sup> Douglas, 'Voluntary Enlistment', pp. 569-70.

<sup>97</sup> *FJ*, 5.9.14., 4.



### Chapter 3: The Crisis of the Convention System, 1900-1914

For any aspiring Nationalist MP at the beginning of the twentieth century, the initial stage of election to Parliament was informal and self-selective. This is not always evident from Irish Members' own accounts, which often imply that their nomination was unexpected and unsolicited. Justin McCarthy, for example, wrote of how 'Suddenly I received an invitation to offer myself as candidate for a vacancy which had arisen in the county of Longford', while T.P. O'Connor's account of his entry into Parliament reads in a similar way: 'Sitting, in my garret in Barnard's Inn, there came unexpectedly to me an invitation to stand for Parliament, and for the old city of Galway.'<sup>1</sup> In fact, both men had been moving in London Home Rule circles for some time and, undoubtedly, had made known their ambition to enter the House of Commons.

London, of course, was an important source of recruits for the Irish Party. The *Pall Mall Gazette* described how, for the Kildare MP, Matt Keating

Proximity to Westminster whetted his senatorial appetite, in due course and he became one of the large batch of Ireland's "exiles" in Great Britain who are ready, with great self-denial, to spend them Commons. A judicious cultivation of parliamentary influences and an activity at national meetings in London, which were not left unrecorded in the national press, lead to Mr. Keating's selection...<sup>2</sup>

Many of the considerable number of letters John Dillon and John Redmond received from prospective parliamentary candidates were from Irishmen (or men of Irish descent) living in London, who made a virtue of their residence in the imperial capital as enabling them to give constant attendance at Westminster. As J.P. Boland (later a whip of the Party) wrote to Willie Redmond in March 1900 'It has always been my desire eventually to enter Parliament, and as a convinced Home Ruler and a permanent resident in London...[I] wish to assist the cause'.<sup>3</sup> It was not uncommon for such men to cultivate contacts within the Party; those with the right sort of London connections might also seek to make themselves personally known to the leadership. Stephen Gwynn attended dinners at the home of Sir James Matthew (who had been a contemporary of Gwynn's father at TCD), with the specific intention of meeting Matthew's son-in-law, John Dillon.<sup>4</sup> However, being a member of the 'London Brigade' also had its

<sup>1</sup> Justin McCarthy, *Reminiscences* (London, 1912), vol. i, p. 330; T.P. O'Connor, *Memoirs of an Old Parliamentarian* (London, 1929), vol. i, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> *PMG 'Extra'*, 1910, p. 95.

<sup>3</sup> J.P. Boland to Willie Redmond, 26.3.00., NLI, RP, ms 15,171 [3].

<sup>4</sup> Gwynn, *Literary Man*, pp. 252-4.

disadvantages.<sup>5</sup> Some sections of the Nationalist movement were uneasy about such Members, viewing their nationalism as suspect.<sup>6</sup> According to the *Cork Accent*, the selection of Daniel Boyle (the 'Manchester Member for North Mayo') for a Connaught seat in 1910 was 'in accordance with the now recognised plan of sending over gentlemen from England and Scotland to fill Irish seats who are not in touch with the local feeling'.<sup>7</sup>

Along with residence, other qualifications which correspondents seem often to have emphasised as recommending their selection, was their education and wealth. Judge Michael Drummond, for example, wrote in October 1910 to Dillon on behalf of Frederick Ryan, who he described as 'a graduate of TCD, where he had a somewhat distinguished career.' Drummond added 'I think he is the sort of man that is wanted in the Nationalist ranks at present, being an educated gentleman, and having an independent private income.'<sup>8</sup> However, what Ryan, and, indeed, the vast majority of the London and Dublin Irishmen who wrote to Dillon and Redmond, did not have, were the local connections necessary to secure their selection by a convention (which explains the conspicuous absence of letters from provincial nationalists among the archives). As William Abraham put it, when writing on behalf of his friend, W.D. Barnett, 'I quite recognise that there are certain difficulties in the way of having him chosen in consequence...[of] his name being almost unknown in Ireland, though he used years ago to be well known in Kerry'.<sup>9</sup>

Ostensibly at least, the standard response received by those correspondents who wrote to Dillon or Redmond about standing for Parliament was polite, but non-committal. Having written to Redmond offering himself as a candidate, Stephen Gwynn, for example, saw the Party chairman in his subterranean office in the House of Commons. Gwynn recalled that 'He was very guarded, and said it was entirely a matter for the local conventions....All that he could do was let my disposition be known in places where a vacancy was probable.'<sup>10</sup> Although Redmond was less than encouraging, he kept his word. When a vacancy arose in North Kildare in late 1904, he mentioned Gwynn as a possible candidate.<sup>11</sup> Doubtless, it was also Redmond

<sup>5</sup> Jasper Tully to John Dillon, 5.7.97., TCD, DP, ms 6760/1649. For a discussion of this question in the Parnellite period, see O'Day, *English Face*, pp. 24-5.

<sup>6</sup> O'Brien and Ryan, *Devoy's Post Bag*, vol. i, p. 264; Gwynn, *Literary Man*, p. 274; Maume, *Gestation*, pp. 9-10, 101. See John Valentine's comments at the West Clare convention. *FJ*, 24.8.09., 7.

<sup>7</sup> CFP, 13.11.12., 5; *CA*, 31.1.10., 1.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Drummond to John Dillon, 25.10.09., TCD, DP, ms 6782/1228.

<sup>9</sup> William Abraham to John Dillon, 26.3.98., TCD, DP, ms 6752/1.

<sup>10</sup> Stephen Gwynn to John Redmond, 3.4.[?], NLI, RP, ms 15,192 [9]; Gwynn, *Literary Man*, pp. 251-2.

<sup>11</sup> John Redmond to John Dillon, 27.12.04., TCD, DP, ms 6747/109.

who suggested Gwynn to Father Glynn, who was seeking a candidate for West Clare, because in the autumn of 1905, the priest contacted Gwynn about the possibility of his standing at the forthcoming election.<sup>12</sup> The convention was held in Kilrush in early January, but as Gwynn recalled 'I went down a couple of days ahead and made my first experience of canvassing...under local direction. It is a disgusting job and ought to be forbidden by law.'<sup>13</sup> At the convention itself, which met on January 10, the assembled delegates (248 lay delegates and 20 priests) considered the seven candidates who sought the nomination. After four and a half hours, James Halpin was selected, Gwynn coming a close second.<sup>14</sup> Afterwards, Willie Redmond (MP for neighbouring East Clare and the representative of the National Directory) emphasised that though Halpin was an 'old personal friend' of his,<sup>15</sup> he had remained entirely neutral.<sup>16</sup>

A very different picture emerges from Arthur Lynch's experience of standing for the same constituency three years later. Like Gwynn (who in the intervening period had been elected for Galway City with the backing of the leadership),<sup>17</sup> Lynch initially approached Redmond for help. Redmond, he later recalled, replied 'politely', but offered no encouragement. 'While, of course, as you know' Redmond wrote, 'I have nothing to do with the selection of candidates for constituencies in Ireland, at the same time, if a situation such as you refer to ever arises, I will certainly bear you in mind, should I be asked by a constituency.'<sup>18</sup> Lynch, however, had reason to doubt Redmond's good faith; he had received a tip-off from 'one of his staff behind the scenes that, if I wanted the matter rectified, I should place no reliance on the Irish leader.' Finding that his name was 'not even mentioned' when the next vacancy arose, Lynch resolved to 'appeal direct[ly] to the people'.<sup>19</sup> Thus, when in 1909, James Halpin died, Lynch put his name forward without consulting the leadership. According to Lynch, Redmond and Dillon deliberately sent their 'emissaries' to the constituency to smear his reputation among the convention delegates.<sup>20</sup> The evidence strongly suggests that the Party leadership supported the candidature of one of T.P. O'Connor's UILGB lieutenants, John Valentine, who was

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<sup>12</sup> Gwynn, *Literary Man*, p. 270.

<sup>13</sup> See, Maume, *Gestation*, p. 77.

<sup>14</sup> Gwynn, *Literary Man*, p. 276.

<sup>15</sup> Halpin had, in fact, chaired the East Clare convention which had selected Redmond some days before. *FJ*, 9.1.06., 4.

<sup>16</sup> *FJ*, 11.1.06., 6.

<sup>17</sup> John Redmond to John Dillon, 30.9.06., TCD, DP, ms 6747/191.

<sup>18</sup> John Redmond to Arthur Lynch, 26.5.08., TCD, DP, ms 6748/338.

<sup>19</sup> Arthur Lynch, *My Life Story* (London, 1924), p.241, 3.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 243-4

personally proposed at the convention by Father Glynn. However, in what appears to have been intended as a deliberate rebuff to the leadership, the convention selected Lynch.<sup>21</sup>

Gwynn and Lynch's experiences of contesting West Clare offer contrasting perspectives on the leadership's role in the process of candidate selection. Redmond promised Lynch nothing more than that he would bear him in mind. This was, in truth, all that the constitution of the UIL permitted him. For the reform of the League's candidate selection process (introduced in June 1900) replaced a system of selection by 'caucus' with one which enshrined the principle of 'the absolute local control of the constituency itself by its proper organisation in the choice of a candidate'.<sup>22</sup> Whereas Parnell had exercised considerable influence in the selection process, the UIL constitution stipulated that the National Directory was entitled to have 'one representative to attend at each convention in the capacity of observer. He was', it added, 'to offer no advice as to the selection of candidates except at the invitation of the convention.'<sup>23</sup>

In February 1902, John Redmond told his close friend 'Long John' O'Connor that except in one instance, the only part he had taken in the selection of candidates since 1900 was 'as a member of the UI League in supplying names to representatives of the League that attend conventions to be put forward at the request of the convention itself.'<sup>24</sup> Yet, as Gwynn's case illustrates, at least by 1903 Redmond was actively lobbying on behalf of certain candidates where a vacancy was 'probable', and thus clearly operating beyond the parameters set-out in the constitution. That said, in many of the cases where Redmond privately recommended candidates, he did so at the request of senior local nationalists (many of them priests). For instance, in the case of the North Kildare vacancy created by the death of Redmond's close friend Edmund Leamy, he told Dillon in December 1904

I enclose the letters I have had about N. Kildare. You will see Dr Foley [the Bishop of Kildare] suggests young Kettle. Do you know anything about his circumstances? It has occurred to me we sh[ould]d offer the seat to Douglas Hyde tho' I fear he would not accept it at present. Stephen Gwynn also occurs to me and John O'Connor.<sup>25</sup>

Dillon and Foley evidently approved of Kettle, as did others whom Redmond canvassed before approaching him. For Redmond wrote to Andy Kettle that 'I have been in communication with the Bishop of Kildare and some of the more prominent local men and also with our friend Dillon and others and all would be glad if he [Tom Kettle] would consent to stand for poor

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<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 244-5.

<sup>22</sup> Lyons, *Parliamentary Party*, p. 150.

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<sup>24</sup> John Redmond to John O'Connor, 20.2.02., NLI, RP, ms 15,214 [3].

<sup>25</sup> John Redmond to John Dillon, 27.12.04., TCD, DP, ms 6747/109.

Leamy's seat...I am assured that if he consented there would be no contest'.<sup>26</sup> Whether from a wish to complete his legal studies or feelings of unreadiness, Kettle 'absolutely refused',<sup>27</sup> and so John O'Connor received the backing of the leadership and won the nomination. Kettle was to have a second chance two years later, when East Tyrone became vacant. However, Redmond was less confident on this occasion that he could secure the nomination, and so commissioned Dick Hazleton to contact Kettle. Hazleton told him '[Redmond] has not got the absolute say in the matter, and would not like to ask you [personally] and then perhaps find himself unable to secure the vacancy for you.'<sup>28</sup> This time Kettle accepted and went on to win the election.

Kettle's case is interesting for several reasons, not least because it indicates how Redmond operated. Stephen Gwynn (who was close to Redmond) believed that it was Dillon rather than Redmond who was 'more effectively in touch with the organisation in Ireland', while 'Redmond confined himself to his duties...at Westminster'. From this, Gwynn concluded that it was Dillon who dealt with the question of vacancies.<sup>29</sup> Undoubtedly, Dillon's intelligence network (as Redmond acknowledged) was far more sophisticated than his own. But, clearly, Redmond's role behind the scenes was still much more extensive than Gwynn appreciated.

Redmond's close consultation with Dillon regarding the selection of candidates is also extremely important. For, at least in the period immediately after the reunion, Dillon apparently pursued an independent line with regard to the new convention system. Indeed, almost as soon as the Party was reunited, he busily occupied himself in securing seats for candidates loyal to him, since he feared that 'in the confusion [of the 1900 general election] many very objectionable men will get in.'<sup>30</sup> One of those Dillon sought to help was Jerry MacVeagh. In August 1900, MacVeagh wrote to Dillon 'you will doubtless have many opportunities of conferring with local men to whom I am personally unknown, I shall be glad if you will kindly say a word for me when possible.'<sup>31</sup> One such local man was Joe Devlin (then not a member of the Party), whom Dillon communicated with concerning MacVeagh's parliamentary prospects in North Monaghan. Devlin replied

I shall do everything I can to carry out your wishes in regard to MacVeagh. Personally I should be very glad to see him in the Party and from my point of view it would be a distinct advantage to have him there...As soon as I believe it wise to act I shall get in to communication with some of the priests with whom I have influence.

<sup>26</sup> Redmond to Andrew Kettle, quoted in Lyons, *Enigma*, p. 63.

<sup>27</sup> John Redmond to John Dillon, 30.12.04., TCD, DP, ms 6747/110.

<sup>28</sup> Richard Hazleton to Tom Kettle, quoted in Lyons, *Enigma*, p. 82.

<sup>29</sup> Gwynn, *Literary Man*, p. 252.

<sup>30</sup> John Dillon to E.C. Walsh, 21.9.00., TCD, DP, ms 6773/777.

<sup>31</sup> Jerry MacVeagh to John Dillon, 21.8.00., TCD, DP, ms 6757/1181

Devlin told Dillon that 'the matter can be safely worked'.<sup>32</sup> In fact, it was not, and MacVeagh did not win a seat in Parliament until 1902.

In part, Dillon's efforts on MacVeagh's behalf can be seen as the actions of a man marginalised by events. However, his intervention here also illustrates that despite altered circumstances he had lost none of his belief in the need for the constituencies to be 'guided' by the Party leadership. This had been a central article of his political faith in the 1890s,<sup>33</sup> and it continued to inform his attitude towards the process by which candidates were selected to Parliament thereafter. Nowhere is this, perhaps, clearer than in a speech he delivered in early 1910.

Now, as to bossism...[m]y opinion is...that...in modern Irish politics there is too little bossism. The old policy resulted in a condition of splendid efficiency in the Party for the service of Ireland...How was it formed? Was it formed, as at present, by leaving to the unfettered and unadvised choice of local conventions the selection of candidates?...Nothing of the kind. The leader of the Party was given a consultative, not a dictatorial, voice in the selection of his followers...[a]nd I think that the proper remedy would be to go back to the old system of allowing a representative of the leader to preside over the convention, and to give advice, not dictation, as there is not power of dictation, as the people have the ultimate voice in the matter. However, that is only my own opinion.<sup>34</sup>

Dillon clearly longed (with a pronounced nostalgia) for a more Parnellian role. But this ambition for greater influence was as F.S.L. Lyons argued 'quite honestly and sincerely held, and was, it is fair to say, not inspired by a love of power for its own sake', but rather the desire to contain what he regarded as the pernicious influence of localism and 'cousinship' in Irish politics.<sup>35</sup>

Although there were important and substantive differences between 'Dillonism' and 'Redmondism', John Redmond shared Dillon's analysis that the independence of the conventions constituted a fundamental 'design flaw' in the UIL constitution. Indeed, in public, he often expressed the wish for a more 'potent role' in the selection process,<sup>36</sup> because according to Stephen Gwynn, he found that many of the candidates selected by divisional

<sup>32</sup> Joe Devlin to John Dillon, 29.10.00., TCD, DP, ms 6729/77; *PMG*, 'Extra', 1900, p. 49.

<sup>33</sup> Lyons, *Party*, p. 41.

<sup>34</sup> *FJ*, 12.2.10., 8.

<sup>35</sup> The Bishop of Galway, Dr O'Dee, described 'cousinship' in May 1911 as the 'tendency... to vote for the man who "belongs to your party", who is a cousin, a friend of yours, or the man on whom you can rely by and by to do a turn for you because of your vote, who will give you a contract for which you are competing'. *FJ*, 1.5.11., 7.

<sup>36</sup> For instance, see *FJ*, 29.8.10., 9.

conventions 'were often chosen purely for local and even personal considerations, and seldom with any real thought of finding the man best fitted to do Ireland's work at Westminster.'<sup>37</sup> As Redmond, writing to Canon Quin concerning the South Armagh vacancy in 1909, explained

I am anxious, at the earliest possible moment, to consult you. Poor [William] McKillop's death makes a vacancy in South Armagh, and I need not tell you of what enormous importance it is to Ireland that the vacancy should be filled up by some one competent to give us assistance in the House of Commons in our work. Some man should be chosen for his qualifications for this particular line of work, and not merely because he is a good fellow or a good Nationalist.<sup>38</sup>

Redmond's conviction that many of the candidates selected by divisional conventions for parliamentary service were unsuited to the work, was shared by several of his colleagues. Stephen Gwynn observed of James Halpin (who had beaten him at the West Clare convention in 1906) that he was 'a decent, stout, strong farmer...whom I came to know and like', but that he was 'no use in the world for the work at Westminster'.<sup>39</sup> After Halpin's death, some of his constituents contacted Dillon asking him to secure a candidate who would 'not only be able to look after their material interests in Parliament but will be able to speak and support legislation peculiar to this part of the country'.<sup>40</sup> Another of the West Clare candidates in 1906, John Valentine, observed, with more bitterness, that the convention system 'left matters to local people, who put forward, say, a farmer or a dealer who had been prominent in cattle driving etc., independent altogether of fitness for Parliament'.<sup>41</sup> Instead, as J.G.S. MacNeill declared in December 1911 'The Member of Parliament should stand for the nation as a whole, not be the mouthpiece for a particular body of opinion, subdivided until it may be infinitesimally small'.<sup>42</sup>

Although some of the men considered to possess the right 'qualifications for parliamentary work' were those like Gwynn who were self-supporting and educated, many others were distinguished less by their socio-economic background than by their personal loyalty. Redmond described one such candidate as 'a very able man, a good speaker, [and] thoroughly trustworthy'. But he might also have mentioned that many of those he and Dillon regarded as suitable were either (as critics claimed) English residents who lacked local connections (such as Valentine, Dan Boyle, or Dr Charles O'Neill) or career activists (like Joe Devlin, J.T. Donovan or J.D. Nugent) whose first loyalty would be to the Party rather than to their constituencies.

<sup>37</sup> See, for instance *Derry People*, 6.1.06., 5.

<sup>38</sup> John Redmond to Canon Quin, 31.8.09., NLI, RP, ms 15,251[2].

<sup>39</sup> Gwynn, *Literary Man*, p. 276.

<sup>40</sup> M. McCormack to John Dillon, 30.7.09, NLI, DP, ms 6782/1198.

<sup>41</sup> John Valentine, *Irish Memories* (Bristol, 1927), p.59.

<sup>42</sup> *FJ*, 6.12.11., 5.

Yet, these same qualities also often meant that Redmond and Dillon found it difficult to secure their election. Nowhere can this be better illustrated than in the person of John Muldoon.

John Muldoon was a successful Tyrone born barrister who had formerly been assistant secretary of the INF and who was a confidante and 'confidential law adviser' to John Dillon.<sup>43</sup> His experience, profession and proven loyalty marked him out as a desirable member of the Party, but in spite of these qualities he encountered immense difficulty in winning, and then holding, a seat in Parliament.

This fact first became apparent in 1905, when William O'Doherty, MP for North Donegal, died. Muldoon had already intimated to both Redmond and Devlin that he would be prepared to go forward as a candidate for the constituency, if need be against O'Doherty (long considered 'unreliable'),<sup>44</sup> and this was recalled by both leaders on the death of the sitting Member. In mid May, Devlin wrote to Redmond that the Standing Committee considered it imperative that someone should be sent to Donegal immediately, in order to prevent 'mischief' or 'any undesirable local man being pressed on the constituency.'<sup>45</sup> Redmond, while agreeing that there should be no delay in summoning a convention, was, however, apparently less anxious than Devlin about the prospect of a local candidate coming forward: 'I, of course, do not know whether there is any suitable local candidate likely to be put forward. If such a man were forthcoming I need not say that I would be very glad'. But, he continued (perhaps a little too quickly) 'in the event of no such man being forthcoming and a request for suggestions being made to us I think we should consider...John Muldoon'. In order to ascertain the condition of the division, he strongly urged that Devlin himself should visit the constituency in order to take soundings.<sup>46</sup> Devlin promptly departed for North Donegal, but his visit was not entirely satisfactory, since it revealed that local sentiment was strongly in favour of a Donegal candidate.<sup>47</sup> In consequence, he recommended that Muldoon's candidature should not be pressed, but that instead, his name could be suggested if the convention appealed to the representative of the Directory. Otherwise, he argued, Gallagher would be acceptable. Gallagher, however, did not go forward at the convention (presumably he was persuaded not to), and instead, Muldoon's candidature was successfully pressed (with the help of Devlin, who attended as representative of the Directory),<sup>48</sup> at the closely fought three hour convention.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>43</sup> *II*, 22.11.38., 15; T.H.S. Escott, *Masters of English Journalism* (London, 1911), p. 320.

<sup>44</sup> Maume, *Gestation*, pp. 45-6.

<sup>45</sup> Joe Devlin to John Redmond, 20.5.05., NLI, RP, ms 15,181 [1].

<sup>46</sup> John Redmond to Joe Devlin, 22.5.05., NLI, RP, ms 15,181 [1].

<sup>47</sup> Joe Devlin to John Redmond, 25.5.05., NLI, RP, ms 15,181 [1].

<sup>48</sup> Joe Devlin to John Redmond, 3.6.05., NLI, RP, ms 15,181[1].

<sup>49</sup> *Derry People*, 10.6.05., 5.



Although the *Donegal Independent* insisted in January 1906 that Muldoon's return at the forthcoming general election was 'certain',<sup>50</sup> he was in fact narrowly defeated at the convention by Bishop O'Doherty's candidate, Philip O'Doherty.<sup>51</sup> This difficulty seemed to have been resolved almost immediately though, when Devlin won a spectacular victory in West Belfast, thereby creating a vacancy in his old seat of North Kilkenny. Once again, the leadership mobilised in Muldoon's favour, as Devlin, along with Pat O'Brien, reportedly travelled through the constituency at the beginning of February pressing local candidates not to stand.<sup>52</sup>

The refusal of the three local candidates to withdraw once again reflected local sentiment that a native MP was required. As a letter in the *Kilkenny Journal* from a correspondent using the pseudonym 'elector' put it: 'We...should be able to find amongst ourselves, Members capable of representing us in the House of Commons, and no longer tolerate the stigma that our county is the "hunting ground" for strangers.'<sup>53</sup> Given this strength of feeling, it is unsurprising that the convention was 'at times...rather heated.'<sup>54</sup> Devlin, Pat O'Brien and Denis Johnston renewed their efforts to persuade the other candidates to retire. In this they were unsuccessful and the convention selected Michael Meagher. Moreover, defeat was compounded by the revelation that Redmond had privately communicated to some senior local clergymen his disinclination to interfere in the contest, while he had written to others indicating his 'strong and emphatic support' for Muldoon.<sup>55</sup>

Although after several further unsuccessful attempts,<sup>56</sup> Muldoon was eventually selected the following year for East Wicklow (again with considerable Directory assistance),<sup>57</sup> the difficulties he encountered indicate two facts very clearly. Firstly, in its determination to influence the convention system, the leadership repeatedly demonstrated a willingness to bend and flout (not withstanding Redmond's careful language) the rules of the League. And secondly, the leadership's heavy-handedness in its attempts to manage certain conventions, created considerable resentment in the provinces.

This resentment was evident again in June 1907, when the vacancy for North Monaghan, witnessed a bitter split between the local UIL and the Ancient Order of Hibernians. There was already a strong local feeling before the contest that a 'stranger' should not be

<sup>50</sup> *Donegal Independent*, 5.1.06, 5.

<sup>51</sup> John Muldoon to John Dillon, 26.3.06., NLI, RP, ms 15,182 [10]. Father Denis O'Halloran to Joe Devlin, 5.1.06., NLI, RP, ms 15,181 [2]. The contemporary press reports (whether over optimistically or not), did expect Muldoon to be returned. *Donegal Independent*, 5.1.06., 5.

<sup>52</sup> *Kilkenny Journal*, 7.2.06., 3; *Kilkenny People*, 10.2.06, 5.

<sup>53</sup> *Kilkenny Journal*, 7.2.06., 3

<sup>54</sup> *Kilkenny People*, 10.2.06., 5

<sup>55</sup> Father O'Halloran to Joe Devlin, 5.1.06., NLI, RP, 15,181 [2].

<sup>56</sup> His name was also mentioned in connection with Galway City.

<sup>57</sup> E.C. Walsh to John Dillon 17.6.07., TCD, DP, ms 6773/746.

selected,<sup>58</sup> so that when it emerged at the convention not only that the Directory's representative had canvassed for J.T. Donovan (a carpet-bagger and Devlinite lieutenant), but that as a result of administrative anomalies the AOH had more delegates than all the other interests combined, the assembly broke up in turmoil.<sup>59</sup> Subsequently, Redmond was forced (by the local bishop) to compel Donovan's withdrawal and accept the election of James Lardner.<sup>60</sup>

The Monaghan by-election was not the last time a county convention was the cause of dispute. Two and half years later, the convention for South Armagh produced a crisis, after Dr Hugh O'Neill controversially defeated Patrick Donnelly by one vote.<sup>61</sup> O'Neill was the nominee of the leadership, but Donnelly had the support of the local clergy.<sup>62</sup> A compromise was proposed,<sup>63</sup> whereby both men would resign and permit Redmond to select a unity candidate, but O'Neill refused to stand down.<sup>64</sup> The local clergy eventually agreed to withdraw Donnelly, but took no part in the subsequent election.<sup>65</sup>

However, the Monaghan election had greater resonance than simply as another embarrassing set-back for the Party leadership. Firstly, it was extremely damaging to Donovan and the AOHs reputation,<sup>66</sup> because not only did it place it in direct opposition to the local clergy, but it seemed to confirm its reputation for clandestine methods. Secondly, the Monaghan convention served thereafter as shorthand for central dictation, in part because evidence continued to come to light alleging AOH skulduggery.<sup>67</sup> And thirdly, because, in thanking Donovan for retiring, Redmond, though acknowledging that he had been selected by a majority of the convention delegates, also recognised the validity of Lardner's complaint that the rules governing conventions required revision.<sup>68</sup>

The significance of this admission was to be seen the following year, when Redmond initiated reform of the League's constitution to regulate the representation of different

<sup>58</sup> *Monaghan People*, 7.6.07., 2; 31.5.07, 1.

<sup>59</sup> *Monaghan People*, 14.6.07., 1

<sup>60</sup> *Sinn Féin*, 29.1.10., 6; John Redmond to John Dillon, 12.6.07., TCD, DP, ms 6747/225.

<sup>61</sup> *FJ*, 21.10.09., 7.

<sup>62</sup> John Redmond to Canon Quin, 31.8.09., NLI, RP, ms 15,251 [2]; Canon Quin to John Redmond, 2.9.09., NLI, RP, ms 15,251 [2].

<sup>63</sup> Canon Quin to John Redmond, 26.10.09., NLI, RP, m 15,251 [3].

<sup>64</sup> Joe Devlin to John Redmond, 29.10.09., NLI, RP, ms 15,181 [2].

<sup>65</sup> Denis Johnston to John Dillon, 31.10.09., TCD, DP, ms 6763/90

<sup>66</sup> The leadership wanted Donovan to stand in Leitrim against Charles Dolan, but the Bishop of Kilmore insisted that while he was opposed to Sinn Féin and would support any candidate put forward by Redmond, he would not accept Donovan. J.J. Clancy to John Redmond, 29.6.07., NLI, RP ms 15,176.

<sup>67</sup> *Sinn Féin*, 29.1.10., 6

<sup>68</sup> *Monaghan People*, 20.5.07., 2

organisations at conventions.<sup>69</sup> These reforms were broadly welcomed.<sup>70</sup> Whether, however, they were (as claimed) actuated by a genuine desire to ensure the absolute fairness of the convention system is questionable. For what they ultimately affected was not so much the reinforcement of William O'Brien's constitution, as an important and substantial reclamation of control over the convention system by the central leadership.

The January 1910 general election witnessed an unusually high number of disrupted conventions, with incidents of walk-outs, boycottings, disturbance and even violence. According to William O'Brien, the authors of most of this disruption were the Party leadership themselves. Indeed, O'Brien claimed that in some 19 constituencies the leadership sought to purge itself of those 'members of the Party who were suspected of secret sympathy with the policy of conciliation'.<sup>71</sup> Paul Bew has examined this claim in terms of how many of the contests actually raised the question of O'Brienism. However, he did not question O'Brien's underlying contention that there was a concerted and co-ordinated strategy to 'exterminate' those MPs 'marked down' as unreliable or disloyal.<sup>72</sup> There has, in fact, been no satisfactory effort to substantiate these claims. Nor has O'Brien's assertion that this campaign was to be achieved 'by an audacious system of manipulation of the conventions, both by the manufacture of bogus delegates and by the exclusion of the genuine ones' been held up to scrutiny.

There is little doubt, as Bew has shown, that O'Brien's list included several members of the Party's 'awkward squad'.<sup>73</sup> However, this information only establishes that many of these men had some kind of 'form'; it does not prove that the leadership sought to purge them wholesale from the Party. In fact, the evidence does not suggest that the January 1910 general election witnessed an attempt by the leadership to systematically purge the Party of elements it regarded as undesirable. Not only were Members (such as Hugh Law or Edward Barry) who had also fallen out of favour with the leadership in the past, ignored,<sup>74</sup> but the opposition to the MPs O'Brien identified varied very greatly. In South Fermanagh the rival candidate to

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<sup>69</sup> *II*, 7.12.09., 4.

<sup>70</sup> *II*, 2.7.09., 4; *Leader* 10.7.09.

<sup>71</sup> William O'Brien, *An Olive Branch in Ireland and its History* (London, 1910), p.460. These were: East Cavan, West Clare, North Donegal, College Green Division Dublin, South Fermanagh, East Kerry, West Kerry, King's Tullamore, South Leitrim, West Limerick, North Mayo, South Mayo, West Mayo, North Meath, North Monaghan, South Monaghan, North Tipperary, Mid Tyrone, North Wexford.

<sup>72</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 459-60; Bew, *Ideology*, p.145 More recently Patrick Maume has written of the January election 'The dissolution of Parliament saw the Irish Party actively preparing to purge dissident MPs'. Maume, *Gestation*, p.79

<sup>73</sup> Bew, *Conflict*, p.196.

<sup>74</sup> For Hugh Law, see *CA*, 7.2.10., 1.

Jeremiah Jordan chose to withdraw at the convention.<sup>75</sup> Two rival conventions were held in East Cavan; both selected Sam Young.<sup>76</sup> Neither James Lardner nor Tom O'Donnell faced any opposition.<sup>77</sup>

In several cases, the subtext to contested conventions was intensely local. In East Kerry, the contest turned on a bitter personal feud.<sup>78</sup> The opposition to E.H. Burke was mounted on the grounds that he had neglected Tullamore by not visiting often enough and because he had ignored his constituency correspondence (a charge which had been levelled against him before).<sup>79</sup> The West Limerick contest was complicated by a dispute over the division of a local estate.<sup>80</sup> P.J. Smyth's difficulties probably owed as much to his dispute with the Leitrim County Council concerning a light railway scheme, and local complaints about his involvement in the sale of boycotted land, as his attitude towards the Budget.<sup>81</sup> J.P. Nannetti's relationship with the Dublin AOH was poor well before the election.<sup>82</sup>

Doubtless, the Party would have been happy to see Pat White de-selected (particularly in the light of his later actions).<sup>83</sup> Redmond had prevented a contest in 1906,<sup>84</sup> and there is no evidence to suggest that he acted to oust him in 1909-10. When, several months later, Denis Johnston, Devlin and Dillon discussed the recognition of the Meath Labour Union at future conventions for North Meath, Johnston acknowledged that 'White will have to walk the plank, as they are all opposed to him', but felt this was outweighed because 'we cannot afford to overlook 3,000 voters in any constituency, with a militant organisation behind them'.<sup>85</sup> However, the Directory only gave the Union one delegate (rather than the three they had sought), and this led to public accusations by the Union of a conspiracy between White and Devlin.<sup>86</sup>

This is not, however, to suggest that the Party leadership was not involved in behind-the-scenes discussions about particular MPs. Devlin's AOH clearly threw its considerable

<sup>75</sup> FJ, 28.12.09., 6.

<sup>76</sup> Irish Police Reports, C[olonial] O[ffice] 904/79.

<sup>77</sup> FJ, 11.1.10., 9; Kerryman, 22.1.10., 1; David Moriarty to John Dillon, 23.2.09., TCD, DP, ms 6773/601.

<sup>78</sup> E.L. O'Malley and H.[?] Hardcastle, *Reports of the Decisions of the Judges for the Trial of Election Petitions* (London, 1911) vol. vi, p.67; Irish Police Reports, CO 904/79.

<sup>79</sup> *Tullamore and King's County Independent*, 11.12.09., 7; Michael Reddy to John Dillon, 19.8.09., TCD, DP, ms 6759/1501.

<sup>80</sup> *Limerick Leader*, 6.12.00., 4.

<sup>81</sup> *Leitrim Advertiser*, 20.1.10., 3; Bew, *Conflict*, p. 196.

<sup>82</sup> Bew, *Conflict*, p. 197.

<sup>83</sup> Joe Devlin to John Dillon, 2.7.04., TCD, DP, ms 6729/105.

<sup>84</sup> *Irish Peasant*, 13.1.06, 5.

<sup>85</sup> Denis Johnston to John Dillon, 31.3.10., TCD, DP, ms 6763/106.

<sup>86</sup> *A-C*, 9.7.10., 11.

weight behind the ousting of George Murnaghan.<sup>87</sup> How much Redmond and Dillon knew about the campaign in Mid Tyrone is unclear. Certainly, it seems that at times (such as in the case of Dublin College Green) there was a long leash between the leadership and the AOH. McGhee's complaint to Dillon that 'It was most monstrous [for Denis Johnston] to draw you into South Monaghan unless success was certain for our side', suggests that this distance may itself have been as much tactical as naiveté.<sup>88</sup>

In other instances, the tactics employed by Redmond *et al* may have been more complex than straightforward deselection. Clearly, the robust treatment of Sir Thomas Esmonde by the North Wexford convention was the result of close consultation with the leadership, as, doubtless, was his survival.<sup>89</sup> The selection of a much chastened Philip O'Doherty in North Donegal may also have been expected by the Party. At the time of the convention, O'Doherty's principal rival, Charles Diamond (a former Nationalist MP and a longstanding associate of Dillon), had confined himself to the face-saving explanation that 'personally he had no interest to serve in Parliament, and he was there only at the invitation of [the] local people'.<sup>90</sup> But, privately, he was extremely bitter. As Diamond wrote to Dillon in 1913

I don't forget the Donegal incident, which I think was rather of the nature of a dirty trick, but, as you explained to me at the time, politicians are often unscrupulous and quite willing to sacrifice individuals in pursuit of their own "laudable aims". If there had been the slightest goodwill on the part of any of the leading members of the Party it would not have been necessary to send me to Donegal to be humiliated in a wild goose chase to serve the Party interests by trying to get for them a seat that was in hostile hands.<sup>91</sup>

This would certainly suggest that Diamond's candidature was instigated by the Party leadership. However, given the fact that Diamond (by his own admission) '[had] for a long time...not...enjoyed much popularity or favour with some of the Party leaders',<sup>92</sup> it seems

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<sup>87</sup> CA, 31.1.10., 1.

<sup>88</sup> Richard McGhee to John Dillon, 4.2.10., TCD, DP, ms 6757/1052. On this, see Bew, *Conflict and Conciliation*, p. 211.

<sup>89</sup> FJ, 27.12.09., 5; James O'Connor to John Redmond, 31.12.09., NLI, RP, ms 15,214.[2].

<sup>90</sup> *Donegal Vindicator*, 31.12.09., 6

<sup>91</sup> Charles Diamond to John Dillon, 15.10.13., TCD, DP, ms 6753/298. According to the *Cork Accent*, Father Philip O'Doherty came to the convention with a 'file' of newspaper clippings from the *Northern Star* (which Diamond had formerly edited), from which he quoted passages critical of Bishop Henry Henry, and this turned the convention against Diamond. CA, 1.1.10., 1.

<sup>92</sup> Charles Diamond to John Dillon, 6.5.12., TCD, DP, ms 6753/295; Brady, *O'Connor*, p. 159.

possible that rather than deselection, the leadership may simply have desired to cow O'Doherty into giving the assurances of future good behaviour which he did.<sup>93</sup>

Elsewhere, the leadership was much more chary of controversy. John Valentine complained bitterly that Redmond had been unwilling to 'say the word' that would have secured West Clare for him, while in Limerick Denis Johnston strongly urged Dillon to ignore the criticisms of the 'Newcastle men' (P.J. O'Shaughnessy's opponents), in the belief that 'any attempt to interfere with O'Shaughnessy will be disastrous.'<sup>94</sup>

In the light of this evidence, the strategy employed by the Party at the January 1910 general election appears much more *ad hoc* than the 'night of long knives' scenario O'Brien depicted. The individual accusations of rigging are, however, harder to assess. Irregularities in the composition of divisional conventions were claimed in six of the 19 cases William O'Brien instanced.<sup>95</sup> Moreover, in East Limerick, South Armagh, North Kilkenny and Mid Tipperary, claims of 'packing' and 'rigging' were also levelled against the leadership (though in these constituencies the Directory had allegedly intervened on behalf of the incumbents). Doubtless, it is not impossible that some of these claims may have had some basis in fact. Certainly, the reforms of 1909 gave the leadership much greater scope for influencing conventions, had they been so disposed. But an equally likely explanation is that many of these claims stemmed from the dilapidated condition of the UIL, both in Dublin and the localities.

Speaking in January 1910, W.G. Fallon observed that 'Their opponents were inclined to forget that it was not by any means an easy matter to bring the representatives of 6,500 electors into a room for the purpose of deliberation'.<sup>96</sup> Multiplied by roughly 70, this was an enormous task, and in 1910 particularly so, since the Dublin office had recently acquired responsibility for organising the divisional conventions. Moreover, the poor state of the UIL in many parts of the country made administration difficult. Whereas in 1902 there had been 1,230 UIL branches, by 1909 the figure was half that.<sup>97</sup> This decline had certainly begun as early as 1904. Larry Ginnell wrote to Redmond at the beginning of that year informing him that 23 county executives were at that time defunct, and nearly 500 branches unaffiliated.<sup>98</sup> Ginnell's colleague in the Dublin office, John O'Donnell, who was general secretary of the League before Devlin, confirmed this picture, when he wrote to Redmond in June 1904 that 'I was in

<sup>93</sup> *Donegal Vindicator*, 31.12.09., 6.

<sup>94</sup> Denis Johnston to John Dillon, 20.11.09., TCD, DP, ms 6763/92.

<sup>95</sup> West Clare, West Limerick, South Mayo, West Mayo, South Monaghan and Mid Tyrone.

<sup>96</sup> *FJ*, 4.1.10., 8.

<sup>97</sup> O'Brien, *William O'Brien*, p. 191.

<sup>98</sup> Larry Ginnell to John Redmond, 11.1.04., NLI, RP, ms 15,191 [2]; 9.2.04., NLI, RP, ms 15,191 [2].

Tipperary, Galway, King's Co., and Mayo recently and the same feeling exists all round. The branches meet occasionally but they have nothing to talk about and they say unless something is done soon the people will lose heart.'<sup>99</sup> The UIL was, however, unable to stem its own decline. As the chairman of the West Waterford executive told the assembled delegates in November 1911 'It [the meeting] was not anything like what it ought to be [in point of numbers]. Since the [1903] Land Act was passed he regretted to say there was a want of interest in the movement on the part of the farmers who have purchased.'<sup>100</sup>

Arguably, the high proportion of unaffiliated or defunct branches was important. In order to function, the convention system required branches to be at least technically affiliated, if not properly organised. This encouraged local nationalists to maintain branches which did not (to all intents and purposes) do very much, to periodically resurrect branches in abeyance, or to establish new branches in the months before a convention was to be held. It is, therefore, quite easy to understand how and why rival candidates freely exchanged accusations about 'mushroom' and 'paper' branches before, during and after a disputed convention. Furthermore, because the Dublin office decided whether a branch had been properly affiliated, it often became embroiled in extremely complicated local disputes.

However, in fairness, the UIL central office did endeavour to regulate the affiliation of branches. John O'Donnell wrote to John Redmond, for example, in April 1904 of Dr Ambrose's application to reorganise the League in West Mayo. O'Donnell observed

If he is really serious towards getting the League into working order for other purposes than his own selection he can easily communicate with the backward branches...He should, I think, be told that there wont [sic.] be no sense in doing what he wants until, at least, he brings in half of the fourteen who are now in arrears.<sup>101</sup>

The following year, Devlin wrote to Redmond concerning a recent application by Sam Young for the affiliation of three branches in the Virginia parish of County Cavan. The fact that the UIL had always found it difficult to establish a branch there aroused suspicion, and when queried, the Directory's representative in the constituency protested that no more than one branch should be affiliated.<sup>102</sup> And in November 1909, Denis Johnston wrote to P.J. O'Shaughnessy concerning the UILs refusal to affiliate certain branches in West Limerick.

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<sup>99</sup> John O'Donnell to John Redmond, 8.3.04., NLI, RP, ms 15,218 [3]; 7.6.04., NLI, RP, ms 15,218 [3].

<sup>100</sup> *FJ*, 1.11.10., 7.

<sup>101</sup> John O'Donnell to John Redmond, 15.4.04., NLI RP, ms 15,218 [3].

<sup>102</sup> Joe Devlin to John Redmond, 14.7.05., NLI, RP, ms 15,181 [1].

We have received an affiliation fee this morning from Coolcappa, but it has not been sent by the registered secretary of the Branch, and we cannot accept it until we have further information on the matter. I should say that we have also received an affiliation fee from Askeaton, and our information from that district in reply to inquiries made, is that no meeting was held there for the purpose of reforming the local Branch. You know how important it is that the local Nationalists should be consulted, and representative public meetings held, which would give an opportunity to all nationalists in the parish to become members of the Branch.<sup>103</sup>

O'Shaughnessy subsequently used the national press to publicise his conviction 'that the Standing Committee of the League are helping a small clique in Newcastle West, who for some time are conspiring against me [sic].' As evidence of this O'Shaughnessy pointed to the fact that 'the United Irish League, have refused, on the most flimsy pretexts, to affiliate some branches that are in my favour', while accepting the affiliation from branches hostile to him. Certainly, the County Inspector for Limerick reported in December 1909 that 6 branches of the AOH had been established in favour of Sheehy, O'Shaughnessy's opponent,<sup>104</sup> though not it seems at the behest of O'Connell Street.

In retrospect, much of the surviving evidence suggests that Dillon's depiction of the UIL Directory as an arbiter of a convention system that was often the scene of on-going local faction-fights (while certainly exaggerated) nonetheless possessed more than an element of truth. However, at the time, the matter was seen differently. For the preceding decade of official and unofficial encroachments into the procedure and practice of candidate selection by Redmond *et al*, lent credibility to even the wildest of accusations levelled against the Directory, with the result that the convention system appeared discredited in many eyes.<sup>105</sup>

In early 1910, two long-serving MPs (Tim Harrington and James O'Connor) died.<sup>106</sup> In Wicklow, Redmond by-passed the convention system, and simply appointed a replacement.<sup>107</sup> Redmond wanted to secure the second seat for William Abraham (defeated at the previous general election), but several Dublin Nationalists had been nursing the constituency during Harrington's illness, and it was only by personally intervening that Redmond secured the nomination for Abraham.<sup>108</sup> Although justified as a case requiring exceptional action,<sup>109</sup> in fact

<sup>103</sup> Denis Johnston to P.J. O'Shaughnessy, 26.11.09., TCD, DP, ms 6763/96.

<sup>104</sup> The County Inspector for Limerick reported in December 1909 that 6 branches of the AOH had been established in favour of Sheehy, O'Shaughnessy's opponent. Irish Police Reports, PRO, CO 904/79.

<sup>105</sup> *II*, 4.1.10., 7 and also 14.2.10., 7.

<sup>106</sup> *CA*, 14.3.10., 1.

<sup>107</sup> *CA*, 18.3.10., 1.

<sup>108</sup> John Redmond to John Dillon, 14.3.10., TCD, DP, ms 6748/448; Joe Devlin to John Dillon, 26.5.10., TCD, DP, ms 6729/151; Denis Johnston to John Dillon, 4.6.10., TCD, DP, ms 6763/109; *FJ*, 14.3.10., 7; 14.4.10., 8; 12.4.10., 7; 8.6.10., 6.

<sup>109</sup> *FJ*, 8.6.10., 6.



it was widely hoped that it would presage a more aggressive role for the leadership in the future. Dillon approvingly commented 'What is the point of having a leader if he is not able to lead in a crisis?',<sup>110</sup> while the *Freeman's* enthusiastically editorialised that Redmond's 'plea...for a consultative voice in the selection of candidates, has the endorsement of every close observer of contemporary politics...In more than one respect the Harbour Division Convention has set an important and valuable precedent.'<sup>111</sup>

Redmond's increasing influence over the convention system was seen once again at the December 1910 general election when the Directory decided (because of the shortage of time) to forgo the selection phase on the grounds that the verdicts of the January election were sufficiently recent to be trusted.<sup>112</sup> Although some English newspapers predicted dissent,<sup>113</sup> on the whole, this departure from electoral custom does not seem to have alarmed contemporaries,<sup>114</sup> the exception being the *Independent*.<sup>115</sup> One or two candidates sought to make political capital from the decision.<sup>116</sup> When Michael Reddy was challenged in King's County, Dillon intervened decisively to put an end to the contest.<sup>117</sup> No such action was seen in North Tipperary, however, where Michael Hogan (vulnerable because of his lack of political activity) was defeated by the whiggish scion of a local landed family.<sup>118</sup>

In the following four years the convention system operated, on the whole, without incident and candidate selection was largely inconspicuous. The third Home Rule crisis soon overshadowed any lingering resentment, while the apparent pre-eminence of Redmond meant that many local conventions were more susceptible to outside influence. When P.J. Power died in January 1913, for example, the three MPs who attended his funeral took the opportunity to consult with the local executive and inform it of Redmond's preference as to the choice of a new MP.<sup>119</sup> Although some delegates dissented, this message was repeated at the 180 strong convention at Kilmachthomas at which Redmond's nominee (his close friend M.J. Murphy) prevailed over the four other candidates.<sup>120</sup> The following year, J.T. Donovan, (who Devlin had unsuccessfully tried to 'parachute' into Monaghan seven years earlier and who had continued

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<sup>110</sup> *FJ*, 15.6.10., 8.

<sup>111</sup> *FJ*, 8.6.10., 6.

<sup>112</sup> *II*, 30.11.10., 5.

<sup>113</sup> *Morning Post* quoted in *II*, 29.11.10., 7.

<sup>114</sup> For example, the *Anglo-Celt*, *Clare Champion*, *Wicklow People*, *Kerryman*, *Connaught Telegraph*, *Leader*, and *Sinn Fein* made no comment on the decision.

<sup>115</sup> *II*, 30.11.10., 4.

<sup>116</sup> Maume, *Gestation*, p.116.

<sup>117</sup> *FJ*, 5.12.10., 8; *Cork Free Press*, 7.12.10., 11.

<sup>118</sup> *Nenagh Guardian*, 26.11.10., 2; 3.12.10., 3.

<sup>119</sup> *FJ*, 22.1.13., 9.

<sup>120</sup> *FJ*, 5.2.13., 8.

to find favour with the Party leadership),<sup>121</sup> was victorious at the West Wicklow convention.<sup>122</sup> Muldoon, (by now one of the safest pairs of hands in the Party), attended on behalf of the Directory, and afterwards insisted, without dissent, that the selection had been conducted impartially.

This period of influence was shattered by the debacle of the North King's County by-election of December 1914. The precise details of the by-election need not be rehearsed. Before the contest there had been various calls for the county convention to be dispensed with since there was no divisional executive and very few branches of the League.<sup>123</sup> The Party had originally wanted Lorcan Sherlock (then Lord Mayor of Dublin) to stand,<sup>124</sup> but had found that, once again, there was strong sentiment for a local candidate. As the *Westmeath Independent* explained 'There are special reasons...why it is eminently desirable that the constituency should have the service of a sterling nationalist, living among the people, and in intimate touch with their local needs...[because f]or upwards of twenty-five years the constituency had a non-resident representative, which was not without inconvenience.'<sup>125</sup> At the convention itself, held on November 19, Patrick Adams, a member of the County council, a cattle driver and son of a local Land League veteran, defeated two other candidates; E.J. Graham and P.J. Bermingham (both of whom also had impeccable local connections).<sup>126</sup> Over a week later, however, Graham complained to John Redmond that there had been irregularities in the composition of the convention and, following some uncertainty, resolved to proceed with his candidature.<sup>127</sup>

The leadership responded by drafting in nearly a dozen loyal MPs to campaign on Graham's behalf.<sup>128</sup> Although early on, Redmond had recognised that Graham was a 'life-long Nationalist and a faithful servant of the national cause', during the campaign, Party speakers sought to smear his reputation,<sup>129</sup> while Adams was presented as the choice of the convention and his association with cattle driving was emphasised.

Patrick Maume has argued that the Party over-reacted to Graham's candidature.<sup>130</sup> Arguably, the position the Party adopted with regard to the Tullamore election was entirely consistent with its longstanding public policy on selection by convention; as John Redmond told

<sup>121</sup> John Redmond to John Dillon, 14.9.12., TCD, DP, ms 6748/496.

<sup>122</sup> *Leinster Leader*, 8.8.14., 5; *FJ*, 14.8.14., 2.

<sup>123</sup> *Midland Tribune*, 21.11.14., 5.

<sup>124</sup> *Roscommon Herald*, 12.12.14., 4.

<sup>125</sup> *Westmeath Independent*, 17.10.10., 4, 6.

<sup>126</sup> *FJ*, 20.11.14., 6.

<sup>127</sup> *King's Co. Independent*, 28.11.14., 2. *FJ*, 2.12.14., 7; 3.12.14., 5-6; 4.12.14., 6;

<sup>128</sup> *FJ*, 4.12.14., 6.

<sup>129</sup> Maume, *Gestation*, p. 168.

<sup>130</sup> *ibid.*

Graham at the beginning of December 'If conventions are not upheld the whole machinery will break down'.<sup>131</sup> But because the Party presented the contest as non-ideological, defeat when it came on December 9, focused attention on why the system had been unable to select one from among a slate of good local candidates.

The *Freeman's* acknowledged this when it went on the defensive in its editorial of December 10. 'The convention system', it argued, 'has worked admirably for more than 30 years', and '[s]hort of a plebiscite of the whole body of voters, which would be impossible, there is no [better] machinery for the choice of a candidate'.<sup>132</sup> Predictably, the Unionist press revelled in the Party's defeat (the *Irish Times* observed that 'it will induce a smile on the grim countenance of Ulster'), and, unsurprisingly also, the *Independent* saw the defeat as vindicating its belief in the 'absurdity of saying that any convention is a true reflex of the views of the electors'.<sup>133</sup> Whereas during the campaign, the paper had argued that the Party's political machinery should be jettisoned once the Amending Bill had been passed,<sup>134</sup> following Graham's defeat, it called for the immediate abandonment of the system.

Other provincial papers joined chase. The Waterford *Evening News* claimed the system was 'flat, stale and unprofitable' and that it was time for the 'caucus system' to be replaced by the 'voice' of the electorate.<sup>135</sup> The *Kerryman* described the Tullamore result as 'a nasty shock for the manipulators of the Party machine' who had 'humbled' the electors in the past.<sup>136</sup> The *Roscommon Herald* drew the lesson that the convention system was 'played out' because it was 'based on the assumption that the bulk of the voters are incapable of exercising the franchise conferred on them by law, and that the work must be done by outsiders who have little or no interest in the place.'<sup>137</sup> The *Mayo News* simply reprinted the critical editorials of the *Irish Independent*.<sup>138</sup>

Some provincial comment was less hostile to the Party (or at least Redmond), but equally critical of the convention system. The *Leinster Leader* claimed that Tullamore showed that conventions were now 'obsolete' and that the system no longer possessed 'popular favour', though it exonerated Redmond.<sup>139</sup> The *Wexford People* also excused Redmond and dubbed the Tullamore result 'regrettable'. Otherwise it did not pull its punches

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<sup>131</sup> *FJ*, 4.12.14., 6.

<sup>132</sup> *FJ*, 10.12.14., 4.

<sup>133</sup> *FJ*, 11.12.14., 4.

<sup>134</sup> *II*, 20.11.14., 2.

<sup>135</sup> *Evening News* quoted in *FJ*, 12.12.14., 6.

<sup>136</sup> *Kerryman*, 12.12.14., 1.

<sup>137</sup> *Roscommon Herald*, 12.12.14., 4.

<sup>138</sup> *Mayo News*, 12.12.14., 4.

<sup>139</sup> *Leinster Leader*, 12.12.14., 4.

since the falling away of the agitation some of the national conventions are little better than a farce...When the country is not organised, and when there are not genuine branches of the organisation in every parish to appoint delegates to conventions, the wire-pullers and tricksters step in and simply pack the convention as they please...<sup>140</sup>

Similarly, the *Wicklow People* suggested that 'at any other time than at the present...we would have been glad to see the wire-pullers who rig the conventions since the organisation declined taught a lesson that they sadly need.'<sup>141</sup> The *Roscommon Journal* agreed, observing that 'All over the country today there are branches of the UI League which have little more than a newspaper existence.'<sup>142</sup> The *Midland Tribune*, argued that the rules governing conventions had to be made more 'elastic' in order to reform the 'out-worn' system.<sup>143</sup>

In contrast, the *Connacht Tribune* sought to focus on the media frenzy surrounding the by-election, commenting that the 'considerable controversy' concerning the convention system indicated nothing so much as the 'lamentable ignorance' of the candidate selection process on the part of the provincial press.<sup>144</sup> Another loyal Party paper, the *Dundalk Democrat*, acknowledged that there was a need 'for closer and more active supervision' of the League 'machinery', but insisted that to jettison the convention system would 'bring us back to the old days before Parnell' when 'Whigs' and 'nominal Home Rulers' had gone 'to Westminster, forgot their promises, and sold their votes for place and profit.'<sup>145</sup> The *Westmeath Independent* criticised what it termed the 'mountain of exaggeration' in the Irish press concerning Tullamore, and emphasised that all those involved had been loyal Redmondites.<sup>146</sup>

In response to the storm of criticism directed at the Party's candidate selection procedures, Redmond, Dillon and Devlin all made robust public statements in which they argued that without the convention system, constituencies would become 'cockpit[s] for the free play of local jealousies and fratricidal strife.'<sup>147</sup> The furthest Redmond went towards acknowledging that there was a problem was to call for the reorganisation of the League in the

<sup>140</sup> *Wexford People*, 12.12.14., 4.

<sup>141</sup> *Wicklow People* quoted in *FJ*, 22.12.14., 6.

<sup>142</sup> *Roscommon Journal* quoted in *II*, 12.12.14., 6.

<sup>143</sup> *Midland Tribune*, 12.12.14., 7.

<sup>144</sup> The *Tribune* was an avowedly Party paper and may have been directly subsidised from Party funds. A.F. O'Reilly to John Dillon, 23.4.09., TCD, DP, ms 6782/1177; Stephen Gwynn to John Dillon, 26.9.12., TCD, DP, ms 674/594.

<sup>145</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 12.12.14., 4; 19.12.14., 4; 26.12.14., 4. The surviving evidence suggests that the *Dundalk Democrat* was a recipient of Party subsidies. John Redmond to John Dillon, 25.9.09., TCD, DP, ms 6748/412.

<sup>146</sup> *Westmeath Independent*, 12.12.14., 4.

<sup>147</sup> *FJ*, 11.12.14., 4. Also see John Muldoon, *The Story of a 'Rigged' Convention; statement of the facts* (Dublin, 1915).

constituencies.<sup>148</sup> Members of Parliament supported this strategy, but privately some Nationalists expressed deep misgivings about the retention of the convention system and the following year saw increasingly frank admissions by MP about the disorganisation of the UIL.<sup>149</sup>

Despite the strong defence of the convention system mounted in late 1914, the Party concentrated on specifics and technicalities. It did not (could not) acknowledge the fact that by 1915, the independence and integrity of the UIL convention system had been discredited. In part this was the consequence of the continuing atrophy of the League. As a popular movement, its electioneering and fund-raising functions simply did not off-set the loss of momentum engendered by land purchase. More specifically, many Nationalists seem to have felt that with the passing of Home Rule (albeit in a suspended form), the political machinery of the Irish Party should be retired.<sup>150</sup> But, arguably, much the most important factor was the resentment towards the constant interference of the Party leadership. Redmond, Dillon and Devlin remained committed towards creating an 'informal-centralised' system, where formal rules were largely symbolic and selection was in practice determined by the executive. In contrast, William O'Brien's constitution of 1900 operated on strong 'formal-localised' lines (where selection was by a local organisation at the constituency level following standardised rules.)<sup>151</sup> Of course, contemporaries did not see matters quite in these terms, but, undoubtedly, the Party leadership did regard (not without some reason) provincial political elites as incapable of placing national interests above local or sectional ones. As the National Directory of the UIL reaffirmed in 1915 (in a statement which neatly summarises the Party's position): 'We want the nationalisation, rather than the parochialisation of Irish politics: to bring the parish pump to Parliament, rather than to bring Parliament to the parish pump.'<sup>152</sup> The series of controversial by-elections between 1900 and 1914 certainly suggest that some conventions saw their role as not only selecting a Home Rule Member, but more pragmatically, a representative of the constituency. In hindsight, the wariness of Redmond *et al* towards 'localism' can be seen as a rear-guard action against some of the forces which were to shape both the style and focus of Irish parliamentary representation after 1922.

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<sup>148</sup> *FJ*, 21.12.14., 9.

<sup>149</sup> Frank McDermott to John Dillon, 10.1.15., TCD, DP, ms 6772/503; Frank McDermott to John Dillon, 24.2.15., TCD, DP, ms 6772/504; Bew, *Ideology*, p. 147.

<sup>150</sup> *II*, 22.12.14., 4.

<sup>151</sup> This classification is taken from Pippa Norris and Joni Lovenduski, *Political Recruitment* (Cambridge, 1995), pp.4-5

<sup>152</sup> *FJ*, 13.1.15., 6.

### Chapter 4: Constituency Correspondence

In 1894 113 million letters from Ireland were handled by the Post Office. In the late 1890s the House of Commons received and dispatched 32,000 letters and 19,000 telegrams during every week that it sat.<sup>1</sup> It seems reasonable to assume, therefore, that at least some of the letters leaving Ireland were destined for Westminster (and *vice versa*), particularly since 79 per cent of the Irish population over five years old could both read and write by 1901.<sup>2</sup> Certainly, Moisei Ostrogorski, writing at the beginning of the twentieth century, saw literacy, along with steam and electricity, as having brought 'the Member under the very eyes of the electors' through the 'penny morning paper, containing the report of the sitting of the House which had finished overnight'. 'The next step with many electors', according to Ostrogorski, 'was a wish to show him [the MP] the way', and so 'communications...addressed to MPs became more and more common'.<sup>3</sup>

Ostrogorski's observations were confined to those constituents who lobbied their Member, via correspondence, on a particular issue or piece of legislation before Parliament. Moreover, he did not comment on the frequency of such letters nor discuss who they came from. But he did acknowledge that the mass circulation media, and (implicitly) rising levels of literacy and the advent of the penny post,<sup>4</sup> had altered the relationship between representatives and represented. Historians, by contrast, have been slow to consider the impact of literacy and letter-writing on the nature of Victorian and Edwardian parliamentary representation.

The consideration of constituent-MP correspondence has largely been the concern of political scientists.<sup>5</sup> Through their efforts, there has emerged an increasingly detailed picture of parliamentary correspondence in the second half of the twentieth century. However, doubtless because the nature of the evidence is so different, political scientists have shown much less interest in the question of constituency correspondence in the period before 1945.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Michael MacDonagh, *The Book of Parliament* (London, 1897), p. 55.

<sup>2</sup> T.J. McElligott, *Education in Ireland* (Dublin, 1966), p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Moisei Ostrogorski, *Democracy and the Organisation of Political Parties* (London, 1902), vol.i, pp. 494-5.

<sup>4</sup> C.R. Perry, *The Victorian Post Office: The Growth of a Bureaucracy* (Woodbridge, 1992), pp. 203-4; Hoppen, *Elections*, pp. 462.

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Coohill's work seems to be the exception to this. See Coohill, 'The Unenfranchised and Their MP'.

<sup>6</sup> For a recent discussion of this material, see Rush, *Member of Parliament*, p. 207.

That said, among those scholars who have considered constituency correspondence in the context of the early twentieth century, there is a broad consensus that Members' postbags have grown markedly over the course of the last 100 years. Writing in 1962, for example, D.N. Chester suggested that British citizens were much more prepared to write to their MP than they had been before the Second World War, attributing this change to the expansion of the welfare state and the higher profile of Members of Parliament through the development of the non-print media.<sup>7</sup> However, Philip Norton and D.M. Wood have characterized even the proportion of letters received by MPs in the 1950s as 'slight', and have concluded that the 'correspondence in the earlier part of the century was near to non-existent.'<sup>8</sup> Indeed, in a more recent study, Norton and Wood have suggested that the real increase in fact came *during* the 1960s, and that before this

[c]onstituents appear rarely to have written to MPs. There are no hard data on the number of letters written by constituents to MPs, but what limited data that exists on letters exchanged between MPs and Ministers, suggests little time was taken up in pursuit of casework. Even if Members wanted to do more, the opportunities to do so were limited: there was no secretarial or travelling allowances to facilitate contact, by correspondence or in person, between the Member and the constituency.<sup>9</sup>

According to Norton and Wood, Conservative Members were 'amateurs' and carpetbaggers, who had no interest in constituency work, while those cases received by Labour Members, were often brought to their attention by trade union officers, party officials or county councillors. In contrast, Anthony Barker and Michael Rush have argued that there was a 'considerable amount' of welfare work being undertaken before the Second World War, but that it was transacted 'face to face' (particularly by Labour MPs who were more likely to have native and residential links), rather than via correspondence.<sup>10</sup>

The work of British and American political scientists is valuable, particularly because of the attention it draws to the personal encounters between Members and their constituents, and also because it recognizes that some cases were mediated by several other individuals or agencies before reaching an MP. But the evidential standards employed in much of this research is far too modest and its use of *a fortiori* logic too extensive to

<sup>7</sup> D.N. Chester, *Questions in Parliament* (Oxford, 1962), p. 96.

<sup>8</sup> Philip Norton and D.M. Wood, *Back from Westminster* (Lexington, Kentucky, 1983), p. 41.

<sup>9</sup> Philip Norton and D.M. Wood, 'Constituency Service by Members of Parliament: Does it Contribute to a Personal Vote?', *PA*, vol. 43, no. 2 (1990), p. 197.

<sup>10</sup> Antony Barker and Michael Rush, *The Member of Parliament and His Information* (London, 1970), p. 199.

render its principal conclusion satisfactory. Doubtless, 'hard data' is difficult to come by, but this cannot excuse not working with the available evidence. For, in fact, not only is there considerable (albeit qualitative) data which suggests that constituency letters were received in sufficient number to be both time-consuming and expensive for Edwardian MPs, but there is also information which indicates that the facilities available to MPs for attending to their constituency correspondence may have been more extensive than hitherto allowed.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, both British and Irish Members of Parliament complained about the burden of their correspondence. The Conservative MP, Sir Richard Temple, for instance, described the 'hard life' of those Members who '[g]oing to bed at one o'clock in the morning...must rise at eight o'clock and attend to the correspondence, which is always heavy for an active parliamentarian'.<sup>11</sup> Although estimating the average Edwardian Members' constituency postbag is impossible, there is some suggestive anecdotal evidence. Sir Alfred Pease claimed that in the early 1890s he sometimes answered 40 letters a day.<sup>12</sup> The Lib-Lab MP Henry Broadhurst wrote in 1901 of how 'Postage is one of the most constant and serious burdens to a poor man; the most moderate estimate on this head is sixteen-pence a day'.<sup>13</sup> In 1907, George Haw reported that Will Crooks sometimes received 'nearly a hundred letters a day', though not all of these were from his constituents.<sup>14</sup>

The evidence for the immediate post-war period is considerably more detailed. In giving evidence before the 1920 Select Committee on Members' expenses, the Ulster Unionist MP, Thomas Donald, estimated that he spent £15 12s on postage a year. His colleague Colonel W.J. Allen estimated that his political correspondence cost him £25, while Major John Edwards gave a considerably higher figure of £44. The Scottish Liberal MP, J.M. Hogge recommended that MPs should be supplied with 50 franked envelopes a week, which he thought would 'break the back' of the public side of his correspondence.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Sir Richard Temple, *The House of Commons* (London, 1899), p.76. Also see, Samuel Smith, *My Life Work* (London, 1902) p. 142; Spencer Leigh Hughes, *Press, Platform and Parliament* (London, 1918), p. 67; Henry Snell, *Daily Life in Parliament* (London, 1930), p. 7; Henry Snell, *Men, Movements and Myself* (London, 1936), p. 212.

<sup>12</sup> Sir Alfred Pease, *Elections and Recollections* (London, 1932), p. 257.

<sup>13</sup> Henry Broadhurst, *Henry Broadhurst MP: the story of his life from a stonemason's bench to the Treasury bench* (London, 1901), p. 290.

<sup>14</sup> George Haw, *From Workhouse to Westminster: The Life Story of Will Crooks, MP* (1907, London, 1911), p. 256.

<sup>15</sup> *HC Select Committee on Members Expenses Report* (HC (1920) vii), p. 14, 15, 32, 19.



Although no such exact estimates exist for Irish Members, there is evidence to show that they also felt the burden of their constituency correspondence. For while some Irish MPs (notably John Redmond and several of the Party whips), had secretaries,<sup>16</sup> the vast majority of Irish MPs did not. One such, Justin McCarthy described 'the countless letters' he received as an MP, 'into which one is supposed to throw his whole soul',<sup>17</sup> while E.H. Burke told his constituents that 'the humblest Member of Parliament, merely because he has the misfortune to be a Member of Parliament receives on average as many letters in a week as he would get in a couple of months before he had the magic [letters] MP after his name'.<sup>18</sup> In *O'Rourke the Great*, Arthur Lynch has his main character complain

Sure the Irish like a row. It isn't what ye do for them that counts, but what ye say- and agin their enemies. Is it what I do for their welfare that tells for me, me sitting up in the small hours of the morning answering letters till the spine of me back feels like a rusty poker, and every one of ten thousand supporters having his own special grievance!<sup>19</sup>

But perhaps the most authentic voice in this regard is that of the County Down MP, Michael McCartan, who wrote to a friend in 1894 'I am very sorry that your kind letter met with the fate of almost every letter sent to me in London- it remained unanswered. If you only knew the amount of correspondence, [it is] almost impossible even to read, not to speak of writing in reply, you would have consideration for me.'<sup>20</sup>

According to received wisdom, Members of Parliament have long been disadvantaged so far as dealing with their constituency responsibilities are concerned.<sup>21</sup> In fact, if far from ideal, the facilities available to Members were more extensive than has previously been permitted. For instance, many Members used the House of Commons' library to attend to their correspondence. Moreover, in addition to the library, described in 1911 as 'a cosy room...with ample supplies of [free] stationery, roaring fires and comfortable armchairs',<sup>22</sup> the late nineteenth century Palace of Westminster had a telegraphic type machine and a post office; a return for the week ending December 11, 1920, indicates that 15,283 letters

<sup>16</sup> In the two cases known of, J.P. Boland's wife acted as his secretary, while A.J.C. Donelan had a private secretary named Mrs Conboy.

<sup>17</sup> Justin McCarthy, *Reminiscences* (London, 1912), vol. i, p. 223.

<sup>18</sup> *Tullamore and King's County Independent*, 1.1.10., 7.

<sup>19</sup> Lynch, *O'Rourke*, p. 12.

<sup>20</sup> Michael McCartan to 'Andy', 3.8.94, UCDA, MLB, [557]

<sup>21</sup> D.G. Crockett, 'The MP and his Constituents', *PA*, vol. xx, no.3 (1967), p. 282.

<sup>22</sup> Robert Farquharson, *In and Out of Parliament* (London, 1911), p. 204. Parliamentary stationery was free and from the extant correspondence, House of Commons notepaper seems to have often been taken and used outside the House. Not all Irish Members were satisfied with the library. See, *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. liv, cols. 1151-2 (25.6.13.).

were posted in the House of Commons.<sup>23</sup> Although the cost of Members' general correspondence had not been subsidized by the state since 1840, Members' letters to metropolitan government departments in London, Edinburgh and Dublin (including the Irish Estates Commissioners) could be sent free of charge.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, the House of Commons provided accommodation for a non-subsidized secretarial service. At the beginning of the twentieth century, some 12 'girls' worked from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. in two rooms reserved for the typing and dictation of Members' public and private correspondence. According to one witness before the Select Committee on the House of Commons Accommodation in 1901, it was heavily used.<sup>25</sup> Space was also provided within the precincts of the Palace for the private secretaries of those able to afford the expense. In 1901, 94 private secretaries were officially recorded as making use of the rooms allocated for this purpose, which were otherwise used for parliamentary committees.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, although the reforms of 1911 made Members' salaries taxable and provided no separate allowance for postage or travel, MPs were entitled to apply to have their expenditure on secretarial and clerical assistance, office accommodation and charges incurred in communicating with their constituents, exempted from assessment.<sup>27</sup>

Evidence concerning the contents of MPs' postbags at the beginning of the twentieth century is vague. Robert Farquharson, for example, claimed that many letters meant either 'worry or expenditure' for the MPs who received them.

There are sure to be requests for places in the Gallery, a broad hint for teas on the Terrace. Some fond parent or pushing son wishes a billet or influence with a public department, or else a deputation has to be arranged, or an interview with a Minister; and then some applications for subscriptions to various worthy or bogus objects, as well as requests to open bazaars or flower-shows; or, if you have imprudently acquired a platform reputation, demands to speaking [sic.]...in various directions.<sup>28</sup>

The Irish parliamentary journalist Michael MacDonagh, who wrote numerous popular books about Parliament in the late Victorian and Edwardian period, was considerably more scathing about the contents of most MPs' postbags. For along with noting the 'half

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<sup>23</sup> *Hansard, HC*, (series 4) vol. cxii, col. 91 (29.7.02.); *HC Select Committee on Members Expenses*, p. 33.

<sup>24</sup> *Hansard, HC* (series 4) vol. cxcii, cols. 1091-2 (16.7.08.).

<sup>25</sup> *HC Select Committee on House of Commons Accommodation Report* (HC Paper (1901) vi), p. 321.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 232-4.

<sup>27</sup> W.B. Gwyn, *Democracy and the Cost of Politics in Britain* (London, 1962), p. 224.

<sup>28</sup> Farquharson, *Parliament*, pp. 198-9.

pathetic and half laughable' letters of the ill and unlucky, the impecunious, the lonely, and those emanating from former 'chums' on the make, he reserved his strongest disdain for those from the 'numbers of the electors [who] still imagine there are many comfortable posts in the public service which are to be had merely for the saying of a word by their representatives to the Minister of the department concerned.'<sup>29</sup>

It is clear, even from this cursory discussion, that there is in fact some evidence (if not 'hard data') concerning correspondence, though it is impossible to know how representative it is. Taken as a whole, it suggests (allowing for literary exaggeration) that in the decades leading up to the First World War, constituents wrote to their MPs (of all parties) more frequently and that correspondence occupied more time than has previously been appreciated. However, differences between Liberal, Labour, Conservative and Nationalist MPs remain hard to pinpoint, as does information about Members' correspondents. Who were these men and (presumably) women? What were their expectations in writing to their MP? Something can be inferred from the issues which allegedly motivated them to write, such as lobbying over legislation, invitations to public engagements and requests for patronage. Equally, the fact that welfare cases are apparently absent, is suggestive. But more extensive and thoroughgoing study of Victorian and Edwardian constituency correspondence is required before historians will be in position to assess the importance of the constituency postbag to popular notions of parliamentary representation.

Just as political and parliamentary historians have been slow to consider the nature of constituency service among British MPs in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain, so historians of the Irish Party have largely ignored the day-to-day business of constituency representation. Even those scholars who have shown greater awareness of the 'service orientation' of the Irish Party have not examined the means by which Nationalist MPs communicated with their constituents, while the few existing studies of individual Irish Members have tended to regard constituency correspondence as an unremarkable and unchanging feature of parliamentary service. Thus, J.B. Lyons has observed that, following Tom Kettle's election to Parliament, 'His correspondence, almost at once, carried those requests and complaints which are received daily by public representatives.'<sup>30</sup> Lyons, however, gives no indication of how Kettle regarded these letters, whether they led to any action on his part, or what they indicated about his relationship with his Tyrone

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<sup>29</sup> Michael MacDonagh, *The Pageant of Parliament* (London, 1921), vol. 1, p. 69.

<sup>30</sup> Lyons, *Enigma*, p.86.

constituents. In contrast, Patricia Lavelle perceptively described the change wrought on her father's postbag following his election for Kilkenny.

and then the letters began coming in to dad, begging him to do what he could to get them back the lease of the farm, or to remove the land-grabber from the old holding. It was tedious and tiresome work, trying to get justice for these landless farmers. It was quite work with no limelight thrown upon it. It was work that was being done up and down the country by the Irish Nationalist Party.<sup>31</sup>

Lavelle's evidence is interesting because it suggests not only that an MP's postbag was an important source of constituency intelligence, but that apparently quite humble constituents regarded MPs as appropriate intermediaries in the settlement of (specifically agrarian) problems, which they had no formal responsibility for, nor authority over. Finally, Lavelle intimates that although such work received little publicity, most Irish Members dedicated considerable time to it.

For most Irish MPs, constituency correspondence would have been important because many were absent from Ireland for long periods of time. Even when Parliament was not sitting, many MPs (like O'Mara) did not live in their constituencies, and in any case, there existed no formal equivalent to the modern day 'surgery'.<sup>32</sup> Resident and non-resident Members alike, therefore, relied on local contacts. Indeed, as the Member for the remote constituency of South Kerry, J.P. Boland, put it, during the parliamentary session MPs relied 'upon a man, or group of men, in each key-district, and [kept in] constant correspondence with them'. In West Kerry, Boland had nine 'key-workers' who looked after his interests; five in Cahirciveen and three in Kenmare. In Waterford City and East Clare, respectively, John and Willie Redmond are known to have made similar arrangements.<sup>33</sup>

The surviving evidence suggests that many local grievances were channelled through such men, rather than addressed directly to MPs. This was not because constituents were incapable of writing to their MP themselves (since by 1911 88 per cent

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<sup>31</sup> Lavelle, *O'Mara*, p. 39.

<sup>32</sup> There has been no research on the origin of Members' surgeries. In 1957, a letter in the *Times* from the veteran Conservative MP, Lord Winterton, was critical of the holding of surgeries, which he described as having developed 'a few years ago'. However, as Enoch Powell indicated in 1951, surgeries were a recognized part of some Members routine by the late 1940s, and according to John Parker, MP for Romford 1935-45, he held surgeries before the war. *Times*, 15.4.57., 11; *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. cdlxxiv, col. 966 (19.2.51); Barker and Rush, *Information*, pp. 198-9.

<sup>33</sup> Boland, *Irishman's Day*, p. 153; Dooley, *Irishmen or English Soldiers*, p. 73; Denman, *Lonely Grave*, p. 51.

of people over five were able to read and write),<sup>34</sup> but because many people in rural constituencies may have preferred to deal personally with a locally known 'contact man'. Certainly, this is the conclusion of several scholars considering similar behaviour later in the twentieth century. Basil Chubb, for instance, claimed in the 1950s that Ireland's 'conservative, parochial...and intensely locally oriented' citizens, gave 'great weight and significance to personal, face to face, contact.'<sup>35</sup> Thus, the need for the 'intervention or good offices of a man "in the know"' existed not only in the person of the MP as an 'adviser, contact man, expeditor, and intercessor' between the individual and the state, but also in soliciting the assistance of an MP in the first place. In the winter of 1906, for instance, a Mrs Lee of Ladyswell contacted a Mr E. Wall with the request that he get James O'Mara 'to put a question in the House' concerning an evicted farm neighbouring her property. Wall, not being acquainted with O'Mara, contacted Father Brennan, his closest clerical supporter in the constituency, and asked him as a favour to 'drop him [O'Mara] a line and ask him to do so if he thinks prudent.'<sup>36</sup>

The fact that priests acted as 'contact men' should come as no great surprise. By the late nineteenth century, not only was it often expected that priests would be at the forefront of the national organisation locally,<sup>37</sup> but their pastoral responsibilities often encompassed the legal, marital, and financial concerns of their parishioners.<sup>38</sup> In fact, according to S.J. Connolly

the Catholic priest was in most cases the educated man to whom his parishioners could most easily and most confidently turn for advice and assistance. Thus the priest was frequently called on to act as an intermediary between his parishioners and those in authority... "If a poor man wants a favour asked of some great man", a Catholic lawyer reported in 1839, "he gets the priest to ask that favour for him: if he is in distress or difficulties, he goes to his priest, and looks upon him as his friend and protector."<sup>39</sup>

<sup>34</sup> S.J. Connolly (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Irish History* (Oxford, 1998), p.319.

<sup>35</sup> Chubb, 'Persecuting Civil Servants', p. 272.

<sup>36</sup> E. Wall to Father Brennan, 5.12.06., NLI, OMP, ms 21,544 [4]. Also see, Father Brennan to James O'Mara, 8.3.06., NLI, OMP, ms 21,544 [4].

<sup>37</sup> Local Nationalists, for instance, assumed that their new parish priest, J.C. Guinan, would automatically become president of their 'Laigue'. J.C. Guinan, *The Soggarth Aroon* (1906, Dublin, 1946), p. 126.

<sup>38</sup> P.D. Kenny, *Economics of Irishmen* (Dublin, 1906), p. 153; K.H. Connell, *Irish Peasant Society* (Oxford, 1968), p. 45.

<sup>39</sup> S.J. Connolly, *Priests and people in Pre-Famine Ireland, 1780-1845* (Dulin, 1982), p. 56. Also see, J.A. Murphy, 'Priests and People in Modern Irish History', *Christus Rex*, vol. xxii, no. 4 (1969), pp. 235-273.

Although, as Stephen Gwynn explained in 1909, with the progressive extension of the franchise and local government reform, 'the people [now have] representatives of their own...[who] claim, and claim rightly, a large share of the influence which formerly the priest alone enjoyed',<sup>40</sup> the social work of priests and their continuing local influence, combined with the frequent (if not total) absence of many MPs from their constituencies, meant that it was in an Mps' interests to work with their local clergy. In 1893, for example, a Mayo priest, Father J.T. Connelly, corresponded with J.F.X. O'Brien regarding the military pension of one of his parishioners,<sup>41</sup> and two years later, the letters of Father J. Corbett alerted O'Brien to the agricultural distress in his Mayo constituency.<sup>42</sup> Priests also drew Members' attention to instances of individual hardship, and, given their pastoral mission, the Catholic clergy were well placed to comment on the problems encountered in the implementation of state welfare schemes at the beginning of the century.<sup>43</sup>

Occasionally, however, when relations between Members and parish priests, or priests and constituents, were not harmonious, lines of communications could break down. In a letter to J.F.X. O'Brien, for example, Edward Jennings apologized for not having written sooner, adding by way of explanation 'I would have written you before this but I thought Father Varden would write you on the subject. He, however, put the matter off from day to day and now he has left the parish.' Jennings added, 'there is no concealing the fact that the majority of them [the parish priests] here have Healyite leanings.'<sup>44</sup>

Although the use of intermediaries was apparently widespread, some Irish constituents did write directly to their Member of Parliament. On the whole, these letters seem to have been competently written, though no doubt carefully drafted. Very few suggest illiteracy or semi-literacy (though this may be obscured by the use of intermediaries). Of course, there were exceptions, as when a group of evicted tenants wrote to Tom O'Donnell in September 1906.

Sir the p[l]ace wee are living is about the worst farm in Kerry and his process we are sure to have for rent nex[t] day to his call if not paid. So we are pled out by him

<sup>40</sup> Gwynn, *Holiday in Connemara*, pp. 118-19.

<sup>41</sup> Father J.T. Connelly to J.F.X. O'Brien, 8.3.93.; 26.5.93.; 14.7.93., NLI, OBP, ms 13,432 [1].

<sup>42</sup> Father J. Corbett to J.F.X. O'Brien, 7.4.95, NLI, OBP, ms 15182 [7]; John Morley to J.F.X. O'Brien, 6.4.95, NLI, OBP, ms 15182 [7]; Father J. Corbett to J.F.X. O'Brien, 21.4.95, NLI, OBP, ms 15182 [7].

<sup>43</sup> Father Glynn to John Roche, 17.2.04., TCD, DP, ms 6750/53. Father H. O'Riordan to John Redmond, 29.6.08, TCD, DP, ms 6748/367.

<sup>44</sup> Edward Jennings to J.F.X. O'Brien, 17.8.94., NLI, OBP, ms 13,457.

and broken down again. And now Dear Sir I hope you will consider for us and send us a few lines and tell us if we can do anything for our good.<sup>45</sup>

More common, however, was the presence of a certain apologetic or timid manner of address. In particular, constituents feared 'troubling' their MP, probably because, within their constituencies Members held the highest non-governmental civil office, and so those writing were sometimes unsure whether the matter was worthy of attention. Nonetheless they did write.<sup>46</sup>

Other correspondents showed no such awkwardness. Such complainants often began their letters by stating their entitlement or 'claim' for communicating with their MP. The letter of a resident of Dunnamaggan, written to James O'Mara in April 1907 is typical of this style of address: 'As one of your constituents I would feel obliged if you would be so kind as to bring under the notice of the Chief Secretary an injustice to which I have been subjected'.<sup>47</sup> In stating their relationship to the Member concerned, these correspondents were not justifying their action, so much as alerting their MP to the consideration they expected. Others put the matter more bluntly; the Arofert Land and Labour Association began one communication to Tom O'Donnell in mid 1910 with the sentence 'As our parliamentary representative, we expect you to use your influence and support on our behalf'.<sup>48</sup>

A large number of those individuals who wrote to Irish Members of Parliament were evicted tenants- the 'wounded soldiers of the Land War'.<sup>49</sup> The efforts of Members on their behalf could be both lengthy and time-consuming. Patricia Lavelle described how

A dozen or more of these cases, occurring in the County of Kilkenny, passed through dad's hands. Some of these were very sad records of injustice. All entailed considerable correspondence with solicitors, land agents and United [Irish] League officials. In some cases protest meetings were called...<sup>50</sup>

<sup>45</sup> John O'Sullivan to Tom O'Donnell, 16.9.06., NLI, ODP, ms 15,456 [4].

<sup>46</sup> Edward Jennings to J.F.X. O'Brien, 17.8.94., NLI, OBP, ms 13,457; William Walsh to James O'Mara, 29.3.05., NLI, OMP, ms 21,544 [3]; J.M. Slattery to Tom O'Donnell, 19.3.06., NLI, ODP, ms 15,456 [4].

<sup>47</sup> Unknown to James O'Mara, 30.4.07., NLI, OMP, ms 21,544 [3]. Also see, James Langan to J.F.X. O'Brien, 20.11.85., NLI, OBP, 13,432 [7].

<sup>48</sup> Arofert LLA to Tom O'Donnell, 18.7.10., NLI, ODP, ms 15,458 [1].

<sup>49</sup> Edward Jennings to J.F.X. O'Brien, 17.8.94., NLI, OBP, ms 13,457; Michael MacDonell to Tom O'Donnell, 13.4.06., NLI, ODP, ms 15,456 [4]; J.J. Sullivan to Tom O'Donnell, 7.9.08., NLI, ms 15,456 [8]; W.S. Kane to Tom O'Donnell, 23.3.09., NLI, ODP, ms 15, 456 [7]; Edward Sheehan to Tom O'Donnell, 8.5.11., NLI, ODP, 15,458 [2].

<sup>50</sup> Lavelle, *O'Mara*, p. 39.

To take but one example, in mid 1903, James O'Mara became involved in the case of Bridget Norris who had been evicted from her holding on the Reade estate for non payment of one years rent in January 1901, the farm having subsequently fallen into the hands of a 'grabber'.<sup>51</sup> O'Mara communicated with the then Chief Secretary, George Wyndham, about the case and he promised O'Mara that he would bring it before the Estates Commissioners. This elicited from Mrs Norris fulsome praise: 'Words cannot express the gratitude of my family and myself for your generous interest on our behalf.' Her tone, however, was somewhat less acclamatory when she wrote in July of the following year, having not heard anything further. 'As the long vacation is now approaching, I thought it better to remind you that I have had no news to that effect'.<sup>52</sup> Whether this letter prompted O'Mara to action is unknown, but a letter dated April 6, 1905, from the assistant secretary of the Estates Commissioners Office (in response to a letter from O'Mara in late March), insisted that the Commissioners had no power to interfere with the tenant occupying Norris' holding. O'Mara wrote back to the Commissioners on April 10, and in reply they conceded that when their inspectors were in a position to take any steps, the office would inform O'Mara. At the same time O'Mara contacted the UIL central office in Dublin to find out whether the League had any further information.<sup>53</sup> Larry Ginnell wrote back immediately, explaining that following O'Mara's previous letters (which have not survived) he had advised Mrs Norris as to the type of application she should make to the Commissioners. However, he had heard nothing more from her and he held out little hope of further assistance unless O'Mara could 'stir up' the local UIL.<sup>54</sup> The last surviving letter is from a Father E. Purcell, written over a year later, informing O'Mara that Mrs Norris had received a letter from the Estates Commissioners explaining that the current tenant of the farm would not give up his occupancy for less than £500, a price she was not prepared to pay.<sup>55</sup>

If attempts to reinstate individual evicted tenants often entailed 'considerable correspondence',<sup>56</sup> the sale of whole estates could also entail the writing and receipt of 'a fair slab of correspondence' for an MP closely involved in the negotiations between landlord and tenants. This is perhaps most evident from Tom O'Donnell's postbag. O'Donnell played a central role in brokering the purchase of the Ventry estate in county

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<sup>51</sup> Baker Ridgewood to Michael Norris, 22.5.02, NLI, OMP, ms 21,544 [4].

<sup>52</sup> Bridget Norris to James O'Mara, 8.9.03.; 14.7.04., NLI, OMP, ms 21,544 [4].

<sup>53</sup> E. O'Farrell to James O'Mara, 6.4.05.; 13.4.05., NLI, OMP, ms 21,544 [4].

<sup>54</sup> Laurence Ginnell to James O'Mara, 11.4.05., NLI, OMP, ms 21,544 [6].

<sup>55</sup> Father E. Purcell to James O'Mara, 14.5.06, NLI, OMP, ms 21,544 [4].

<sup>56</sup> *FJ*, 7.1.10., 8; 17.10.11., 9.



Kerry. This was a lengthy process (effectively from 1905 through to 1914), involving the reconciliation of the conflicting interests of the tenants, Lord Ventry and the Congested Districts Board. Throughout O'Donnell operated in the interests of the tenantry. In order to facilitate the purchase of the whole estate, he organized the Ventry tenants into local committees and these consulted O'Donnell on questions of land law and the conduct of negotiations.<sup>57</sup> However, O'Donnell correspondence also shows that he worked closely with the Board's Kerry representative, Henry Doran,<sup>58</sup> and Lord Ventry's agent, Captain McClure. Although O'Donnell won widespread praise when the estate was sold in 1910,<sup>59</sup> this co-operation combined with his perceived conceitedness, alienated some of the local clergy.<sup>60</sup>

While some constituents lobbied their MPs to support particular causes,<sup>61</sup> legislation actually before Parliament also generated considerable constituency correspondence. In the course of his representation of Cork city, J.F.X. O'Brien received numerous letters from his constituents urging him to support a variety of projects. In 1900, the Cork branch of the National Amalgamated Union of Shop Assistants, Warehousemen and Clerks wrote to O'Brien seeking his support for a future Shops Bill,<sup>62</sup> and in 1903, the school attendance committee of the Cork Corporation wrote urging him to support the Day Industrial Schools Bill.<sup>63</sup> James O'Mara was also lobbied by constituents. For instance, the difficulties which had arisen between magistrates and the licensed trade during 1903,<sup>64</sup> prompted the government to introduce a Licensing Bill the following year, which (among other provisions) deprived licensing magistrates of the power to decline the renewal of licences on the grounds of 'public policy'. The Bill was opposed by temperance reformers and the Liberal opposition as 'a timid concession for party purposes to a great and powerful trade'.<sup>65</sup> At the beginning of May 1904 (the week of the Bill's second reading debate), O'Mara, who was known to be a temperance advocate, received several letters from

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<sup>57</sup> John Casey to Tom O'Donnell, 21.1.07, NLI, ODP, ms 15,456 [5]. Also see P.J. Kearney to Tom O'Donnell, 23.11.05., NLI, ODP, ms 15,456 [3]; Father D. Brennan to Tom O'Donnell, 15.12.05., NLI, ODP, ms 15, 456 [3]; J.R. Clifford to Tom O'Donnell, 26.9.07., ms 15,456 [5]; John Casey to Tom O'Donnell, 17.2.08., NLI, ODP, ms 15,456 [8].

<sup>58</sup> Henry Doran to Tom O'Donnell, 25.8.08.; 22.12.08., NLI, ODP, ms 15, 456 [8].

<sup>59</sup> Timothy Harrington to Tom O'Donnell, 26.5.10., NLI, ODP, ms 15,458 [1].

<sup>60</sup> Henry Doran to Tom O'Donnell, 19.8.10., NLI, ODP, ms 15,458 [1].

<sup>61</sup> For instance, see L.C.C. Howad of the National Service League to Tom O'Donnell. L.C.C. Howad to Tom O'Donnell, 8.1.06., NLI ODP, ms 15,456 [4].

<sup>62</sup> William Roche to J.F.X. O'Brien, 29.9.00., NLI OBP, ms 13,443 [1].

<sup>63</sup> Cork School Attendance Committee to J.F.X. O'Brien, 11.6.03., NLI, OBP, ms 13,443 [1].

<sup>64</sup> *Annual Register, 1903* (London, 1904), pp. 68-9

<sup>65</sup> *Annual Register, 1904* (London, 1905), pp. 110-11, 121-4.

constituents pressing different lines of action on him. The hotelier, Edmund Callanan, urged him to support the Bill,<sup>66</sup> while Peter Walsh wrote

As an elector of the South Kilkenny division...I want to write to you in reference to the Second reading of the Licensing Bill...[I] earnestly ask you as an abstainer and as a Christian to be in your place on Monday 9th to do all you possible can to defeat the Bill.<sup>67</sup>

In fact, whether because of conflicting constituency pressure, or more probably national considerations, O'Mara (along with such noted temperance advocates as Willie Redmond), abstained.<sup>68</sup> Two years later, O'Mara was able to demonstrate his temperance sympathies, when he introduced a St. Patrick's Day Closing Bill, in connection with which he received numerous resolutions of support from local and national organisations.<sup>69</sup> The following year, however, O'Mara was censured by the Callan Town Tenants League for having not supported the third reading of the Towns Tenants Bill, contrary to the course it and others had urged on him.<sup>70</sup>

In contrast to the postbags of early twenty-first century British and Irish parliamentary representatives, letters from constituents relating to housing, pensions and other entitlements of the modern welfare state are conspicuous by their absence from the letter collections of Victorian and Edwardian Irish MPs. This is because, with the exception of Tom O'Donnell's papers, the surviving backbench correspondence chronologically precedes the advent of 'New Liberalism' and the legislation it gave rise to. Thus, it is not surprising to find that not only were the number of correspondents writing to Irish MPs between c.1890-1910 with regard to individual grievances comparatively small, but that their grievances reflected a time before the advent of the 'Social Service State'.<sup>71</sup> Instead, for many Irish men and women their relationship with the state was confined to the payment of annuities under the terms of their purchase agreements. However, some anticipation of later developments may be seen in Members' dealings with the grievances of retired servicemen,<sup>72</sup> and serving members of the RIC.<sup>73</sup> In some instances, the absence

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<sup>66</sup> Edmund Callanan to James O'Mara, 5.5.04., NLI, OMP, ms 21,544 [3].

<sup>67</sup> Peter Walsh to James O'Mara, 5.5.04., NLI, OMP, ms 21,544 [3].

<sup>68</sup> *Parl. Debs.* (series 4) vol. cxxxiv, cols. 1099-1106 (11.5.04.).

<sup>69</sup> Lavelle, *O'Mara*, pp. 67-8.

<sup>70</sup> Callan TTA to James O'Mara, 16.2.06., NLI, OMP, ms 21,544 [3]; E. O'Connell to James O'Mara, 21.6.06., NLI, OMP, ms 21,544 [5].

<sup>71</sup> Donald Read, *Edwardian England, 1901-15* (London, 1972), p. 151.

<sup>72</sup> J.T. Connelly to J.F.X. O'Brien, 8.3.93., NLI, OBP, ms 13,432 [1]; Michael Phelan to James O'Mara, 9.7.04., NLI, OMP, ms 21,544 [3]; George Alexander to John Redmond, 3.5.94, NLI,

of welfare provision, prompted Members to become involved in private efforts to help individuals or communities in distress.<sup>74</sup>

A more common subject dealt with by Members in their correspondence was the advancement of local economic interests, which effectively meant securing state investment in the local infrastructure and protecting economic interests.<sup>75</sup> W.H.M. Comen wrote to Tom O'Donnell in June 1906, for instance, urging him to lobby the government to provide a grant for the dredging of Barrow Harbour. Many other MPs received similar letters about harbour maintenance or improvements.<sup>76</sup> Other areas which generated correspondence included the improvement of postal facilities,<sup>77</sup> securing grants for fishermen,<sup>78</sup> drainage,<sup>79</sup> opening new local schools,<sup>80</sup> the extension of telephone facilities,<sup>81</sup> canal maintenance or construction,<sup>82</sup> and the attendance at the sittings of private Bill committees (when such Bills were relevant to a Members' region). At times this last responsibility could give rise to considerable amounts of correspondence (and stress), as in the case of the Great Southern and Western and Limerick and Western Railway Companies Amalgamation Bill of 1899. As a Bill effecting Cork and Munster, one of Cork city's two Members, J.F.X. O'Brien, sat on the Hybrid Committee which considered the measure, and communicated frequently with his Cork constituents as to their attitude towards the Bill. The correspondence began in March and continued through to August 1899; O'Brien received 22 letters altogether (16 in July alone) from the Cork Corporation,

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RP, ms 15,238 [5]; Patrick McLean to Jeremiah Jordan, 17.2.90, PRONI, JP, D/2073/2/1. On this, see J.G.S. MacNeill's letter to the *Freeman's FJ*, 13.8.08., 8.

<sup>73</sup> Michael McCartan to [Illegible?] Flynn, 9.11.94., UCDA, MLB, [579]; Michael McCartan to Sir Andrew Reid, 1.3.99, UCDA, MLB, [734].

<sup>74</sup> Tom O'Donnell was, for example, closely involved in the Brandon Bay Disaster Fund. Mrs O'Neill to Tom O'Donnell, Feb. 1908, NLI, ODP, ms 15,456 [8]; Private Secretary of Pierpoint Morgan to Tom O'Donnell, 10.4.08., NLI, ODP, ms 15,456 [8].

<sup>75</sup> Political scientists have more recently termed this the 'local promoter role'. See Michael Gallagher and Lee Komito, 'The Constituency Role of TDs', in John Coakley and Michael Gallagher (eds.), *Politics in the Republic of Ireland* (1992, London, 1999), p. 206.

<sup>76</sup> W.H.N. Comen to Tom O'Donnell, 8.6.06., NLI, ODP, ms 15,456 [4]; P.J. O'Brien to Tom O'Donnell, 21.11.11., NLI, ODP, ms 15,456 [4]; Michael McCartan to Lord Arthur Hill, 18.10.95., UCDA, MLB, [66]; John Pinkerton to Sir J. Hibbert, 28.11.93, PRONI, PP, D/1078/P/60.

<sup>77</sup> J.N. White to John Redmond, 20.3.93., NLI, RP, ms 15,238 [5]; Ben Bathurst to J.F.X. O'Brien, 26.4.01., NLI, OBP, ms 13,432 [1].

<sup>78</sup> T.F. Brady to J.F.X. O'Brien, 6.2.99., NLI, OBP, ms 13,432 [2]; [CDB] to Tom O'Donnell, 4.4.12., NLI, ODP, ms 15,458 [3].

<sup>79</sup> Michael O'Donnell to Tom O'Donnell, 4.7.12., 15,458 [3].

<sup>80</sup> Father Purcell to James O'Mara, 6.3.07., NLI, OMP, ms 21,544 [3].

<sup>81</sup> Duke of Norfolk to J.F.X. O'Brien, 8.1.00., NLI, ODP, ms 13,432 [8]; D.J. Daly to J.F.X. O'Brien, 12.1.00., NLI, OBP, ms 13,443 [1].

<sup>82</sup> Thomas McGovern to Jeremiah Jordan, 13.5.86., PRONI, JP, D/2073/2/1/7; Patrick Kennedy to James O'Mara, 19.9.06., NLI, OMP, ms 21,544 [3].

the Cork Chamber of Commerce, the Cork Harbour Board, the Board of Trade, railway companies, and the railway expert, William Field, MP, and, in turn, sent at least 12 letters on the matter himself.<sup>83</sup>

A further source of constituency correspondence related to the ‘nursing’ of Members’ constituencies. Although Irish MPs did not have to ‘subscribe to their local charities, to open their bazaars, visit their hospitals, kick off at their football matches, [and] take the chair at their farmers’ dinners or smoking concerts’ in the way that their British colleagues did,<sup>84</sup> William O’Malley’s recollection that Irish Members were ‘never expected to give a subscription for anything’ is not entirely accurate.<sup>85</sup> As Father Richard Barrett wrote to J.F.X. O’Brien in 1895 ‘I suppose you must give something to the Cork National Society. In my opinion a couple of pounds will be generous for you.’<sup>86</sup> At a later point, John Clancy received requests to contribute to charitable organisations,<sup>87</sup> while, according to one Kilkenny priest, James O’Mara was considered ‘easy prey’ by constituents seeking financial support for good causes.<sup>88</sup> Thomas Smyth was recommended to the delegates of the South Leitrim convention in December 1909, in part at least, because ‘he at all times liberally subscribed towards local deserving objects in the constituency’.<sup>89</sup> Other Irish Members also received calls on their pockets, from county boards of the GAA, from memorial committees, *workingmen’s clubs and so on*.<sup>90</sup> Needless to say, not all such letters were financially motivated. J.F.X. O’Brien was occasionally asked to open bazaars,<sup>91</sup> and he along with other Irish Members were also invited to become honorary members of various nationalist societies.<sup>92</sup>

It would seem that, by 1910, communicating by letter, either directly or through an intermediary, with a Member of Parliament was an accepted, even routinized procedure for

<sup>83</sup> See J.F.X. O’Brien Papers, NLI, OBP, ms 13,445.

<sup>84</sup> Harry Graham, *The Mother Of Parliaments* (London, 1910), p. 48.

<sup>85</sup> O’Malley, *Glancing Back*, p. 208.

<sup>86</sup> Richard Barrett to J.F.X. O’Brien, 27.7.95., NLI, OBP, ms 13,432 [1].

<sup>87</sup> *FJ*, 17.3.11., 8.

<sup>88</sup> James Doyle to James O’Mara, 11.1.07, NLI, OMP, ms 21,544 [3].

<sup>89</sup> *A-C*, 1.1.10., 5.

<sup>90</sup> Secretary Connaught Council GAA to Daniel Boyle, 15.8.12, TCD, DP, ms 6752/63; Daniel Boyle to John Dillon, 27.8.12, TCD, DP, ms 6752/64; 25.4.04; Thomas Cahill to John Dillon, 30.11.09, TCD, DP, ms 6782/1243; *FJ*, 19.5.13., 7; May Sparks to James O’Mara, 14.6.07., NLI, OMP, ms 21,544 [5].

<sup>91</sup> Church of St Mary’s and St Michael’s E. to J.F.X. O’Brien, 15.5.05., NLI, OBP, ms 13,442 [11].

<sup>92</sup> Dungarvan Town Commissioners to J.F.X. O’Brien, 13.7.97., NLI, OBP, ms 13,432 [3]; Cork Branch, National Association for the Prevention of Consumption to J.F.X. O’Brien, Feb. 1903, NLI, OBP, ms 13,443 [1]; James Cunningham to Michael McCartan, 23.11.87, UCDA, MLB, [194].

many constituents (and not only the Party's middle-class supporters). Although Edwardian Irish MPs' postbags were very much smaller than those of their twenty-first century counterparts, still, the great majority of the political correspondence received by MPs was constituency related. Moreover, the nature and volume of this correspondence was determined largely by the shape of the state in early twentieth-century Ireland. Whereas MPs received letters concerning law and order, land purchase, state investment in the local infrastructure and so on, few letters were received regarding housing, pensions or medical provision. The absence of such 'casework' would suggest that Irish Members were not, therefore, 'welfare officers'.<sup>93</sup> Even so, the activities of the state were sufficiently complex and its relationship with Ireland's Catholic inhabitants sufficiently poor, as to require the need for mediators or 'brokers'. Unlike most of their constituents, MPs had both a working knowledge of bureaucratic procedure and preferential access to the administration itself (either directly or through Parliament),<sup>94</sup> and some Members used these advantages to assist their constituents and build reputations as 'hawker[s] of local interests'.<sup>95</sup>

Writing in 1897, the London-Irish parliamentary journalist, Michael MacDonagh, observed that many British electors believed that 'their representatives have an abundance of nice, fat, comfortable posts at their disposal'. As a result, he continued, 'Members of Parliament are...inundated with demands from supporters for posts'.<sup>96</sup> The presence of such letters in large numbers among the surviving correspondence of Irish Members of Parliament, strongly suggests that such expectations also existed in Edwardian Ireland.<sup>97</sup> Prominent among letters of this kind were those from, or on behalf of, individuals seeking to become magistrates, postmasters and mistresses, medical superintendents of asylums, clerks within the Irish legal and local government administration and inspectors of prisons, factories and state welfare programmes.

To take several examples, John O'Shea wrote to James O'Mara in February 1907 on behalf of Dick Ryan who wanted to be appointed to the position of inspector of cottages under the Labourers Act. O'Shea explained that though Ryan 'has testimonials from Dr Browning PP...and all the leading men of the county...I think if you would speak to Sir

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<sup>93</sup> Rush, *Member of Parliament*, p. 210.

<sup>94</sup> These comments are based on the analysis in Lee Komito, 'Irish Clientelism: A Reappraisal', *Economic and Social Review*, vol. 15, no. 3 (1984), p. 174.

<sup>95</sup> The expression is Basil Chubb's. See, Chubb, 'Persecuting civil servants', p. 285.

<sup>96</sup> MacDonagh, *Book of Parliament*, p. 56.

<sup>97</sup> In the Dillon papers there are at least 47 letters seeking his assistance in securing various public appointments covering the period 1895 to 1912. In Tom O'Donnell's correspondence there are to be found at least 20 such letters and in J.F.X. O'Brien's papers, at least ten.

Anthony MacDonnell [the Under Secretary for Ireland] you could do more than the whole of them for him.’<sup>98</sup> Three years later in April 1910, Maurice Criffin wrote to Tom O’Donnell. ‘I have to trouble you’, he wrote, ‘about a very particular friend of mine—Daniel O’Connor, of Reenagown National School...a third class teacher who is looking for advancement to second grade.’ As an untrained teacher with 17 years experience, O’Connor was not entitled to promotion, but Criffin wrote to O’Donnell in the hope he might be able to persuade the National Board of Education to make an exception. He concluded his letter ‘I would take it as the greatest personal favour if you would exert your influence in this case’.<sup>99</sup> In June 1912, C.J. McCormack wrote to John Dillon seeking his assistance on behalf of his cousin, Dr C. Bermingham of Westport, who wished to be appointed as an inspector of anatomy. He enclosed his cousin’s letter, which read ‘It occurred to me if you asked John Dillon he would use his influence on my behalf’.<sup>100</sup>

Such correspondence indicates that Irish Members were regarded as influential. Moreover, it would also suggest that, over an extended period of time, some Irishmen saw nothing unusual in writing to their parliamentary representative and asking him to ‘help’ them secure a public appointment. And the fact that these letters were often written by third parties (some of whom were the same ‘pivot-men’ alluded to above) known both to the constituent and the MP, and the fact that they asked Members to ‘speak to’, ‘have a word with’, ‘say a word to’ or ‘to write a line to’ the relevant Minister or head of department, reflects not only the importance contemporaries attached to personal connections, but the informal and intimate terms business in government and public administration was assumed to operate along. Michael Delany, for example, pointed out to John Dillon, in a letter he wrote on behalf of an aspirant for the office of secretary to the Mayo County Council, that ‘[t]he one thing he [Michael Waldron] lacks is that influence which, whatever a man’s accomplishments or abilities may be, is necessary as you know now-a-days to succeed at elections by our popular boards, and that is the reason I request [your assistance]’.<sup>101</sup> The same belief informed one of Tom O’Donnell’s constituents, who wrote to him in 1913 concerning a fishery inspectorship. ‘No outsider can ever find out when a vacancy occurs, as those in office have the happy way of informing their friends who in fact do not know the least thing about fishing’.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>98</sup> John O’Shea to James O’Mara, Feb. 1907, NLI, OMP, ms 21,544 [3].

<sup>99</sup> Maurice Criffin to Tom O’Donnell, 20.4.10., NLI, ODP, 15,458 [1].

<sup>100</sup> C.J. McCormack to John Dillon, 6.6.12., TCD, DP, ms 6772/494.

<sup>101</sup> Michael Delany to John Dillon, 21.6.09., TCD, DP, ms 6771/115.

<sup>102</sup> Pat Kelly to Tom O’Donnell, 22.12.13., NLI, ODP, ms 15,458 [4].

For some in Ireland, the politics of patronage represented the unacceptable face of Irish public life. Stephen Gwynn believed that jobbery was a particular problem in remoter areas.<sup>103</sup> Gwynn's colleague, Vincent Kennedy, also expressed concern about the importance of 'purity' in the conduct of local elected representatives.<sup>104</sup> In 1913 Jerry MacVeagh was anxious that the patronage system should be reformed by the Home Rule Bill.<sup>105</sup> However, others believed this criticism should also encompass the nation's parliamentary representatives. William O'Brien, for instance, claimed that 'A horrible wave of corruption and selfishness had been passing over the public life of Ireland, over the Members of Parliament, over the County and District Councils, and over the so-called Nationalist newspapers', namely, the pursuit of personal gain at the expense of the national cause.<sup>106</sup> According to Daniel Sheehan, 'the sterner principles which instructed and enacted that the man who sought office or preferment from a British Minister unfitted himself as a standard-bearer or even a raw recruit in the ranks of Irish Nationality', had been abandoned after 1891, in favour of a head-long rush for preferment and patronage.<sup>107</sup>

But although the Party's critics at times produced impressive lists of appointments, allegedly secured through patronage, only occasionally were Members of Parliament themselves directly implicated.<sup>108</sup> Even so, their collusion and corruption was (for the AFIL and Sinn Féin) assured, since, for such critics, place-hunting and jobbery were the historically proven consequences of abandoning political independence. Indeed, this had been a criticism advanced by the Young Irelanders against O'Connell's alliance with the Whigs, and the issue which had caused the downfall of the Independent Irish Party of the 1850s. In fact, by the late nineteenth century, the names of John Sadlier and William Keogh had become synonymous with the worst kind of national betrayal, and in the years after 1903 it was frequently alleged that the Party had secured 'scores of Dublin Castle appointments for every one that Sadlier and Keogh ever received', or as the *Irish Catholic* put it 'We are back again just where Sadlier and Keogh left us in the fifties of the last

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<sup>103</sup> Gwynn, *Holiday*, p. 184.

<sup>104</sup> *A-C*, 9.1.09., 4.

<sup>105</sup> Jerry MacVeagh to John Redmond, 28.10.13., NLI, RP, ms 15,25 [9].

<sup>106</sup> *FJ*, 16.12.10., 8.

<sup>107</sup> D.D. Sheehan, *Ireland since Parnell* (London, 1921), p. 217.

<sup>108</sup> See, for instance, Undated (c. 1907?) Sinn Féin leaflet listing *Freeman's Journal* personnel appointed to government positions. NLI, OMP, ms 21,544 [7]. William O'Brien frequently cited the example of the barrister-MP, John O'Connor, who accepted Crown Briefs, as did the *Gaelic-American*. *CA*, 1.1.10., 1; 28.1.10., 1.; *Gaelic-American*, 11.12.09., 8. The latter paper also censured P.J. Power for acting as a magistrate. *G-A*, 19.2.10., 3.

century, when the strangling grasp of whiggery threatened to extinguish the last remnants of National aspiration and national life.’<sup>109</sup>

John Redmond categorically denied the allegations of jobbery levelled at his Party. At Manchester in 1908 he stated that ‘No single member of the Party has ever violated that pledge or has accepted any honour, office, or employment for himself or his friends’.<sup>110</sup> Again, in October 1910, he told a Kilkenny audience that ‘for the past years for which I have been chairman, I have known no member of the Party to have ever claimed or looked, for either himself or a friend, any place of honour or position (applause)’,<sup>111</sup> while in a press interview in 1912 he insisted that ‘Never in my life have I asked a single government for a single office for my friends, though I have made many enemies by my refusals.’<sup>112</sup>

Certainly, there seems little doubt as to the veracity of Redmond’s last statement. It is attested to both by his friends and foes,<sup>113</sup> and in his correspondence. In a letter to Canon Quin of Armagh in 1909, for instance, he patiently explained ‘I am sure you quite understand that it is out of my power to interfere in any way whatever. I have never used my influence in favour of the appointment of any individual by the government, and never will.’<sup>114</sup> John Dillon apparently took a similar approach to such requests, as evidenced by the comment of one of his correspondents that ‘I know from past experience that you could not well intervene in any government appointment’.<sup>115</sup> Some, however, were not convinced of Redmond or Dillon’s principled neutrality. When J.B. Skeffington sought appointment as a Commissioner of National Education, he was apparently informed by no less an authority than Joe Devlin that Dillon was ‘pushing’ the candidacy of a Connaught priest, while Redmond was standing aside ‘no doubt to give Dillon a free hand.’ Others, while recognising Redmond’s integrity, looked on his Party less favourably.<sup>116</sup>

<sup>109</sup> *Irish Catholic* quoted in Lawrence McBride, *The Greening of Dublin Castle* (Washington, D.C., 1991), p.50.

<sup>110</sup> McBride, *Greening*, p. 154.

<sup>111</sup> *FJ*, 29.8.10., 9.

<sup>112</sup> *FJ*, 13.5.12., 9. Also see, John Redmond to John Dillon, 6.4.07., TCD, DP, ms 67/47/217.

<sup>113</sup> Wells, *Redmond*, p. 15; William Martin Murphy to T.R. Harrington, 29.7.16., NAI, HP, ms 1052/4/2; Robinson, *Memories*, p. 284; Margaret O’Callaghan, ‘Franchise Reform, “First Past the Post” and the Strange Case of Unionist Ireland’, *Parliamentary History*, vol. 16 (1997), p. 101.

<sup>114</sup> John Redmond to Canon Quin, 31.8.09., NLI, RP, ms 15,251 [2].

<sup>115</sup> J.J. Dunne to John Dillon, 27.10.09., TCD, DP, ms 6782/1231; Robinson, *Memories*, p. 224.

<sup>116</sup> Quoted in McBride, *Greening*, p. 146; William Martin Murphy to T.R. Harrington, 29.7.16., NAI, HP, ms 1052/4/2.



Contrary to widespread assumption, it was not until 1906 that a form of words was devised specifically prohibiting Irish Members from engaging in place-hunting. Indeed, at no time did the Party pledge mention that members of the Party were not to support the applications of their constituents for public appointments. Rather, the Party rule, was simply another of its 'self-denying ordinances', begun under Parnell, 'by which', according to Stephen Gwynn, 'the man elected...bound *himself* [author's emphasis] to accept no post of any kind under government.'<sup>117</sup> The extension of this personal rule to a Members' constituents would seem, then, to have been a custom. In short, it was an established rite with enormous public force, but it was not explicitly mentioned in the pledge.

Yet, as Alan O'Day has shown, whatever the moral force of this self-denying ordinance, from the early 1880s, jobbing and place-hunting were a part of parliamentary nationalism. After 1882, one of the dividends of the 'Kilmainham Treaty' was that many senior Parnellites, including Parnell himself, sought and received government situations on behalf of their constituents. Although, in public, Parnellite Members were 'cagey' about such activity, given Irish sensitivities regarding place-hunting, they were also alive to the frustrated aspirations of many of their middle-class constituents.<sup>118</sup>

The evidence for the succeeding decade is patchy, but would seem to support the assertion that Irish Members continued to seek and receive appointments for their constituents. Despite, for instance, strongly denying that he had 'job[bed] with Tory and with Liberal for positions of emolument for himself or any of his constituents', John Pinkerton did correspond with the Lord Chancellor in 1894 concerning the appointment of resident magistrates in his constituency.<sup>119</sup> Similarly, though he claimed that '[it is] desirable if not altogether essential to place ourselves under no obligation to any [government]',<sup>120</sup> Michael McCartan's papers reveal a man completely immersed throughout the 1890s in the business of securing patronage for his constituents and associates. McCartan wrote to Liberal and later Unionist Chief Secretaries, Postmaster Generals, Lord Chancellors, Home Secretaries, Treasury Ministers, and Patronage Secretaries on behalf of constituents seeking positions or promotion in the postal service, the RIC, the Royal Navy, local government and county asylums.

But, arguably, McCartan's main preoccupation was with the appointment of his 'friends' to the county bench. In John Morley, he (and doubtless other Irish Members)

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<sup>117</sup> Gwynn, *Last Years*, pp. 12-13

<sup>118</sup> O'Day, 'Irish Parliamentary Party', pp. 177-182.

<sup>119</sup> John Pinkerton to [Illegible?] McCormack, 22.9.00., PRONI, PP, D/1078/P/69; [Lord Chancellor?] to John Pinkerton, 28.1.94., PRONI, PP, D/1078/P/62.

<sup>120</sup> Michael McCartan to Mr Macaghan, 24.12.92, UCDA, MLB, [461].

found a Chief Secretary sympathetic to Nationalist complaints about the disproportionate number of Protestant JPs, and one, moreover, prepared to go some way to correct the imbalance. As McCartan informed Robert Lytle in January 1893, 'The policy which the Lord Chancellor proposes to adopt is to appoint...first, those friends of ours whom he can induce the Lieutenants of the counties to approve of, and then he will go back again over the counties and appoint whom he pleases without regard to the Lieutenants.'<sup>121</sup> As a result many of the 'Morley Magistrates' of Down appointed between 1892 and 1895, were the result of close consultation between McCartan, the county's Nationalists (lay and clerical), and the Lord Chancellor.

After 1895, the well of patronage dried up. The (Unionist) government was now, as McCartan explained to several correspondents, unsympathetic to Catholic interests (though this did not stop him from lobbying Ministers). Thus, for instance, he held out little hope of success to his parliamentary colleague William Abraham who wrote in July 1897 seeking McCartan's assistance in securing an appointment for one of Stephen O'Mara's family.<sup>122</sup> Similarly, J.F.X. O'Brien, who under the preceding Liberal government had secured positions for his supporters and been consulted regarding the appointment of magistrates, found that under the Salisbury administration, as he informed one correspondent who sought his assistance in 1897, 'there is quite an impasse between Irish MPs and the...[government]'. According to O'Brien this was because 'The hands of Irish MPs are tied in matters of this kind. We are bound not to use or try to use influence in such cases.'<sup>123</sup> The fact that no such 'impasse' had existed between 1892 and 1895 suggests that for at least some Irish Members, the self-denying ordinance was elastic and depended on which party was in government. Other Irish MPs seem to have distinguished between the exertion of influence in a public and a private capacity. Michael McCartan told a clerical correspondent in 1896 'I believe there is an objection at the present time to any Irish Member making direct application for office for any person, but there is nothing to prevent me from using some influence with my friends in such a very deserving case as this.'<sup>124</sup> Yet other Members possessed neither O'Brien's certainty nor McCartan's legal-mindedness, but only the vaguest grasp of how the ordinance operated. Richard McGhee, for example, consulted John Dillon in December 1897 (one and a half years after he first entered Parliament) about a request he had received to assist the friend of a Tyrone priest. 'Father

<sup>121</sup> Michael McCartan to Robert Lytle, 21.1.93., UCDA, MLB, [479].

<sup>122</sup> Michael McCartan to William Abraham, 27.7.97., UCDA, MLB, [700].

<sup>123</sup> [Bertram Windle?] to J.F.X. O'Brien, 1.2.97., NLI, OBP, ms 13,432 [11].

<sup>124</sup> Michael McCartan to Father Manner, 3.7.96., UCDA, MLB, [108].

Woods is of the opinion', McGhee wrote, 'that the appointment is one which, whatever government is in power, is made on the recommendation of the [local MP]...But is the doing of such a thing in accordance with the rule of the Irish Party at all?'<sup>125</sup>

Although modern scholars have acknowledged the involvement of Nationalists in the politics of Edwardian patronage, not only have their explanations been inadequate,<sup>126</sup> but historians have erred in favour of caution in judging whether Redmondite Members actively engaged in lobbying the government on behalf of supporters and constituents for public appointments.<sup>127</sup> In fact, their constituency correspondence suggests that (certainly after 1906) not only were friends, relatives and supporters more assiduous in seeking such assistance than hitherto, but that many Irish MPs assented to these requests. Six weeks after the formation of the new Liberal administration, for instance, the Limerick City Member, Michael Joyce, wrote to John Redmond asking him to have the nephew of a local nationalist appointed as a resident magistrate, as long as this was 'consistent...with the position you hold as leader of the Irish Party.' Redmond, however, was quite certain it was not, and wrote to Joyce of his 'shock' at the request, which he claimed represented a 'gross violation of duty on the part of any member of the Irish Party'.<sup>128</sup> Doubtless, similar letters prompted Redmond to have passed at a meeting of the Party the following month (and annually thereafter), a resolution which stated unequivocally that 'it is inconsistent and improper for any member of the Party to use influence, direct or indirect, to obtain paid government situations, or appointments, or promotions of any kind whatsoever, for any person.'<sup>129</sup>

Publicly, at least, this seemed to have settled the matter. In September 1911, the London correspondent of the *Birmingham Post* reported that many British MPs were envious of their Irish colleagues being in possession of an effective reply to the many requests for preferment under the National Insurance Act. 'To these requests', the correspondent reported, 'Nationalist Members respond by forwarding their correspondents copies of the resolution which, in order to preserve their independence, they pass at the beginning of each session'.<sup>130</sup> In January 1912, P.J. Brady told a meeting of the Dublin AOH much the same story.

<sup>125</sup> Dick McGhee to John Dillon, 16.12.97., TCD, DP, ms 6757/1022.

<sup>126</sup> O'Mahony and Delanty, *Rethinking Irish History*, p. 73.

<sup>127</sup> McBride, *Greening*, p. 157; Paul Bew, *Ideology*, p. 20.

<sup>128</sup> Michael Joyce to John Redmond, 21.1.06, NLI, RP, ms 15,199 [2]; John Redmond to Michael Joyce, 30.1.06., NLI, RP, ms 15,199 [2].

<sup>129</sup> *FJ*, 15.2.06., 7.

<sup>130</sup> Quoted in *FJ*, 9.12.11., 7.

The number of young men desirous of obtaining posts of any nature under the Insurance Act is countless. One could spend the entire day either in interviewing applicants or writing them polite letters pointing out the Irish Party rule, or the government regulation made to meet this very case and forbidding the use of political influence.<sup>131</sup>

Like Brady, some Members seem genuinely to have adhered to this practice.<sup>132</sup> But many did not. A Sinn Féin leaflet of 1908 purportedly quoted correspondence from the Home Office acknowledging a letter from Michael Joyce (again) and his colleague William Lundon written on behalf of a constituent seeking preferment.<sup>133</sup> Moreover, a letter of 1912 from the chairman of a branch of the TTL to John Dillon, suggests that Lundon's son and successor also solicited patronage from the government.<sup>134</sup> Denis Kilbride reported to John Dillon that some of the officials at the Estates Commissioners office were annoyed by the letters they received from Irish MPs recommending individuals for positions. The names of P.A. Meehan and William Delany were mentioned in connection with the matter.<sup>135</sup> Tom O'Donnell was another MP who actively canvassed on behalf of numerous constituents seeking preferment. In 1907 and 1912 he wrote letters of recommendation on behalf of candidates seeking employment with the CDB, and in 1914 the Lord Chancellor appointed three men O'Donnell had recommended to be made Commissioners of the Peace. O'Donnell also wrote a letter of recommendation on behalf of a Miss Daly who sought appointment as a superintendent with the Irish Intermediate Education Board in 1910.<sup>136</sup> According to Tim Healy, he and J.P. Nolan, the other Member for County Louth, conferred together before approaching Augustine Birrell in support of A.N. Sheridan's (successful) candidature to be Clerk of the Crown and Peace for Louth in 1908.<sup>137</sup> Willie Redmond seems also to have privately expressed willingness to recommend candidates for public office.<sup>138</sup>

Not all Irish MPs personally approached Ministers or departments. Some Members approached Party colleagues who might, in turn, have valuable contacts, as when Abraham approached McCartan, or when in 1907 Tom O'Donnell (apparently) sought the

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<sup>131</sup> *FJ*, 9.1.12., 10.

<sup>132</sup> For instance, see R.J. Ripid to James O'Mara, 5.2.07., NLI, OMP, ms 21544 [3].

<sup>133</sup> Sinn Féin leaflet in O'Mara Papers, NLI, ms 21,544 [7].

<sup>134</sup> Daniel Fetton to John Dillon, 27.4.12., TCD, DP, ms 6783/1382.

<sup>135</sup> Denis Kilbride to John Dillon, 28.3.07., TCD, DP, ms 6756/780.

<sup>136</sup> CDB to Tom O'Donnell, 12.10.07., NLI, ODP, ms 15,456 [5]; CDB to Tom O'Donnell, 3.4.12., NLI, ODP, ms 15,458 [3]; [?] Horan to Tom O'Donnell, 21.1.14., NLI, ODP, ms 15, 456 [5]; Pain Johnston to Tom O'Donell, 24.3.10., NLI, ODP, ms 15, 458 [1].

<sup>137</sup> O'Malley and Hardcastle, *Election Petitions*, p. 498.

<sup>138</sup> William Redmond to J.J. Horgan, 10.5.[?], NLI, Horgan Papers, ms 18,269.

assistance of Gussy Roche.<sup>139</sup> More common, however, was for MPs to lobby either Dillon or Redmond. J.P. Farrell and J.P. Hackett both wrote to John Dillon in 1912 on behalf of constituents keen to secure his support in their applications for public appointments.<sup>140</sup> Jerry MacVeagh, John O'Dowd and J.D. Nugent also wrote to Dillon on behalf of applicants, though this was before they were elected to Parliament.<sup>141</sup> As an MP, O'Dowd sought Dillon's help in advancing the professional interests of some of his constituents.<sup>142</sup> P.A. McHugh was another Member who lobbied Dillon both before and after he entered Parliament.<sup>143</sup> In March 1909 he wrote concerning 'a decent county Leitrim man', and remonstrated with Dillon over his policy of non-intervention.<sup>144</sup> The MPs William Landon and John Roche separately wrote to John Dillon seeking his assistance in securing government appointments for their sons.<sup>145</sup> In a rare example of an MP lobbying over a major position, Sir Thomas Esmonde wrote to Redmond on behalf of A.M. Sullivan's bid to become Irish Solicitor General.<sup>146</sup>

The evidence suggests not only that many constituents requested the intervention of MPs in the matter of public appointments, but that many MPs acquiesced. Obvious also is the fact that lobbying went on not only between Members and departments of government, but internally within the Party. Furthermore, the tone and volume of this correspondence suggests that it was both habitual and regular, and that, for many MPs it was as much a part of their postbag as constituency correspondence relating to evicted tenants or local facilities. Indeed, so 'institutionalized' had this form of activity become that among some sections of the Irish government and society, the intercession of an Irish Member was felt to be one of the most important factors in securing appointment or promotion. As T.F. Rahilly, a junior clerk in the Accountant General's office in Dublin (who aspired to be a clerk in one of the offices of the Four Courts) explained '[while the] head of my office, the Acc[ountant] General is quite favourable...he volunteered the information himself to me

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<sup>139</sup> Stanley Harring to Augustine Roche, 8.6.07., NLI, ODP, ms 15,456 [5].

<sup>140</sup> J.P. Farrell to John Dillon, 17.9.12., 6753/429; John Hackett to John Dillon, 1.3.12., NLI, DP, ms 6755/612a.

<sup>141</sup> Jerry MacVeagh to John Dillon, 23.3.97., TCD, DP, ms .6757/1175; John O'Dowd to John Dillon, 27.5.95., TCD, DP, 6759/1452; J.D. Nugent to John Dillon, 12.8.12., TCD, DP, ms 6758/1335.

<sup>142</sup> John O'Dowd to John Dillon, 21.3.12., TCD, DP, ms 6759/1464.

<sup>143</sup> P.A. McHugh to John Dillon, 8.3.95., TCD, DP, 6757/1106.

<sup>144</sup> P.A. McHugh to John Dillon, 1.3.09., TCD, DP, 6757/1137.

<sup>145</sup> William Landon to John Dillon, 7.4.08., TCD, DP, ms 6756/924; John Roche to John Dillon, 3.6.12., TCD, DP, ms 6750/109.

<sup>146</sup> John Redmond to John Dillon, 6.9.11., TCD, DP, ms 6729/156.

that the way of making sure of my getting the transfer is to get some Nationalist MP to say a word in my favour to the Chancellor, the ex-Attorney General.’<sup>147</sup>

Writing in 1917, William O’Brien claimed that the Irish Party had maintained its position in Irish politics by the ‘liberal distribution of offices from the highest in the gift of Dublin Castle to the innumerable berths under the Insurance Act and the Local Government bodies’. In short, ‘corruption’ had ‘eaten [its]...way...deep into the body politic’.<sup>148</sup> But was the ‘incorruptible and unpurchasable’ Party really *corrupt*?

By contemporary British standards the answer would probably have been no.<sup>149</sup> H.J. Hanham has shown that though political patronage steadily declined from 1870 onwards ‘[r]ight up to the First World War remnants of the old system lingered in most departments’.<sup>150</sup> Of course, the Irish Party cannot and was not measured simply in terms of the prevailing standards of Westminster and Whitehall, since for many Irish nationalists at issue was not patronage *per se*, but specifically the soliciting of *British* government jobs. That said, the surviving evidence suggests that the matter was more ambiguous than the minority of intransigent nationalists allowed. Many MPs interpreted the ‘self-denying ordinance’ as a personal commitment (and even then one which operated selectively), or did not necessarily regard lobbying the Party leadership as contravening the spirit of the ordinance. Moreover, many nationalists regarded the intercession of Irish MPs not only as a pragmatic necessity, but also as a national virtue, because Unionists and Protestants had, in the matter of public positions, for ‘centuries’ received preferential treatment from Dublin Castle.<sup>151</sup> As P.G. Phelan argued in a public letter to Tim Healy in 1896 ‘I find no fault with the influential person who secure[s]...offices for his political friends. On the contrary, I approve of his action, and only regret he...[does] not succeed in making more.’<sup>152</sup> To this way of thinking, to assist constituents (and friends and relatives) in obtaining positions of public responsibility was to advance the interests of Irish Catholics and

<sup>147</sup> T.F. Rahilly to Tom O’Donnell, 25.9.11., NLI, ODP, ms 15,458 [2].

<sup>148</sup> William O’Brien, “*The Party*”: *Who they are and what they have done* (Dublin and London, 1917), p. 6.

<sup>149</sup> Certainly the Party was viewed by several contemporary British commentators as above British patronage politics. For instance, see Sydney Brooks, *Aspects of the Irish Question* (Dublin, 1912), p. 217.

<sup>150</sup> H.J. Hanham, ‘Political patronage at the Treasury, 1870-1912’, *Historical Journal*, vol. iii, no. 1 (1960), pp. 75.

<sup>151</sup> Gerald McElroy has observed that while Catholics found widespread employment within public administration, most of these jobs tended not to be in senior positions, a fact which created considerable resentment. Gerald McElroy, ‘Employment of Catholics in the Public Service in Ireland, 1895-1921: A Broad View’, in Alan O’Day (ed.), *Government and Institutions in the Post-1832 United Kingdom* (Lampeter, 1995), pp. 305-56.

<sup>152</sup> McBride, *Greening*, p. 92.

Nationalists. Indeed, as one of J.F.X. O'Brien's constituents (who also aspired to the Mayo magistracy) wrote 'I don't covet the dignity so much for myself, but I do not wish to see all power in the hands of enemies of the people.'<sup>153</sup> Sympathy with such sentiments was expressed in the following decade by certain sections of the press (such as the *Leader*), by some successful Catholic professionals and, if discretely, even by some MPs. When, at a meeting of North Donegal nationalists, Father James Morris, for example, objected to the Party's resolution not to use influence on behalf of applicants, on the grounds that 'Nationalists, whose education and position entitled them to a share of the country's responsible public positions...[should not] be debarred or side-tracked by the resolution', (the crypto-Healyite MP) Philip O'Doherty observed that 'there was a great deal of force in Father Morris's argument, and he sympathized with these views.'<sup>154</sup>

The argument that the Party ordinance was ambiguous or not clear-cut cannot be sustained for the period after 1906. For judged by its own explicit standards, many Members continued to behave in an 'inconsistent and improper' manner. Sir Henry Robinson (the last vice-president of the Irish Local Government Board), recalled how Irish Members would write to him using the formula 'Only that I am pledged not to ask for any favour from the government, I would be quite unable to resist telling you that....', in order to bypass the ordinance.<sup>155</sup> But does this finally demonstrate the contention of heterodox nationalists that the Party was both *corrupted* and *purchased*?

Although political scientists differ, much of the modern scholarship on political corruption employs the working definition that corruption is 'the abuse of public office for private gain'.<sup>156</sup> The impropriety of Irish MPs was not, for instance, the kind that brought Ministers before a parliamentary committee during the Marconi scandal of 1913. Credible reports of corruption attaching to Irish Members are few.<sup>157</sup> When the *Globe* accused Irish MPs of corrupt practices in connection with Private Bill legislation in 1901, its editor was summoned to the House to apologize at the bar.<sup>158</sup> Moreover, the vast majority of positions over which Members had 'influence' were local and of limited power. Becoming a 'Jay Pay' may have 'added inches to one's girth', but their appointment did not involve major allocative decisions of state.

<sup>153</sup> M.L. Crean to J.F.X. O'Brien, 19.6.95., NLI, OBP, ms 13,432 [2].

<sup>154</sup> *FJ*, 23.1.11., 9.

<sup>155</sup> Robinson, *Memories*, pp. 284-5.

<sup>156</sup> Neil Collins and Mary O'Shea, *Understanding Corruption in Irish Politics* (Cork, 2000), p. 2.

<sup>157</sup> One such is related in Maurice Manning, *James Dillon* (Dublin, 1999), p. 32. Another 'grey' area of politics was the acceptance of company directorships.

<sup>158</sup> *FJ*, 16.8.01., 4, 5.

Nor is there any suggestion that MPs received monetary payment for their advocacy. Among the extant correspondence there is only one letter offering money in return for the influence of an Irish MP,<sup>159</sup> and several 'jobbing' Members are known to have reacted angrily to offers of cash in return for services. Michael McCartan, for example, wrote to James Brady in December 1892 that 'As a Member of Parliament I am always willing to give any information and advice...but in so doing I never allow myself to be [illegible?] by offers of retainer or fees',<sup>160</sup> while J.F.X. O'Brien reacted angrily to J.J. Walsh's enclosure of a money order for £10; 'it is obvious that your enclosed...is practically intended as payment on account of services rendered and for further services expected...I consider it to be the duty of an MP to serve his constituents...without expectation of reward'.<sup>161</sup>

Of course, 'private gain' could mean more than money or gifts in kind. In his letter of April 1910 to Tom O'Donnell (quoted above), Maurice Criffin told the Kerry MP that he would look upon O'Donnell's assistance as the 'greatest personal favour'; a promise of no small importance given that he was managing director of the *Kerryman*. But the majority of correspondents did not have such influence and promised no more than their gratitude. Indeed, promises of future electoral support seem to have been exceptionally rare. Of course, this may have been because this was taken for granted (although some MPs acted on behalf of Unionist constituents), but it probably owes more to the fact that such promises would have been regarded as meaningless, since the great majority of seats were uncontested between 1892 and 1918.

Doubtless, some Members may have sought to secure electoral (or, more likely, convention) support in return for favours rendered. In his novel, *O'Rourke the Great*, Arthur Lynch has O'Rourke haggling for the endorsement of a key 'pivot-man', the vice-chairman of the county council, Neddy Sullivan, at the forthcoming general election. O'Rourke eventually secures Sullivan's influence with the other leading men of the district by agreeing to help his nephew enter the RIC, advance his daughter's interests in the post office and lend him money to extend his business premises.<sup>162</sup> Clearly, however, the readiness of the majority of Irish Members to seek government patronage, or, indeed, any other service, on behalf of their constituents was not exclusively motivated by the need to secure votes. That said, political support or opposition could be expressed in more ways

<sup>159</sup> [John McHuoy ?] to John Redmond, 26.7.93., NLI, RP, ms 15,238 [5].

<sup>160</sup> Michael McCartan to James Brady, 20.12.92, UCDA, MLB, [444].

<sup>161</sup> J.F.X. O'Brien to J.J. Walsh, 24.4.05., NLI, OBP, ms 13,432 [11].

<sup>162</sup> Lynch, *O'Rourke*, p.171.



than through the ballot. In short, the absence of elections did not remove the need for Irish MPs to maintain their 'bailiwick'.

Certainly, minor patronage does seem to have been regarded as a means of rewarding some of the key 'pivot men' who assisted MPs in the management of their constituencies. John Dillon received a letter from T.S. Moclair (one of his principal supporters in Mayo) in August 1912 to the effect that 'Pat Higgins (brother of the Bishop) got his permanent JPship on Wed; I know if we could work one for J. Conway, Co Councillor...and for Bill Barrett, DC Parke...some recompense wd be made to two of the best fighting men in West Mayo.'<sup>163</sup> When Michael Joyce approached Redmond about appointing the nephew of Mr O'Brien of South Hill to the local bench, he stressed that O'Brien was an 'earnest and generous supporter of the Irish cause'.<sup>164</sup> When one nationalist not recommended by Michael McCartan was appointed to the local bench in January 1893, he wrote to the Lord Chancellor explaining that this might cause dissatisfaction among the government's supporters in County Down, and recommended that in future he should always be consulted first. McCartan's motives were transparent; his ability to reward his supporters and his local clout were clearly undermined if the government ignored his recommendations.<sup>165</sup>

Doubtless, some Members were prompted by a desire to reward their supporters, but some letters suggest that MPs also acted in this way because of the pressure local nationalists exerted on them. Indeed, the available evidence suggests that in acting on behalf of their constituents, many MPs may have (at times) been responding to the coercive methods employed by their constituents. J.P. Farrell, for example, wrote to John Dillon in June 1904 'There are two evicted tenants in my constituency who are pressing me very hard to get them a grant from the evicted tenants fund...I hope you will kindly get them a grant.'<sup>166</sup> William O'Malley remembered that 'So powerful [was the Party]...considered in the House of Commons that constituents really believed there was nothing they couldn't get there. They were forever asked for favours that couldn't possibly be granted.'<sup>167</sup> Similarly, E.H. Burke told his constituents in 1910 that

the best of our friends have most extraordinarily exaggerated ideas of what a Member of Parliament should do at the Estates Commissioners office...I have

<sup>163</sup> T.S. Moclair to John Dillon, 13.8.12., TCD, DP, ms 6773/553

<sup>164</sup> Michael Joyce to John Redmond, 21.1.06, NLI, RP, ms 15,199 [2].

<sup>165</sup> Michael McCartan to [Illegible?], 13.1.93., UCDA, MLB, [470].

<sup>166</sup> J.P. Farrell to John Dillon, 27.6.04., TCD, DP, ms 6753/424.

<sup>167</sup> O'Malley, *Glancing Back*, p. 139.

received many...letters asking me to use my influence with the Estates Commissioners to get the completion of the purchase through...Those who write those letters did not quite understand how limited the powers of a Member of Parliament are in these special and individual cases.<sup>168</sup>

Sir John Robinson recalled a story of an Irish MP who approached one Fleet Street editor on behalf of a constituent who wanted to 'get connected with some first-class London paper and write leading articles', even though he had no journalistic experience.

The manager shakes his head and ventures to say that so far as Bouverie's Street is concerned, Ballyhooly must continue to nurse its genius. "Well, I expected as much" coolly replied the Irish Member. "But, by George, they put so much pressure on me, that I couldn't for the life of me but ask you."<sup>169</sup>

Sir Henry Robinson, the last vice-president of the CDB, also observed the strain under which Irish MPs worked.

The Nationalists had their constituents to placate, they had to give them material indications of their influence with the government by showing that they could get things done. This was...a matter of life and death to the rank and file of the Party...if they could not secure little concessions...for deserving constituents, of what use were they at all?<sup>170</sup>

Granted, Sir John Robinson's purpose was to amuse, while Sir Henry Robinson's was to pillory, but their references to the effects of constituency pressure find parallels in the correspondence of Irish Members. Place-hunters could be persistent. One, for example, who had already been rebuffed once, complained to John Dillon that 'I don't think it too much to respectfully request that you will be kind enough to ask Mr J.J. O'Kelly MP to recommend me'.<sup>171</sup> Another female correspondent complained to Redmond that she was very disappointed that he had not 'let it be known that anything he [the Chief Secretary] could do for me would be pleasing to you'. She continued 'it strikes me that you and the Irish Party would be doing good work for Ireland if you did take an interest in the different appointments being made by the Irish government'.<sup>172</sup> Clearly, Redmond responded by citing the Party rule. Unwilling to accept defeat, Mrs O'Brien wrote back immediately with what she clearly believed (perhaps with good reason) to be a fool-proof solution.

<sup>168</sup> *Tullamore and King's County Independent*, 1.1.10., 7.

<sup>169</sup> F.M. Thomas (ed.), *Fifty Years of Fleet Street being the life and recollections of Sir John R. Robinson* (London 1904), p. 234.

<sup>170</sup> Robinson, *Memories*, p.

<sup>171</sup> Sarah MacGowan to John Dillon, 26.4.12., TCD, DP, ms 6783/1381.

<sup>172</sup> Mrs O'Brien to John Redmond, 28.2.08., TCD, DP, ms 6747/269.

I will be grateful if you send me a letter in the following style. 'My dear Mrs O'Brien. I am sorry owing to the pledge I have taken I cannot ask the government for favours for my friends otherwise I would have very great pleasure as chairman of the Irish Party to do all in my power to lay the claims of your nephew before the Chief Secretary and ask him to appoint your nephew...to the position he is seeking...' <sup>173</sup>

Whereas Mrs O'Brien sought to persuade Redmond, others Members encountered more demanding correspondents. A senior Tyrone Nationalist wrote 'as my father- my brother- and myself have given the most part of a century to the support of liberal and democratic principles, I claim the right of my brother to recognition of our services of the cause.'<sup>174</sup> A distressed J.G.S. MacNeill wrote to Redmond in 1908 about a difficult case which had arisen in his constituency; a Donegal parish priest had written to him requesting that he secure for a local doctor a vacant position in the gift of the Postmaster General. MacNeill had immediately replied explaining that it was not the practice of the Party to apply for positions from the government. He received back a letter expressing astonishment at his refusal.

your only plea was [that?] [your?] Party would all [abstain?] from the govt. But this is a personal and not a party or [strictly?] govt. matter and the interests of your constituents shd not be overlooked for any party [principles?]. You know where there is a will there is a way. We would not ask you to interfere if Dr Gordon was not under every aspect of the case the most eligible man. <sup>175</sup>

Such examples reinforce the impression that there was a significant body of nationalist opinion which did not merely regard requesting an MP to assist in their personal advancement as incompatible with the interests of Home Rule but considered such service to be an essential part of Irish parliamentary representation.

It is doubtful whether any Irish Member of Parliament lost his seat between 1880 and 1918 for failing to secure patronage, or generally neglecting his constituency correspondence. Chasing grievances and 'persecuting' civil servants may have pleased constituents, but ultimately the national programme seems to have taken precedence. Still, attentiveness to such communications was clearly valued in an MP. Among the criticisms levelled at E.H.

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<sup>173</sup> Mrs O'Brien to John Redmond, 5.3.08., TCD, DP, ms 6747/276. For another example of this, see Michael Kelly to Tom O'Donnell, 20.10.10., NLI, ODP, ms 15,458 [1].

<sup>174</sup> W.J.Harison to John Dillon, 25.4.08., TCD, DP, ms 6747/308.

<sup>175</sup> J.G.S. MacNeill to John Redmond, 9.3.08., NLI, RP, ms 15,205 [1]. Also see, J.G.S. MacNeill to John Redmond, 12.5.08., NLI, RP, ms 15, 205 [1].

Burke by his critics at the January 1910 general election was that he was neglectful of his constituency correspondence. Even though Burke's rival at the Tullamore convention only received seven votes, he deemed the subject sufficiently important to devote most of his post-selection speech to the matter.<sup>176</sup> At the same election, David Sheehy was censured by Richard Fox at a meeting of the Trim RDC for his failure to reply to constituency communications.

He wrote to Mr Sheehy about three weeks ago, bringing the matter before him, but he received no reply, and Mr Sheehy did not even condescend to acknowledge the letter which he must have received for he (Mr Fox) sent it to the House of Commons. Mr Sheehy was a very good man as regards attending to the Home Rule question, but he should also attend to the interests of his constituents, and he was sorry to have to say it publicly that Mr Sheehy was not discharging his duty to his constituents so far as their personal interests were concerned.<sup>177</sup>

Similarly, at a public meeting following the West Mayo Convention, James Daly observed

I will not say anything of the past, but, I must say on former occasions I wrote several letters of complaint about things which I thought should be brought before the House of Commons. There were no replies to my letters and I believe the representatives of Mayo were taking care of themselves...[and I only] got a letter of apology a few months afterwards...<sup>178</sup>

Although Dr Robert Ambrose did not lose his seat, nor William Doris win the constituency simply because of disgruntled letter writers, nonetheless, Doris evidently took this complaint seriously, because three and half years later, in September 1913, at Newport, one of his Mayo supporters praised him for 'attend[ing]...promptly to the numerous letters he received from all parts of the constituency calling his attention to grievances of various kinds and asking to have them redressed'.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> *Tullamore and King's County Independent*, 1.1.10., 7.

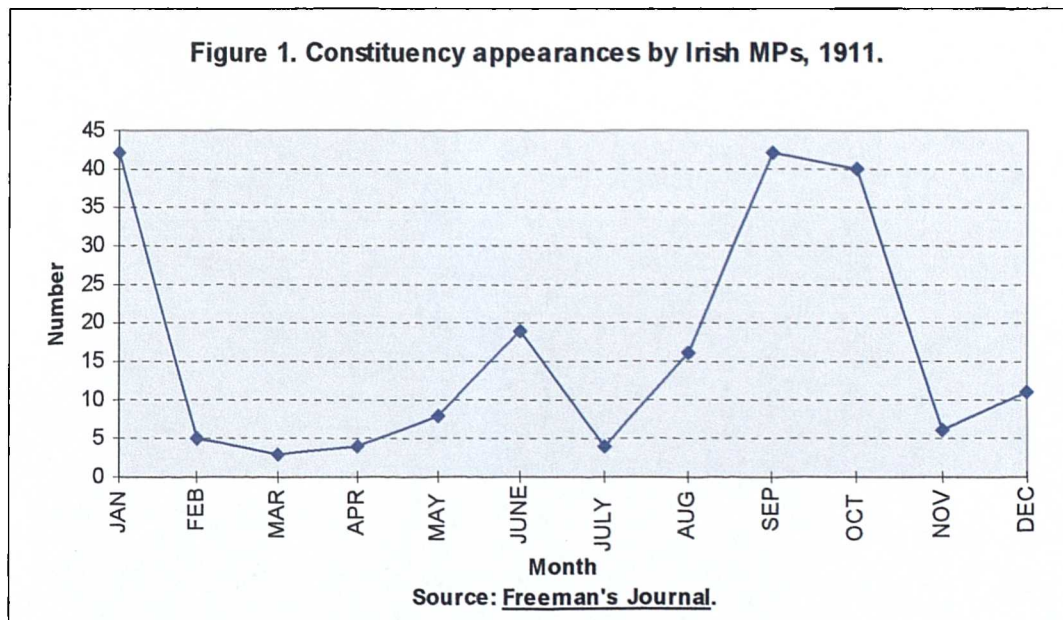
<sup>177</sup> *FJ*, 30.12.12., 9.

<sup>178</sup> *FJ*, 1.1.10., 5.

<sup>179</sup> *FJ*, 18.9.13., 4.

### Chapter Five: Constituency Visitations

According to one Edwardian nationalist MP 'Railway journeys with a sea-passage in between just rule out the possibility [of visiting your constituency during the session]. Parliamentary recesses are the only opportunity for personal contacts, for public meetings and the innumerable ways of keeping in touch directly with movements and counter-movements.'<sup>1</sup> The pattern of nationalist Members' appearances in their constituencies between 1910 and 1914 certainly suggests that most MPs usually attended constituency engagements during one of the several parliamentary recesses. For example, figure 1 illustrates that in 1911 the months of greatest activity were January, September and October, which corresponds with the fact that the session did not commence until January 31, while the summer recess ran from August 22 though to October 24.



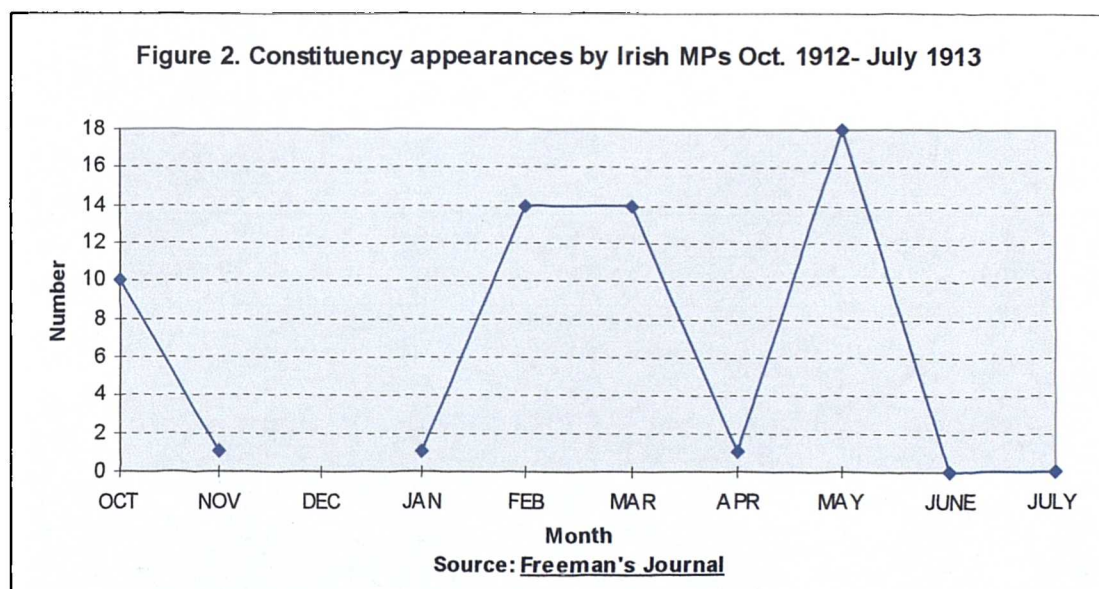
Doubtless, the distance between London and Ireland was a major reason why Irish constituency visitations were structured in this way. But, by itself, the remoteness of Irish constituencies from Westminster does not wholly account for either the timing or the frequency with which nationalist Members visited their constituencies in the late Edwardian period

For although it doubtless imposed considerable strain, according to the London correspondent of the *Freeman's Journal* (writing in July 1912) '[u]nder normal conditions it was [author's emphasis] possible for Members to leave on Friday or Saturday to attend a

<sup>1</sup> Boland, *Irishman's Day*, p. 153.

meeting on Sunday, return on Monday, and be in their places on Monday night.<sup>2</sup> In 1910 approximately ten per cent of constituency appearances occurred during the parliamentary session.<sup>3</sup> However, thereafter, this figure fell, chiefly because the sessions of 1912 and 1913 were not 'normal'. In 1912, the constituency appearances of nationalist Members during the session dropped to approximately four per cent of all such engagements, and in 1913 to two per cent. This meant not only that the coincidence of parliamentary adjournments and constituency visitations in these years became almost absolute, but that many constituencies did not officially see their Members for quite considerable periods of time.

One reason for this change was, as the *Freeman's* explained 'the attitude of the opposition.'<sup>4</sup> Beginning in 1912 (the year the Home Rule Bill was introduced), the Conservative party in parliament went to enormous lengths to defeat the government in the division lobbies by engineering 'snap' votes. This prompted the Irish party whips to fully exert themselves in securing the constant attendance of their backbenchers. And so constant was the threat of a government defeat in the division lobbies, and so unremitting was the pressure of the nationalist whips, that nationalist MPs found it extremely difficult to visit their constituencies during the session.



<sup>2</sup> *FJ*, 2.7.12., 6.

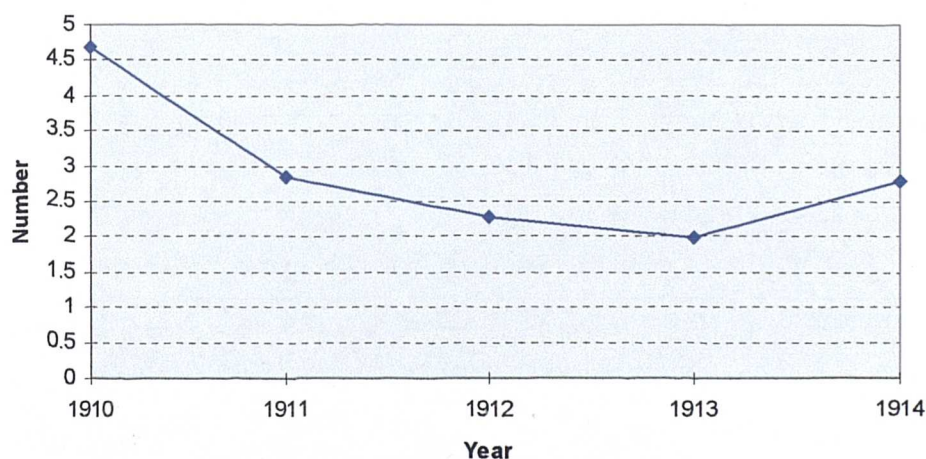
<sup>3</sup> All figures quoted are based on reports in the *Freeman's Journal*. Though not an absolute record, the peculiar Pravdaesque character of the *Freeman's*, the earnestness of the leadership to advertise the Party's work, and the fact that many M.P.s wrote the press reports of their own meetings, suggests that these approximate figures are probably reliable. For M.P.s reporting themselves, see J.P. Boland to Tom O'Donnell, 16.8.12., NLI, ODP, Ms 15,458 [3].



As figure 2 illustrates, after the House of Commons reassembled on October 7, 1912 (following the summer recess) only three Members are reported to have appeared in their constituencies at public events before February 14, 1913. According to the *Freeman's* reports, no nationalist Members attended public events in their constituencies at all in December 1912 and only one did so in January 1913. Although the recess of February 14 to March 6 saw an increase in activity, the remainder of March witnessed only one constituency appearance, while April also saw only a single constituency visit. Again, while the three week Easter recess (May 8-27) allowed some Members to attend constituency meetings, during the following two months Ireland was apparently empty of MPs.<sup>5</sup>

The closer coincidence of nationalist Members' constituency appearances with parliament's recesses was not the only feature of Irish constituency visitations between 1910 and 1914 which conspicuously changed. For nationalist MPs were now not only absent from their constituencies for longer periods of time, but overall (as figure 3 illustrates) they appeared less frequently in the localities they represented. In 1910, the average Irish Member attended 4.80 constituency events, whereas by 1914 this had fallen to 2.87 appearances per Member. Indeed, the year before (1913) the average figure had fallen to 2.07 appearances per MP (or less than half the 1910 figure).

**Figure 3. Average number of constituency appearances, 1910-1914**



Source: *Freeman's Journal*

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> On this, see John Muldoon's speech, *FJ*, 8.9.13., 7.

Undoubtedly, some of this change may be attributed to the closer attendance of nationalist Members at Westminster, but also important was the increased time and effort many Irish Members devoted to addressing meetings in Britain.

As early as February 1911, the party was planning a propaganda campaign on the mainland in anticipation of the introduction of the third Home Rule Bill.<sup>6</sup> Co-ordinated by the re-established Irish Press Agency (essentially the party's propaganda office in Britain) under the direction of Stephen Gwynn, MP, (later assisted by Tom Scanlan, MP) nationalist Members attended meetings across the British Isles.<sup>7</sup> By November 1911, nationalist MPs were attending approximately 40 meetings a week.<sup>8</sup> In the first quarter of 1912 nationalist Members spoke at approximately 170 meetings,<sup>9</sup> and by the beginning of August this had risen to a total of 500 meetings.<sup>10</sup> The campaign continued the following year. Although the summer recess of 1913 (which began on August 15) saw what the *Freeman's* London correspondent called an 'old fashioned' recess (which lasted six months),<sup>11</sup> as the same correspondent observed some days later, for many Members there would be but a 'short respite' before the autumn campaign in England commenced.<sup>12</sup> In fact, between mid-October and mid-December 1913 nationalist MPs attended an estimated 1,000 meetings. This won them the fulsome praise of the party organ 'The Irish Members have responded nobly to the call of their leaders in respect of these meetings...After three almost continuous sessions they gave up the recess to this important work in Great Britain, and many of them have travelled from end to end of the country'.<sup>13</sup> In total, Stephen Gwynn estimated that nationalist Members addressed approximately 3,000 meetings between 1912 and 1914.<sup>14</sup>

One (anticipated) consequence of the party's campaigning in Britain was that many of those MPs involved found it difficult to visit their constituencies. As Tom Scanlan, MP, told his Sligo constituents in October 1911 'I want you to realise that our main fight at the present time is for Home Rule, and I think that all the energies of our Party should be spared in order to prosecute successfully the great campaign which has been carried on in England and Scotland.'<sup>15</sup> Indeed, in the following years numerous

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<sup>6</sup> *FJ*, 28.2.11., 7.

<sup>7</sup> Boland, *Irishman's Day*, p.121.

<sup>8</sup> *FJ*, 29.11.11., 7.

<sup>9</sup> *FJ*, 3.4.12., 7.

<sup>10</sup> *FJ*, 10.8.12., 6.

<sup>11</sup> *FJ*, 16.8.13., 6.

<sup>12</sup> *FJ*, 18.8.13., 6.

<sup>13</sup> *FJ*, 1.12.13., 6.

<sup>14</sup> *FJ*, 13.10.14., 6.

<sup>15</sup> *FJ*, 13.10.11., 9.



Members pointed to their work in Britain to explain their infrequent appearances in their constituencies. Dr John Esmonde, MP, for example, told his constituents at the beginning of October 1913 that although the House of Commons was not due to reassemble before the new year, his involvement in the autumn campaign in England meant that he would be unable to speak in North Tipperary before Christmas.<sup>16</sup>

While a majority of nationalist Members participated in the party's propaganda campaigns, still some 40 per cent were not involved. Selection was made by ability, though if the claim of one party activist is to be credited not more than 20 MPs were actually 'capable of forwarding the Home Rule cause by addressing meetings in Great Britain.'<sup>17</sup> According to Stephen Gwynn another distinguishing feature of this group was that 'amongst the most successful speakers were men who had begun their political career in the old fenian organisation.'<sup>18</sup> However, statistical analysis suggests that among those selected there was a further distinguishing characteristic. For both in 1912 and 1913, the IPAs speakers were drawn disproportionately from that section of the party which did not have residential links with their constituencies. This may have been coincidental or it may have reflected the belief of some contemporaries that 'local men' were not well suited to speaking in the House of Commons or on public platforms in Britain.<sup>19</sup> Whichever, the analysis suggests that Members who did not reside in their constituencies were more likely to speak in Britain than those who did.<sup>20</sup>

Although non-resident Members were more likely to be enlisted for platform duty in Britain than 'local' MPs, ironically the disruption experienced by nationalist Members during the third home rule crisis may have affected the latter group more than their Dublin or London based colleagues. Whereas, in 1910 and 1911 the analysis suggests that there was a positive statistical relationship between resident MPs and those Members who appeared in their constituencies on three or more occasions, no such relationship was apparent during the crucial home rule years of 1912-14.

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<sup>16</sup> *FJ*, 10.10.13., 7.

<sup>17</sup> Valentine, *Memories*, pp. 60-1.

<sup>18</sup> *FJ*, 13.10.4., 4.

<sup>19</sup> For instance, see *Monaghan People*, 14.6.07, 1.

<sup>20</sup> Non-parametric chi-squared test:  $\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(o - e)^2}{e}$ . 1912:  $\chi^2 = 5.250$ ,  $P = 0.022$ ; 1913:  $\chi^2 = 8.761$ ,  $P = 0.003$ . Based on *FJ*, 10.8.12., 7; 14.10.13., 7; 30.10.13., 6; 15.12.13., 7.

Figure 4. Table showing the statistical relationship between those Members who appeared in their constituencies three or more times and who resided in their constituencies, 1910-1914.

	$\chi^2$	P=	N=
1910	9.651	0.002	70
1911	8.672	0.003	70
1912	3.553	0.059	70
1913	0.190	0.663	71
1914	1.377	0.241	69

The cause of this changing pattern probably relates to how the constituency appearances of resident and non-resident MPs were structured. In 1910, 28 (or 40 per cent of) Irish backbench MPs did not reside in the locality which they represented in Parliament. Although, during the session all of these Members would have found it relatively difficult to visit their constituencies, still, among them, there were several distinct sub-sets. MPs like William Delany, J.P. Hayden, Michael Hogan, Philip O'Doherty and J.J. O'Shee, while not residing in their constituencies, lived in adjacent counties and would (at least during the recess) have found visiting the localities they represented physically much easier. A further group of MPs (comprising E.H. Burke, Dick Hazleton, Tom Kettle, Swift MacNeill, John Muldoon, Willie Redmond, David Sheehy, Sam Young, and Ned Kelly) lived when not at Westminster either in Dublin or Belfast. During the recess, most of these MPs could commute to their constituencies within one or two days. A third group of 15 non-resident MPs lived permanently in London or elsewhere in England.

As a whole, non-resident MPs seem to have visited their constituencies about twice a year. However, in 1910, the average number of constituency visitations for Irish metropolitan and English residents was closer to one visit: either in the spring or during the late summer. Unlike provincial and some Dublin residents, however, those Members who

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permanently resided in England tended to visit their constituencies for extended periods of time. Arthur Lynch, MP, for example, visited West Clare for several weeks in August 1910, in order to '[stimulate] the activity of the various Nationalist organisations'.<sup>21</sup> The London-Irish journalist, William O'Malley, MP, customarily spent several months every summer in Connemara: in 1910 he spent August and September 1910 in his constituency.<sup>22</sup> In mid August, O'Malley spoke at Oughterard.<sup>23</sup> The following Sunday, he held a meeting in Lettermore after nine o'clock mass (as was common in the west).<sup>24</sup> He then travelled to Carraroe and held a meeting after 11 o'clock mass and in the afternoon held another meeting in Rosmuck, where a branch of the UIL was established.<sup>25</sup> At the beginning of the following month, O'Malley attended a large meeting at Clifden, at which Joe Devlin, MP, and several other Members spoke.<sup>26</sup> He spoke at Inishboffen some weeks later, and concluded his visit with an 'eminently practical speech' at Clonbur in mid September.<sup>27</sup>

O'Malley's extended visit to Connemara was not simply a political tour. His family accompanied him, and, doubtless too, he obtained a few weeks fishing.<sup>28</sup> In fact, the combining of a constituency visitation with a holiday was not uncommon. J.P. Boland's daughter recalled that 'Until 1918...we lived in Ireland when Parliament was not sitting. Having no house of his own in his constituency, my father rented Derrynane from the O'Connells'.<sup>29</sup> In August 1913, the *Freeman's* reported that Tom Scanlan, MP, and his wife had arrived at Rosse's Point (a seaside resort), from where he was to visit different parts of his constituency in the coming month.<sup>30</sup> O'Malley's colleague in the representation of Galway, Stephen Gwynn, also sometimes made long summer visits to the West. Indeed, he published an account of one such trip, during which, along with public meetings and attending the ceremonial opening of a new parish church, he occupied himself fishing and touring the area in the manner of a Gaelic revivalist.<sup>31</sup>

Clearly, constituency visitations afforded non-resident MPs the opportunity to attend a relatively large number of public and private meetings in a comparatively short space of time. Moreover, although this strategy meant that such Members were absent from their constituencies for most of the year, it did mean that when MPs' time was

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<sup>21</sup> *Clare Journal*, 15.8.10., 2.

<sup>22</sup> *CT*, 4.9.09., 9.

<sup>23</sup> *CT*, 13.8.10., 7.

<sup>24</sup> Gwynn, *Holiday in Connemara*, p. 108.

<sup>25</sup> *CT*, 20.8.10., 6.

<sup>26</sup> *CT*, 3.9.10., 2.

<sup>27</sup> *CT*, 10.9.10., 2; 17.9.10., 2.

<sup>28</sup> O'Malley, *Glancing Back*, p. 70.

<sup>29</sup> Boland, *Mother's Knee*, p. 53.

<sup>30</sup> *FJ*, 23.8.13., 7.

<sup>31</sup> Gwynn, *Holiday in Connemara*.

squeezed between 1912 and 1914 such annual or bi-annual visits continued largely uninterrupted. Still, such MPs were (to borrow David Fitzpatrick's description of County Clare's two Members of Parliament) 'exotic rather than...familiar figure[s]'. In short, O'Malley *et al* were not part of the communities they represented in Parliament; they met their constituents infrequently and, then, often in a formal or ceremonial context. In contrast, a rather different picture of parliamentary representation in nationalist Ireland emerges when the constituency diaries of resident Members of Parliament are reconstructed.

Conor Cruise O'Brien has written of how 'It was easy', for the critics of the Party in 1880, 'to view with alarm the overthrow of an old paternal system, under which a county had been represented by a local man of standing, who knew and loved his people, in favour of...a man completely ignorant of local conditions, and not even living in the same county.'<sup>32</sup> A majority, albeit a slim one, of the Parnellites elected in 1880 'had', according to Alan O'Day, 'no very obvious reason for holding their particular seat', while (in contrast to the moderate and marginal 'home rulers' of the 1870s) a majority of nationalist MPs 'had a main residence in England.'<sup>33</sup> However, among the new nationalist cohort elected in 1885 were a considerable number of MPs who lived in their constituencies.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, F.S.L. Lyons has shown that for the period 1890 to 1910 'the emphasis upon greater local representation within the Party was steadily growing'. Whereas in 1892-5 36.78 per cent of nationalist MPs lived in their constituency, by 1910, this figure had risen to 55.42 per cent.<sup>35</sup>

Undoubtedly, this demographic shift had many implications for the party. One was how often constituents saw their parliamentary representative. To take an example, Thomas Smyth was among those MPs elected after 1900 who might be described as 'racy of the soil'. Although born and educated in Longford (one of whose MPs was a cousin by marriage),<sup>36</sup> he was elected for neighbouring County Leitrim in 1906. At the time of his election, Smyth was described by the *Pall Mall Gazette* as not hitherto having 'been conspicuous in political life'.<sup>37</sup> He worked as an auctioneer and general insurance agent in

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<sup>32</sup> O'Brien, *Parnell*, p. 32.

<sup>33</sup> O'Day, *English Face*, p. 26, 23. An analysis (based on the figures in Brian Walker, *Parliamentary Election Results in Ireland, 1801-1922* (Dublin, 1978), pp. 115-19) of the 60 'home rule' MPs elected in 1875 indicates that 58.24 per cent of them had residences in their constituency, though many also seem to have had residences in London.

<sup>34</sup> O'Brien, *Parnell*, p. 154.

<sup>35</sup> Lyons, *Irish Parliamentary Party*, p. 179.

<sup>36</sup> Joseph Conroy to John Dillon, 7.4.17., TCD, DP, ms 6771/62.

<sup>37</sup> *PMG 'Extra'*, 1906, p. 102.

his adopted county (an occupation insufficient to sustain his parliamentary career),<sup>38</sup> and served on the Mohill Rural District Council. In Parliament, after 1906, he was no more 'conspicuous'. He was a 'silent Member': one who almost never spoke in debate or put parliamentary questions. That said he drew attention to himself through his support for William O'Brien, MP. In 1907, he was numbered among several 'circumspect' O'Brienites,<sup>39</sup> and the following year he voted for O'Brien's proposal to restore the policy of conciliation.<sup>40</sup>

In 1910, Smyth attended two public meetings in his constituency. On January 1, he addressed a stormy meeting estimated at between 2-5,000 people at Aughavas, situated nearby to an evicted farm.<sup>41</sup> Three months later, he attended a rally, in the company of his colleague F.E. Meehan, at Fenagh.<sup>42</sup> But according to the RIC, on the whole, Leitrim was 'peaceable' during these years, and the local UIL 'generally inactive' because '[o]ver eighty per cent of the tenant farmers in [the] Co. have purchased...and this extension of land purchase has had a very beneficial effect on the tenant themselves and on the general peace of the Co.'<sup>43</sup> Indeed, Smyth had comparatively little involvement with the Leitrim UIL. In 1910 he reportedly attended the Mohill branch of the League only once. Additionally, he occasionally corresponded with that branch, periodically sought to reorganize the UIL in the constituency,<sup>44</sup> and in 1910 attended three meetings of his divisional executive.

Smyth's case, however, underlines the fact that the relationship between a resident Member and his constituency cannot simply be measured in terms of public meetings. For unlike O'Malley *et al*, Smyth was socially and politically integrated within his constituency. His work as an auctioneer (though occasionally conflicting with his political engagements) saw him visiting not only many parts of Leitrim, but also made him a familiar figure in neighbouring Longford, Sligo and Roscommon.<sup>45</sup> In Mohill Smyth was particularly well-known. He attended a considerable number of local funerals and subscribed 'liberally towards local deserving objects'.<sup>46</sup> In February 1910, for example, Smyth attended a meeting in support of the Irish industrial revival at Cloonturk and

<sup>38</sup> T.F. Smyth to John Redmond, 15.2.06., TCD, DP, ms 6747/167.

<sup>39</sup> Conor O'Kelly to Tom O'Donnell, 18.9.07., NLI, ODP, ms 15,456 [5].

<sup>40</sup> Bew, *Conflict and Conciliation*, p. 171.

<sup>41</sup> A-C, 8.1.10., 1.

<sup>42</sup> LA, 31.3.10., 3.

<sup>43</sup> County Inspector's Reports for the month of January, 1911, PRO 904/81.

<sup>44</sup> LA, 4.1.12., 2.

<sup>45</sup> LA, 3.2.10., 2. In 1912 it was estimated that Smyth's auction work was worth £1,000 a year. *Roscommon Journal*, 23.11.12., 1.

<sup>46</sup> For instance, see LA, 20.1.10., 3; A-C, 1.1.10., 5.

subscribed £10.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, in 1910 he showed considerable interest in the industrial revival in Leitrim. In June, he attended another industrial meeting, and in late August was among the audience at a lecture on the revival of Irish industry delivered in Mohill.<sup>48</sup> Smyth was also a member of the Mohill Rural District Council (which he attended rarely) and chairman of the Mohill Board of Guardians which met every Thursday. In this connection, he occasionally apologized for his absences when at Westminster.<sup>49</sup> In fact, though unable to attend its meetings during the session, Smyth was present for at least 25 (or approximately one half) of the Board's meetings in 1910.<sup>50</sup>

The impression that residence multiplied the number of 'points of contact' between a Member of Parliament and his constituents would seem to be confirmed by the study of neighbouring West Cavan's MP, Vincent Kennedy. Kennedy came from an old Cavan gentry family. His father (a landlord who sold out to his tenants) was one of the leading solicitors of Ulster and Crown Solicitor for Cavan, while one of his uncles was a tobacco magnate, one-time Lord Mayor of Dublin and former Parnellite MP for Sligo.<sup>51</sup> Kennedy was a 'cousin' of John Redmond, and like Redmond and 'so many of his parliamentary colleagues of the better sort' had been educated at Clongowes Wood.<sup>52</sup> He qualified as a solicitor in 1900 before entering Parliament in 1904.

Vincent Kennedy was very much a part of the community in which he had been born and in which (excepting his school years) raised. During parliamentary recesses he worked as a solicitor in Cavan, appearing before the Cavan quarter and petty sessions. Like Smyth, he attended many local funerals. He was a member of the Ancient Order of Hibernians (though not, apparently, a very active one) and his relations with the local Catholic Church were good. In March 1910, for instance, he persuaded Dr Boylan, Bishop of Kilmore, to allow the local UIL to make a collection for the Irish Parliamentary Fund outside the Cathedral gates on Sundays.<sup>53</sup> As a leading public figure he attended the instalment of Boylan's successor in September 1910, and in March 1911 presided at a public lunch at which Dr Finegan was presented with a car and a purse of sovereigns.<sup>54</sup> Kennedy was also prominently involved in local municipal politics and charitable efforts.

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<sup>47</sup> *LA*, 2.6.10., 2.

<sup>48</sup> *LA*, 16.6.10., 10; 1.9.10., 2.

<sup>49</sup> *LA*, 8.6.11., 3.

<sup>50</sup> In 1910, over 37 per cent of the Party were either currently members of one of the several tiers of local government or had some previous local government experience. 15 MPs, or just over one-fifth of the Party were county councillors, and of these seven were or had been chairman of their councils.

<sup>51</sup> *A-C*, 23.7.10., 4.

<sup>52</sup> Maume, *Gestation*, p. 128; *PMG 'Extra'*, 1910, p. 54.

<sup>53</sup> *A-C*, 12.3.10., 7.

<sup>54</sup> *A-C*, 17.9.10., 3; 2.3.11., 3.

He was a member of the Cavan Amusement Committee (which organized children's events and an annual ball), president of the Cavan Agricultural Show Committee and a member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (in connection with which he visited the town's sick and elderly). Kennedy was also a member of the Cavan Road Improvement Committee and the Cavan Rural District Council, and in 1910 he attended the monthly meetings of the Council on all but one occasion. Unlike Smyth, Kennedy was much more politically active. He was closely involved with the Cavan branch of the United Irish League, attending its meetings and by his own subscription considerably increasing its collection for the IPF. In 1910, Kennedy attended five public demonstrations.

As the examples of Smyth and Kennedy illustrate, resident Members did not 'visit' their constituencies; they were part of their local communities. Of course, attending local funerals, subscribing to a local good cause or working in the division one represented in Parliament, were not necessarily overtly 'political' acts. However, they did mean that such MPs were much more 'familiar figures' to their constituents, and *vice versa*. This is significant, because belying the number of public meetings a resident Member attended were the innumerable one-to-one or informal encounters which undoubtedly played their part in an MPs' knowledge of his constituency.

Unfortunately, very little is known about such casual exchanges. There is, for instance, very little evidence for Edwardian Ireland, as there is for contemporary Britain or America, of frequent face-to-face contact. According to his biographer, for instance, Will Crooks's door was always open to any of his Poplar constituents in trouble,<sup>55</sup> as was George Lansbury's.<sup>56</sup> In late nineteenth century America, the New York political machine known as Tammany Hall practised a style of municipal politics that was distinguished not only by corrupt ward 'bosses' and 'honest graft', but by functioning 'as a kind of private welfare service'.<sup>57</sup> The 'typical day' of one Tammany district leader, the Irish-American George Washington Plunkitt, for example, began at two o'clock in the morning when a bartender knocked on his door requesting him to go to the police station to post bail for a saloonkeeper arrested on a minor charge. The rest of the day comprized of court appearances on behalf of local residents, looking after the victims of household fires, and

<sup>55</sup> George Haw, *From Workhouse to Westminster: the life story of Will Crooks, MP* (London, 1911), pp. 253. However, more recently, Jon Lawrence has argued that 'Labour politics in Bow, and in the borough of Poplar as a whole, consisted of more than offering a mixture of philanthropy and citizens' advice. No less important was Labour's role on the national political stage.' Jon Lawrence, *Speaking for the people Party, language and popular politics in England, 1867-1914* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 238.

<sup>56</sup> Raymond Postgate, *The Life of George Lansbury* (London, 1951), p. 104.

<sup>57</sup> Oliver Allen, *The Tiger: The Rise and Fall of Tammany Hall* (Reading, Mass., 1993), p. xi.

attending funerals, weddings, and church fairs where he '[bought] ice cream for the children, kiss[ed]...babies while flattering the mothers, "and [took] their fathers out for something down at the corner"'.<sup>58</sup>

Of course, not only were Plunkitt and Lansbury (different in so many other ways) urban politicians, but they also *permanently* resided in their respective constituencies. That said, there is some anecdotal evidence to suggest that, at times, nationalist Members who resided in the localities which they represented also dealt with their constituents on a personal and *ad hoc* basis. According to one unionist commentator writing in 1903 of the Dublin MP William Field 'He knows his constituents; he goes into their houses, and sees them...smoking their pipes in their own homes, and spitting into their own firesides.'<sup>59</sup> A colleague of Field in the representation of Ireland's capital city, Alfie Byrne, was known as the 'shaking hand of Dublin' for his familiarity with his constituents, and in his later guise as an TD gave one inexperienced Deputy the advice that 'a widow should always be listened to, she might have no one else to talk to.'<sup>60</sup> Anecdote has it that the ground floor reception room of Joe Devlin's Belfast home deliberately had a 'modest, tatty appearance', which apparently contrasted with the better decorated rooms upstairs.<sup>61</sup>

But it was not only urban politicians who had such one-to-one dealings with their constituents in nationalist Ireland. The Sandhurst trained MP for Cork, A.J.C. Donelan, for instance, was described by one of his leading constituents in 1906 as 'one of themselves: he went about amongst the people: when he heard of any trouble amongst his constituents he wrote from the House of Commons. And he buried every one in his constituency (laughter). There was not a funeral anywhere in East Cork that was not attended by Captain Donelan.'<sup>62</sup> The *Connacht Tribune* described 'Willie' Duffy, MP, in 1909 as ever at the service of his constituents.

Living among them he is familiar with every grievance, and it is a noteworthy fact that when he is in Loughrea, he is kept just as busy- if not busier - than if he were in Parliament. From early morning till eve evicted tenants with grievances, and others, are calling on him to lay the facts of their particular case or grievance before him.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> William Riordan, *Plunkitt of Tammany Hall: A Series of Very Practical Talks on Very Practical Politics* (1905, New York, 1963), p. 91-3.

<sup>59</sup> *Irish Truth*, 7.11.03., 3638.

<sup>60</sup> Brian Farrell, 'Ireland: From Friends and Neighbours to Clients and Partisans: Some Dimensions of Parliamentary Representation under PR-STV' in Vernon Bogdanor (ed.), *Representatives of the People? Parliamentarians and Constituents in Western Democracies* (Aldershot, 1985), p. 241.

<sup>61</sup> A.C. Hepburn to author, 01.05.02.

<sup>62</sup> *FJ*, 11.1.06., 7.

<sup>63</sup> *CT*, 14.8.09., 3.



Other county MPs seem to have been accessible to the communities in which they lived because their businesses and shops doubled as informal constituency offices.<sup>64</sup> In March 1910, for instance, the *Anglo-Celt* welcomed the fact that the solicitor and Monaghan MP, J.C.R. Lardner, had ‘opened an office in Mr McGuinness’ where, it is understood, he will attend each Friday and fair day at 10 am. It is hoped that he will use his influence with the Co. Surveyor to have the surface of the road from Arvagh Road made trafficable. It is almost impassable, and clergymen and doctors complain bitterly of its condition.’<sup>65</sup> Alternatively, when Arthur Lynch’s fictional ‘local’ MP, Michael O’Rourke attended the Ballydrumbeg races, he began the day by ‘walk[ing] about the town, calling in here and there’, and later at the race-meeting ‘went about according to his programme saluting everyone right and left, joining groups...but slipping away so as to “spread the butter evenly,” always saying the right thing as he left.’<sup>66</sup> Arguably, this kind of activity was political, though, doubtless, little of it would have reached even the pages of the local press.

On the basis of this (albeit limited) evidence, there would seem to have been a qualitative difference in MP-constituency relations between resident and non-resident Members. This is not, however, to suggest that all ‘local’ men were ‘familiar figures’ or that such intimacy did not create its own problems. Moreover, the private and more personal aspects of constituency service apparently practised by some resident MPs should not be seen as a substitute for attending public meetings and rallies. Indeed, Members with good reputations for attending to the needs of their constituents were not immune from criticisms of neglect in this respect. When at a meeting in May 1910, for example, a letter from J.C.R. Lardner, MP, was read out apologising for his unavoidable absence, a section of the audience made their displeasure clearly felt: ‘He should be here- we’ll take no apology- Why isn’t he here- He should have come... We won’t listen. Order, order. Let him read the apology. We want no apology; he should be here.’<sup>67</sup> The same month, another ‘local’ MP J.P. Nannetti was criticized by members of the South City Ward of the Dublin UIL for not being present at their meeting.<sup>68</sup> Such instances prompt the obvious question as to what such public events signified to MPs and their constituents?

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<sup>64</sup> Patrick McLean to Jeremiah Jordan, 7.2.09, PRONI, JP, D/2073/2/2/1; Michael McCartan to John Sloan, 12.11.96., UCDA, MLB, [141].

<sup>65</sup> *A-C*, 12.3.10., 9.

<sup>66</sup> Lynch, *O’Rourke*, pp. 12-13, 40.

<sup>67</sup> *A-C*, 4.5.10., 9.

<sup>68</sup> *FJ*, 10.5.10., 5.

In her study of extra-parliamentary political speech in mid-Victorian Britain, Kirsten Zimmerman has examined the development from the late 1850s onwards of what she terms ‘consensus’ (as opposed to ‘activist’ or ‘partisan’) speech. The form this typically took was the ‘annual public review’ speech, e.g. one ‘given by an MP to his constituents in a public meeting convened specifically for the purpose’ at which a ‘lengthy and explicit account...of their [Members’] political actions in the previous term and...[his] aims for the next one’ was given.<sup>69</sup> Through this kind of speech, and the question and answer session which often followed, such meetings facilitated ‘the development of a more accountable relationship between MPs and their constituents.’ However, whereas the custom of holding an annual meeting found purchase in England, Scotland and (albeit somewhat tardily) Wales, according to Zimmerman in Ireland such speeches were ‘very rare’. Indeed, when some Irish Members did begin to emulate their British counterparts in the later 1860s they felt it necessary to defend their adoption of what was clearly a British cultural import.

The emergence of Isaac Butt’s Home Rule League (with its twin emphases on more concerted parliamentary action and greater accountability) in 1873 marked an important change in Irish parliamentary representation. At the home rule conference in Dublin a resolution was proposed calling on all Irish MPs to ‘render to their constituents an account of their stewardship’ at the end of each session.<sup>70</sup> By the mid 1870s the practice of holding an annual meeting seems to have been quite common in Ireland. In September 1876, for example, seven Irish ‘home rule’ Members delivered ‘public review speeches’.<sup>71</sup> The O’Connor Don, for instance, told his Roscommon constituents that ‘he appeared before them in pursuance of a custom which he believed to be a good one, that representatives should meet with their constituents on suitable occasions when Parliament was not sitting.’ Whether he or his colleague in the representation of Roscommon, Charles French, MP, felt quite as enthusiastic after they had received a public grilling at the hands of their constituents (for voting against the Grand Jury Bill and Isaac Butt’s Land Bill) is unknown.<sup>72</sup> But clearly such meetings were both interactive and deliberative, though they also suggest that in the Ireland of the 1870s, at least, such speeches did not have to be consensual or non-partisan.

Five years later, in September 1881, there is almost no press evidence of this custom having been still in use. The Wexford MP, John Barry, did speak of ‘giving an account of his stewardship’ before ‘many thousands’ in Wexford, while there was perhaps

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<sup>69</sup> Zimmerman, ‘Speaking to the People’, Chapter 4, p. 17.

<sup>70</sup> Jordan, ‘O’Connor Power’, p. 49.

<sup>71</sup> *FJ*, 11.9.76., 2; 15.9.76., 7; 18.9.76., 3; 27.9.76., 3.

<sup>72</sup> *FJ*, 28.9.76., 3.

an echo of the old language in the resolution of confidence Justin McCarthy's Longford constituents passed ('each and every one of his votes coupled with his brilliant speeches, we unanimously approve of').<sup>73</sup> But though ten home rule MPs (excluding Barry) attended political meetings in their constituencies that month, none of them delivered public review speeches or invited their constituents to question them on their individual records. Instead, they encouraged their listeners to join the Land League and explained the terms of the proposed Land Bill. Similarly, in September 1889, though fourteen Parnellite Members attended public meetings in their constituencies, none of them sought to give an account of their recent actions.

Accounting for this change is beyond the scope of this article. But, certainly, the major consideration in any explanation must be the shift in Irish political culture which Parnellism inaugurated. K.T. Hoppen has described Parnell and his lieutenants as 'apostles of the "modern"' and undoubtedly part of this modernity was an emphasis on national politics (in both a geographic and ideological sense). Donald Jordan, for example, has seen in Parnell's clash with John O'Connor Power (one of the MPs who gave an annual review speech in 1876) the victory of Parnellian centralism over local initiative and pragmatism in Irish politics.<sup>74</sup> 'Not only', he argues, 'were local issues downplayed in the interests of national ones, but the independence of the local political leadership was undermined. By the mid 1880s, local politicians were expected to be no more than agents of the parliamentary party, led by Parnell.'<sup>75</sup> Thus, by standardising and centralising the candidate selection process and by the administration of the party pledge (deprecated by home rulers in 1873),<sup>76</sup> Parnell and his lieutenants sought to substitute in place of the individualistic, personalized and paternalistic relationship which had characterized MP-constituent relations during the 1870s, one whereby Members were judged by national criteria: obedience to majority rule, adherence to a national programme and loyalty to Parnell.

Although the 1880s saw the demise in nationalist Ireland of the custom of the annual public review speech, the practice of a speaker reviewing his record was not entirely unknown in later years. In January 1912, for example, Dr John Esmonde visited Cloughjordan 'to give his constituents an opportunity of asking him any particulars as to his work in Parliament',<sup>77</sup> something which he had promised at the December 1910 general

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<sup>73</sup> *FJ*, 19.9.81., 2; 26.9.81., 2.

<sup>74</sup> Power also definitely made such a speech in 1878. Moody, *Davitt*, p. 271.

<sup>75</sup> Jordan, 'O'Connor Power', p. 66.

<sup>76</sup> O'Brien, *Parnell*, p. 140.

<sup>77</sup> *FJ*, 30.1.12., 9.

election.<sup>78</sup> In September 1913, Matt Keating, MP, told a meeting in Kilkenny that ‘the Members of the Irish Party had now come among their constituents for the purpose of giving an account of what had been done and what would be done in the near future. He had been at every division that had taken place upon any Irish question to record his vote’.<sup>79</sup> Moreover, in 1910, a considerable number of MPs referred to their voting records. However, the overwhelming majority of platform speeches did not follow this format, but instead were largely impersonal and dealt with the position of national politics and the record of the party. In May 1910, for instance, John Cullinan told a meeting in Tipperary that ‘he felt it to be his duty to visit his constituency and explain to his people the true position of affairs at the present time’. But according to the *Freeman’s* report ‘He then dealt with the effect of the budget and the general situation at length’.<sup>80</sup>

However, while public review speeches appear to have ceased, the notion of ‘stewardship’ does seem to have continued, albeit in a somewhat adapted form.<sup>81</sup> Indeed, the evidence suggests that while the tradition of ‘public oratorical accountability’ remained a strong precept of Irish parliamentary representation, the notion of personal oratorical accountability (via an annual review speech) was not vital to the relationship between Edwardian nationalist MPs and their constituents. In short, personalized oratory had given way to a ‘nationally integrated political rhetoric’.<sup>82</sup> Moreover, by circa 1910 the mode of discourse itself had become in some ways less important than the presence of the local MP at a public meeting. This certainly seems to be the implication in several known instances. For example, Joe Devlin was MP for North Kilkenny from 1902, but when he won West Belfast at the 1906 general election, he chose to sit for his native city. However, the desire of the party leadership to install another favoured Ulsterman, John Muldoon, in the constituency, proved too much for some local nationalists. As Father Carrigan, speaking at a meeting of the North Tullaroan branch of the UIL in February 1906, explained

Mr Delaney [MP for neighbouring Ossory]...was selected from amongst the people, and when not attending to his parliamentary duties was engaged in holding meetings and organising his constituents. They all knew that when they had a stranger for a representative, and wished him to address a public assembly, they invariably received a telegram from him on the morning of the meeting expressing regret that in consequence of a severe cold or the death of a relative, he was unable to attend.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> *Nenagh Guardian*, 3.12.10., 6.

<sup>79</sup> *FJ*, 17.9.13., 6.

<sup>80</sup> *FJ*, 18.5.10., 9.

<sup>81</sup> *FJ*, 10.12.09., 9; 20.12.09., 7; *A-C*, 8.1.10., 10; *FJ*, 3.6.10., 8.

<sup>82</sup> H.C.G. Mathew, ‘Rhetoric and Politics in Britain, 1860-1950’ in P.J. Waller (ed.), *Politics and Social Change in Modern Britain* (Brighton, 1987), p. 48.

<sup>83</sup> *Kilkenny Journal*, 7.2.06, 4.

At the January 1910 general election, T.W. Bennet criticized the sitting Member for East Limerick, Tom Landon, for his failure to regularly visit the constituency since his election the previous year. 'Where was he?', asked Bennet, 'Where had he been? When did he come amongst them? He had looked in vain for a trace of him, and except [if] he came in the watches of the night Mr Landon did not put his foot in Kilmallock to tell them how he was doing his duty (hear, hear)'.<sup>84</sup> Another Munster MP, J.C. Flynn, was also criticized for his long absence from his constituency.<sup>85</sup> E.H. Burke, MP, robustly defended himself against the criticism of a section of his constituents that he visited King's County too infrequently.<sup>86</sup> During 1910, Willie Redmond was also the subject of local resentment owing to the infrequency of his visits. Redmond attended only one engagement in his constituency during 1910. On this occasion he told his audience that

he had always felt it a matter for great regret that he was unable to be more throughout East Clare since he was first elected. But, after all, it was not always easy to be in the county, when it was borne in mind that they were considerably more than half the year in the House of Commons, and if he had not been throughout the constituency, he would always like that his friends in Clare would remember that he was trying to do his best for them.<sup>87</sup>

Redmond's apologetic tone may have been prompted by local dissatisfaction with the fact that neither of the county's 'carpet-bagger' MPs frequently visited Clare. During the previous general election, one delegate at the selection convention for neighbouring West Clare had declared that

it is a slur to West Clare that, election after election, it is to be a hunting ground for all classes of outsiders for its representation, whilst we have within the borders of the constituency, intelligent and respectable men as worthy and as capable [of] representing the people as any of those coming amongst us now and again...We have got enough and too much of the outsider class.<sup>88</sup>

In fact, Redmond wrote a letter to the Clare press the following month regretting his inability to visit his constituency more often. This may have placated some (though not all)

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<sup>84</sup> *FJ*, 28.12.09., 6.

<sup>85</sup> *II*, 8.12.09., 5.

<sup>86</sup> *Tullamore and King's County Independent*, 11.12.09., 7; 1.1.10., 7. Burke had been criticized in 1908 for neglecting his constituency. However, during 1910 he made a greater effort and was reported to be on good terms with his constituents in December 1910. However, thereafter, he seems to have made a particular effort to explain his absences. Michael Reddy to John Dillon, 19.8.09., TCD, DP, ms 6759/1501; *Tullamore and King's County Independent*, 10.12.10., 4; *Westmeath Independent*, 7.1.11., 6.

<sup>87</sup> *CJ*, 9.6.10., 3.

<sup>88</sup> *CJ*, 3.1.10., 2.

of his critics,<sup>89</sup> though in May 1910 his executive determined to hold Redmond to promises previously given, that he would visit the constituency and discuss the operation of the 1909 Land Act.<sup>90</sup> Even so, in November 1911, a letter in the *Cork Free Press* complained that 'Mr Redmond has done practically nothing for his constituents and contents himself with a few flying visits each year.'<sup>91</sup> Redmond's reputation for avoiding his constituents even reached America.<sup>92</sup>

Comparing the behaviour of Nationalist Members to British MPs is extremely problematic; there is no equivalent data for Edwardian Britain and the evidence which does exist is largely anecdotal. The evidence suggests that, because many more British MPs had to 'nurse' their seats, the constituency calendars of Edwardian British MPs may have included more social and ceremonial events. According to the parliamentary commentator Harry Graham, in order to secure the 'good pleasure' of his constituents, the typical Edwardian MP had to be willing to attend 'their local charities, to open their bazaars, visit their hospitals, kick off at their football matches, [and] take the chair at their farmers' dinners or smoking concerts.'<sup>93</sup> In terms of how frequently British Members visited or appeared in their constituencies contemporary estimates of such 'duty-visits' varied very greatly. James Lowther, for instance, wrote of his 'annual visit to my constituents',<sup>94</sup> while the Earl of Midleton calculated that one year he gave up forty evenings 'to local calls' made by his 'exacting' Surrey constituents.<sup>95</sup> Michael Rush suggests that Sir Charles Dilke's figure of about three times a year may have been 'more typical' of the era.<sup>96</sup> However, the evidence for the immediate post-war period is rather better.

The evidence taken before the Select Committee on Members' expenses in 1920 casts light on many aspects of Members' lives, including how often they commuted between Westminster and their constituencies. Although one MP, M.T. Simm (National Democratic MP for Wallsend, 1918-1928), indicated that he visited his constituency very rarely (something which he claimed his north-eastern constituency made no objection to), most of the Members giving evidence visited their constituencies more frequently. Along with several other Members, William Adamson (MP for West Fife, 1910-1931), told the committee that he returned home every weekend 'just as most Members of Parliament are

<sup>89</sup> *CJ*, 21.4.10., 3.

<sup>90</sup> *CJ*, 21.2.10., 3; 12.5.10., 4.

<sup>91</sup> *CFP*, 25.11.10., 5.

<sup>92</sup> *G-A*, 8.1.10., 3.

<sup>93</sup> Graham, *Mother of Parliaments*, p. 48; MacDonagh, *Pageant*, vol. I, p. 83.

<sup>94</sup> Viscount Ullswater, *A Speaker's Commentaries* (London, 125), vol. ii, p. 249.

<sup>95</sup> Earl of Midleton, *Records and Reactions, 1856-1939* (London, 1939), pp. 46-7.

<sup>96</sup> Rush, *Member of Parliament*, p. 200.

in the habit of doing'. Other Members before the committee confessed, however, that they did not visit their constituencies as frequently; largely it seems because of the time and expense of travelling long distances. Major John Edwards (Lib-Lab MP for the Aberavon division of Glamorganshire, 1918-1922), for example, explained that because of the cost he visited his Welsh constituency about 12 times a year, while J.M. Hogge (Liberal MP for East Edinburgh, 1912-1924) told the committee that 'It is very difficult for a Scottish Member to fulfil a public appointment either with his constituency or with any other public body in his constituency that might want his advice, inside of three days, unless he travels by night.' Still, he managed to visit his constituency 24 times a year. Hogge's statement suggests there appears to have been little inclination on the part of British Members at the beginning of the twentieth century to deliberately avoid visiting their constituencies. Indeed, Sir J.D. Butcher (Conservative MP for York, 1892-1906, 1910-1923), spoke for several Members when he commented that 'I think it is the duty of a private Member and imperative upon him to go as often as he can and see his constituents, as I think it is much the best both for the constituency and for the Member.'<sup>97</sup>

Of course, it is difficult to ascertain how typical these Members were or what effect the intervening four years of war had had on the attitudes of British MPs. But, that said, the evidence suggests that several tentative conclusions are possible. Firstly, the distance of Irish constituencies from Westminster did influence how frequently MPs appeared in their constituencies. However, distance was not the sole determinant; factors such as residency were also important. Moreover, Irish Members were not unique in the fact that the modesty of their incomes and the remoteness of their constituencies hindered the frequency with which they visited the localities they represented. Thirdly, it seems that the notion of the 'annual visit' associated with Edwardian MPs and their inter-war successors, underestimates how often many such Members visited their constituencies. Finally, if Rush's estimate is accepted, then Irish Members were not far off the pace of their British counterparts. That said, the fact that (as in Ireland) many British Members lived in their constituencies, problematizes the whole concept of 'visitations', underlining once again the need for much more thoroughgoing research into late Victorian and Edwardian parliamentary representation.

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<sup>97</sup> *HC Select Committee on Members Expenses, Report*, pp. 11, 5, 32, 18-19, 30.

### Chapter 6: Question Time

8. Mr PATRICK MEEHAN asked why the Estates Commissioners refuse to provide a holding for Thomas Moore, an evicted tenant on the Lansdowne estate, Queen's County, whose claim as representative of his father, James Moore, had been previously recognized and admitted?

Mr BIRRELL: The Estates Commissioners inform me that Moore's former holding comprized about forty-three acres at a rent of £22 10s. The Estates Commissioners offered to provide him with a holding of fifty-one acres, subject to a purchase annuity of £23 10s., but he refused to accept their offer, and they decided not to take any further action in his case.<sup>1</sup>

There was nothing exceptional or remarkable about the question Patrick Meehan, MP for Leix, asked the Chief Secretary on Thursday, March 5, 1914. It was but one of 151 parliamentary questions asked that day, of which 84 were starred, or oral, and 67 were unstarred, or written questions. Of these, 30 oral and 12 written questions were asked by Nationalist MPs on subjects such as land purchase, meat contracts and the cataloguing of Irish manuscripts by the Royal Irish Academy. Although under the rota system then in existence, Thursday was designated specifically for Irish questions, the asking of questions relating to Ireland was a daily event throughout the session, and Meehan's question was thus typical of thousands asked each year.<sup>2</sup> Yet, if Meehan's question itself was not individually very important, it did have significance for those directly concerned (Thomas Moore and the Estates Commissioners), and, as one instance of a very common form of parliamentary behaviour, has general importance for how historians understand not only the work of backbench MPs, but also the nature of Irish parliamentary representation. For at the beginning of the twentieth century, not only were questions 'much the most personal of all the activities of the House, reflecting much more closely than any other form of procedure the everyday activities of Members, the problems that concern[ed] them, their personal predilections and idiosyncrasies', but Nationalist MPs had a reputation for being particularly 'ardent' questioners.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. lix, col. 572 (5.3.14.).

<sup>2</sup> Based on a sample (the first week of each month during which Parliament sat in 1910) of 464 oral and written questions asked by Nationalist Members in 1910, the Chief Secretary answered 49 per cent of questions, Redmond Barry, Irish Solicitor-General, answered 12.8 per cent, Charles Hobhouse, Financial Secretary to the Treasury answered 8.2 per cent, Percy Illingworth, Junior Lord of the Treasury, answered 5.8 per cent, Herbert Samuel, the Postmaster General, answered 5.5 per cent and Sydney Buxton, President of the Board of Trade, answered 3.3 per cent. A further 18 Ministers answered Irish questions but these only totalled 13.4 per cent of Irish questions.

<sup>3</sup> Chester, *Questions*, p. 197.



In c.1900 (as today), parliamentary questions rarely affected government policy or strategy, and, perhaps because of this, historians of the Party have largely ignored them. Conor Cruise O'Brien's study of the Parnellite Party between 1880 and 1890 hardly mentioned questions, while F.S.L. Lyons saw question time as simply an escape valve for the majority of Irish Members denied the opportunity to contribute to 'debates'.<sup>4</sup> Only Alan O'Day has advanced a more sophisticated interpretation of the use of questions by Irish Members, though, as he has also acknowledged, because the Party's activity in the House has not been subjected to quantitative analysis over an extended period of time, there remains no dedicated study of the Party's parliamentary behaviour generally, or its use of question time specifically.<sup>5</sup>

In part, also, this deficiency is attributable to a general paucity of such studies by both historians and social scientists, and to the circumscribed nature of questions and the 'tedious and exacting' nature of data collection.<sup>6</sup> But, arguably, the most important reason why Irish questions have received so little attention, is because of the prevalence of the view that 'Nationalist MPs went to the House of Commons [simply] in order to petition for the removal of Irish business from that assembly'. This has, as Alan O'Day has explained

tended to obscure both their contribution to parliamentary development, as it did also internal contemporary debate on the proper role of Ireland's representatives. Nationalist involvement at Westminster has been seen as driven by tactical considerations, a motivation different in kind from other small parties seeking to influence events.<sup>7</sup>

Indeed, if there is consensus among scholars of parliamentary procedure, it is that questions were yet another device adopted and adapted by Irish Members for the purpose of obstructing Parliament in order to advertise the grievances of Ireland. Thus, Irish questions have been viewed by British scholars as not only 'overtly political', but as an 'abnormal element' at Westminster, thereby further perpetuating the idea of the inherent aberrancy of the Irish Party within the context of British parliamentary politics.<sup>8</sup>

This view has its origins in the contemporary response of some British politicians and administrators to the Irish Party's use of question time. This position was perhaps best

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<sup>4</sup> Lyons, *Irish Parliamentary Party*, p. 222.

<sup>5</sup> O'Day, *Home Rule*, pp. 184-5; 'Irish Parliamentary Party', p. 302.

<sup>6</sup> David Judge, 'Backbench Specialisation- a study in parliamentary questions', *PA*, vol. xxvii, no. 2 (1974), p. 172.

<sup>7</sup> Alan O'Day, 'Defining Ireland's Place in Parliamentary Institutions: Isaac Butt and Parnell in the 1870s', in Alan O'Day (ed.), *Government and Institutions in the post-1832 United Kingdom* (Lampeter, 1995), p. 156.

<sup>8</sup> Nevil Johnson, 'Parliamentary Questions and the Conduct of Administration', *Public Administration* vol. 39 (1961), p. 142; Chester, *Questions*, p. 70.

articulated in 1901-2, when Arthur Balfour, then Leader of the House of Commons, presented the government's proposals for the rearrangement of the parliamentary timetable to the House. In so doing, his stated purpose was punctuality: to more precisely schedule various items of private business which preceded the commencement of public business, in order to remove uncertainty and delay. However, recent and more distant events may also have exerted some influence on the initiation of reform by Salisbury's last administration. Balfour himself, as Chief Secretary for Ireland between 1887 and 1891, had been subjected to sustained and aggressive questioning by Irish Members,<sup>9</sup> while more recently he and the government clearly resented what Joseph Chamberlain termed 'Irish rowdiness and Irish obstruction' to the government's direction of the war in South Africa.<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, Balfour saw procedural reform, and in particular the curtailment of question time, as

put[ing] an end to much that is objectionable in our proceedings, and, among other things, to the system of petty annoyance by which the Irish hope to make themselves so eminently disagreeable to the rest of the House that we shall be glad to get rid of them, even at the price of Home Rule.<sup>11</sup>

To Balfour's mind this disagreeability manifested itself not only in an 'excessive' number of questions, but by there being 'more of a parochial than of an imperial character'.<sup>12</sup>

This view seems to have been shared by the officials of the Irish Office located on Great Queen street in London. For it was not only successive Chief Secretaries (of all political affiliations) who disliked Irish questions, but their permanent staff also clearly resented the pressure answering questions placed on them. The permanent Irish Under Secretary between 1895 and 1914, Sir J.B. Dougherty, in giving evidence before the Royal Commission on the Civil Service in 1914, described many of the questions received by his department as of an 'exceedingly trivial character'.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, R. Barry O'Brien, in his popular study of the Dublin Castle administration before the Great War, quoted one anonymous civil servant who felt that 'half of them [Irish questions] are quite unnecessary', and another official who claimed that 'we get a lot of questions which are quite unnecessary and useless.'<sup>14</sup> Indeed, according to one Edwardian political

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<sup>9</sup> MacDonagh, *Pageant*, p. 244; Sir Richard Temple, *Letters & Character Sketches from the House of Commons* Sir Richard Carnac Temple (ed.), (London, 1912), p. cvi.

<sup>10</sup> *Parl. Debs.* (series 4) vol. cil, col. 1319 (13.2.02.).

<sup>11</sup> Chester, *Questions*, p. 65.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Parliamentary Papers*. 1914, vol. 16, HC, Cmd. 7340. Royal Commission on the Civil Service, 4th Report, 'Minutes of Evidence', p.185.

<sup>14</sup> O'Brien, *Dublin Castle*, pp. 23-4.

commentator ‘the clerks at the Irish Office are employed exclusively upon the task of answering conundrums set by Members of the House of Commons.’<sup>15</sup>

Yet, in considering the use Irish backbenchers made of question time it is surely not enough to simply accept the ‘British’ perspective, and so the remainder of this chapter will be devoted to examining how Irish Members themselves saw parliamentary questions and the business of question time.

In his recent study of British Members of Parliament, Michael Rush notes that whereas in 1887 and 1901, Nationalist MPs had a higher mean average of parliamentary questions asked per MP than their Liberal and Unionist counterparts, by 1913, Conservative backbenchers had a higher mean average of questions asked than both Nationalist and Liberal MPs. Rush presents this change in Irish parliamentary behaviour as a reflex to the first rotation of the Home Rule Bill by the House of Commons the previous session: ‘The Nationalists now had less reason to participate...their main concern was the survival of Asquith’s minority Liberal government, a matter which required support at appropriate times in the division lobbies, not...[the] asking of questions.’<sup>16</sup>

Certainly, the link Rush makes between the decline in Irish questions and the Home Rule Bill is plausible; during the Home Rule sessions of 1912-14, Irish Members as a whole deliberately altered their parliamentary activity in order to maximize their presence in the division lobby and minimize their profile during debate. However, although only based on a sample of questions asked between 1910 and 1914,<sup>17</sup> the analysis conducted for this study suggests (see fig. 1) that in 1910, 1912, and 1914 Nationalist MPs, in fact, asked a higher mean average number of questions than Conservative or Liberal MPs. Though not conclusive, this suggests that the decline in 1913 noted by Rush was not the straightforward result of the Home Rule crisis, but part of a longer-term, decadal decline.

Figure 1. Table showing mean average number of questions asked by party, 1910-1914.

1914	3.66	5.12	5.55
1912	5.31	6.28	7.40
1910	2.44	3.54	4.26
	Liberal	Unionist	Nationalist

<sup>15</sup> Graham, *Mother Of Parliaments*, p.238.

<sup>16</sup> Rush, *Member of Parliament*, pp. 61-2.

<sup>17</sup> The sample consists of the first complete week of each month during which Parliament sat in 1910, 1912, and 1914.

Nationalist Members asked parliamentary questions for a variety of reasons. One, less obvious, motive was that it offered a ready means to Members of parliamentary socialisation. J.C. Wedgewood remembered how 'John Redmond always instructed his new men to put two questions each week and a supplementary to each- good training to secure ease in a hostile House.'<sup>18</sup> In fact, some Members never progressed beyond questions either because of a lack of opportunity or because they were not 'ready speakers'. As T.P. O'Connor observed of such 'silent Members': 'There might be a grievance in the constituency of one of those Members...[t]hat Member [may]...not care to bring the matter forward in the form of a speech, but prefers the terser form of a question.'<sup>19</sup>

Others deliberately confined themselves to questions, finding them a convenient method of pursuing their own personal parliamentary causes. In February 1912, for instance, the *Freeman's* reported that after 10 years of 'persistent struggle', the answer to a question put by J.P. Farrell elicited the information that the trunk telephone line was to be extended from Mullingar to Longford.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, those adept at extemporisation and gifted with a ready wit, could also fashion something of a parliamentary name for themselves from question time. Such, by reputation, were Michael Flavin (nicknamed 'Supplementary Flavin'), Jerry MacVeagh, (who, according to Charles King, 'delight[ed] in putting awkward questions that will make the House laugh'),<sup>21</sup> and Willie Redmond, who the *Pall Mall Gazette* described in 1906 as having

Ministered much to the gaiety of the last Parliament. He has a fashion of interjecting *sotto voce* commentaries on the answers of Ministers to Irish questions, that reach the Treasury branch, but not always the Speaker's ear, and there are mysterious bursts of laughter or shouts of exasperation that the Speaker can only quell with an indignant, "Order, order!"<sup>22</sup>

Doubtless, for some, laughter and amusement was an end in itself. D.D. Sheehan, for example, described question time in the first years of the twentieth century as a 'positive joy' and writing of the 1890s, Matthew Bodkin described how the asking of questions provided 'unexpected interludes to mitigate the dullness of parliamentary life'.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Wedgewood, *Memoirs*, p. 64.

<sup>19</sup> *Parl. Debs.* (series 4) vol. cvii, col. 142 (29.4.02.).

<sup>20</sup> *FJ*, 21.2.12., 6.

<sup>21</sup> *PMG 'Extra'*, 1910, p. 93; Charles King, *Asquith Parliament*, p. 275.

<sup>22</sup> *PMG 'Extra'*, 1906, p. 61.

<sup>23</sup> Sheehan, *Parnell*, p. 83; Matthew Bodkin, *Recollections of an Irish Judge: Press, Bar and Parliament* (London, 1914), p. 208. Other Irish Members, however, took a different but apparently no less successful approach. For instance, according to the London Correspondent of the *Independent*, at question time, J.J. Mooney 'frequently scored with his supplementaries,

But perhaps the most obvious reason why Irish MPs asked questions- in order to acquire information and press for government action- has tended to be discounted, and not without some good reason. For, undoubtedly, both Victorian Unionists and some later historians have been correct in asserting that many Irish questions 'were asked partly to harass the Chief Secretary and partly to call attention to the need for a separate Irish Parliament to deal with the "wrongs of Ireland".'<sup>24</sup> Indeed, as Eugene Crean put it in 1902 'Their object in exposing on the floor of the House the methods of Irish administration was...to show to the civilized world what the system of government in Ireland was.'<sup>25</sup> R. Barry O'Brien put it more bluntly in his response to a despondent civil servant entrusted with drafting answers to Irish parliamentary questions:

"Ah, well...you can't complain. It is part of the war. If Irish Members are obliged to go to the English Parliament when they want to sit in their own Parliament at home, you can't object if they harass the administration in every way open to them. It is, as I say, part of the war."<sup>26</sup>

Although one scholar of the Party has more recently argued that 'it is doubtful whether they [Parnellite MPs] saw it [question time] essentially as an obstructive device',<sup>27</sup> contemporaries certainly felt otherwise.<sup>28</sup>

Yet, arguably, by 1910 the circumstances which had made obstructive parliamentary questions tactically advantageous had passed, thereby fundamentally changing the position of the Party vis-à-vis question time. The major reason for this change was the election of a Liberal government in 1906. Ever since the inauguration of the Liberal alliance twenty years before, the Irish Party had moderated its parliamentary behaviour whenever the Liberals were in government. The Unionist MP, Sir Richard Temple, remarked on the moderation of Irish questions during the 1892-5 Liberal administration, and this was again evident following the Liberal landslide victory of 1906. For instance, in the week of March 5-9, 1900, Irish Members asked 60 (or 31.4 per cent) of the 191 parliamentary questions tabled. The following year (between March 4-8), Irish MPs asked 98 (or 39.68 per cent) of the 247 questions asked. By the second week of

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which he addressed to the minister in a stern and emphatic tone which impressed the House and often placed the member of the government to whom they were put, in a difficulty.' II, 14.4.34., 8.

<sup>24</sup> Chester, *Questions*, p. 105.

<sup>25</sup> *Parl. Debs.* (series 4) vol. cvii, col. 242 (29.4.02.).

<sup>26</sup> O'Brien, *Dublin Castle*, p. 23.

<sup>27</sup> O'Day, 'Irish Parliamentary Party', p. 310.

<sup>28</sup> Herbert Gladstone, *After Thirty Years* (London, 1928), p. 101; Sir Henry Lucy, *Lords and Commons* (London, 1921 p. 120.

March 1905 (the year Balfour's administration left office), Irish Members accounted for 122 (or 45.90 per cent) of the 270 questions asked. In contrast, according to D.N. Chester, the Party asked approximately 20 per cent of questions between 1906 and 1914.<sup>29</sup> In 1910, for example, the Party accounted for an estimated one-quarter of all parliamentary questions; a figure which, while indicating that the Party continued to table a number of questions disproportionate to its size, nonetheless represents a decline on its share during the Salisbury-Balfour years.

But the change after 1906 was not simply one of quantity. By long-standing custom, British MPs (and in particular the backbenchers of the party in government) preferred to raise many matters privately with the relevant Minister.<sup>30</sup> That this was not, however, the practice of Irish Members was argued by D.N. Chester.<sup>31</sup> Chester probably exaggerated the extent to which Irish Members eschewed private interviews and correspondence with Ministers before 1906,<sup>32</sup> and, certainly, he underestimated the fact that for much of the preceding two decades, Irish Members would have had to deal with (probably unsympathetic) Unionist Ministers.<sup>33</sup> However, after 1906, as the reminiscences of J.P. Boland clearly indicate, a new working relationship was inaugurated.

It was a change from earlier sessions when the Tories were in power. You did not then ask to see Ministers by appointment or expect to be invited to a conference. Questions at long range or attacks in debate were then the normal methods adopted by an Irish Nationalist.<sup>34</sup>

This underscores the broader point that, after 1906, the use of Irish questions for obstructive purposes declined. Whereas in March 1905, 76.23 per cent (or two-thirds) of Irish questions were starred (or oral), by 1910, 56.05 per cent (over one-half) of questions asked by Irish Members were unstarred. This feature of Irish questioning is particularly noticeable because it was exceptional.

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<sup>29</sup> Chester, *Questions*, p. 91.

<sup>30</sup> For instance, see *Parl. Debs.* (series 4) vol. cil, col. 64 (6.2.02.); A.P. Herbert, *The Point of Parliament* (London, 1949), p. 66.

<sup>31</sup> Chester, *Questions* p. 105.

<sup>32</sup> For instance, see J.F.X. O'Brien to Lord Londonderry, 25.2.96., NLI, OBP, ms 13,443 [1]; *FJ*, 8.4.14., 6

<sup>33</sup> Robinson, *Memories*, p. 191.

<sup>34</sup> Boland, *Irishman's Day*, p. 25.

Figure 2. Table showing written questions expressed as a percentage of all questions asked by the four parties.

	Nationalist	Liberal	Labour	Unionist
1910	56.05%	35.52%	22.99%	30.03%
1912	59.02%	36.12%	32.48%	31.48%
1914	53.02%	29.38%	28.19%	31.69%

Source: *Hansard*.

The significance of this is obvious: written questions were not part of question time, they imposed little burden on Chief Secretaries personally and they did not entitle the MP to any awkward supplementary questions.

The second feature of Irish questions after 1906 which points towards their positive reorientation, is their continued parochialism. Irish questions had, of course, been criticized in the past for being too 'local'. Then, their provincialism had been regarded as part of the Irish 'system of petty annoyance'. However, even after the election of a sympathetic Liberal administration and the removal of the need to set 'conundrums', Irish questions continued to be much 'more of a parochial than an imperial character'. Indeed, by 1910, 58.39 per cent of Irish questions concerned Members' constituencies (a pattern which broadly continued through to 1914).<sup>35</sup> By way of (limited) comparison, between April 4-8, 1910, whereas 60.6 per cent of Irish questions were constituency related, only 22.67 per cent of Liberal, 10.9 per cent of Unionist and 8.33 per cent of Labour questions concerned questioners' constituencies.<sup>36</sup>

There are several reasons for the constituency focus of Irish questions. In part, it reflects the prominence of two particular areas of government policy which affected Ireland in an unusual way. In 1910, 33.19 per cent of all Irish questions concerned land purchase (which encompassed the sale of estates, the administration of the Estates Commissioners, the reinstatement of evicted tenants, etc.), while welfare questions (pensions, urban and rural housing, unemployment, etc.) accounted for a further 19.61 per cent.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup> In 1912 65.74 per cent of Irish questions were constituency related, and in 1914 the figure was 51.75 per cent. The decrease in this figure was largely due to the decline of welfare questions.

<sup>36</sup> In total 454 questions were asked: Nationalists 132, Liberals 75, Unionists 211 and Labour 36. A constituency questions was defined as one which made specific reference to the Members' constituency.

<sup>37</sup> See Appendix 1 for the other areas Irish MPs put questions on between 1910 and 1914.

Although by 1909, approximately 230,000 holdings (equivalent to seven million acres) had been purchased, so many applications had been received that by 1908 there was a backlog of £56,000,000 worth of sales. In 1909, 9,000,000 acres remained unpurchased. Moreover, the land stock issued to finance the 1903 Act had devalued in price by 1909, and the government proved unwilling to cover the loss of £8,000,000 on the outstanding £56,000,000. Accordingly, the 1909 Land Act increased the annuity, reduced the landlords 'bonus' and determined that henceforth landlords would be paid in stock rather than cash.<sup>38</sup> This made selling less attractive, and so the great majority of land questions asked by Irish Members were put in an effort to encourage the Estates Commissioners to accelerate their proceedings.<sup>39</sup> As the parliamentary sketchwriter of the *Freeman's* observed in late April 1913 '[question time included] the usual string of questions from the Nationalist benches, intended to hasten land purchase and the division of untenanted land'.<sup>40</sup>

In 1910, 63 per cent of welfare questions asked by Irish MPs concerned old age pensions. Introduced in 1908, due to the peculiar demographic character of Ireland, by 1910, a staggering 98.6 per cent of people aged 70 or older were in receipt of a pension at a cost of £2,400,000 to the Treasury.<sup>41</sup> As Alan O'Day has pointed out, many of the questions asked by Irish MPs concerned the poor law disqualification and the maximum earnings disqualification, but Irish Members also campaigned on the issue that because the Irish census returns for the mid nineteenth century had been destroyed, some applicants were unfairly penalized.

Together, (as figure 3 illustrates) welfare and land questions 'solidified the [constituency] service function' of Irish Members of Parliament in the years before the First World War.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>38</sup> O'Brien, *William O'Brien*, p. 156; A.J. Kettle, *The Material for Victory* (Dublin, 1958), p. 129.

<sup>39</sup> This broadly sums up the attitude of Irish MPs towards the land question in these years: the terms of the settlement were known it was simply a matter of 'working' the Estates Commissioners (as one MP put it) to process sales more quickly. As one MP explained in January 1911 'the land question had been settled, and the stronger their organisation was the quicker the landlords would sell'. *FJ*, 31.1.11., 9. However, other MPs admitted that the completion of land purchase would not come until after Home Rule had been secured. See, *FJ*, 8.1.12., 10. The exception to this was in certain midland districts and in parts of Connaught, where cattle driving continued to be advocated during 1910-11 by some MPs.

<sup>40</sup> *FJ*, 25.4.13., 7.

<sup>41</sup> Strauss, *Irish Nationalism*, p. 202; O'Day, *Home Rule*, p. 228.

<sup>42</sup> O'Day, *Home Rule*, p. 228.



Figure 3. Table showing Land and Welfare questions.

	Land PQs as % Irish PQs	% Land PQs Constituency Related	Welfare PQs as % Irish PQs	% Welfare PQs Constituency Related
1910	33.19	88.96	19.61	63.73
1912	30.34	91.26	17.67	63.33
1914	30.57	90.68	5.96	73.91

Source: *Hansard*.

That said, by 1914, the percentage of Irish questions that were constituency related had fallen below 50 per cent.<sup>43</sup> Land questions continued to be not only the most frequently asked category, but also the area of questioning which involved the greatest number of constituency cases. However, welfare questions slumped to only 5.73 per cent of all Irish questions, which may reflect the fact that by 1914 almost all those entitled were in receipt of a pension and the number of rejected applicants had declined sharply since 1909.<sup>44</sup>

A second possible factor in accounting for the constituency orientation of Irish parliamentary questions is the demographic composition of the Party. In 1910, 40 Irish MPs had been born in the constituency which they represented, while 46 resided in their constituencies. F.S.L. Lyons styled these men 'invaluable interpreters of [local] opinion', but though it might be expected that these links would be reflected in MPs' parliamentary behaviour, statistical analysis suggests that Members who had family and/or residential links with their constituencies were no more likely to ask constituency questions than those who did not have such connections.<sup>45</sup> Carpet-baggers and constituency men alike, therefore, asked questions concerning their constituents; a fact which suggests that private Members as a group were culturally attuned to the interests of the communities they represented.

<sup>43</sup> The figures were: 1910: 58.83; 1912: 59.06; 1914: 46.89.

<sup>44</sup> In 1914, 202,202 people were in receipt of a pension in Ireland. Whereas, in 1909, 43,824 applications were rejected or revoked, by 1912, this figure had fallen by more than half, to 21,311. *Parliamentary Papers*, 1919, Vol. xxvii, HC Paper 279, Cmd 410, 'Report of the Departmental Committee on Old Age Pensions'; *Parliamentary Papers*, 1913, Vol. xli, HC Paper 247, 'Return of Old Age Pensions in Ireland'.

<sup>45</sup>

	BORN IN CONSTITUENCY			LIVE IN CONSTITUENCY		
	N=	Chi-square test	P=	N=	Chi-square test	P=
1910	40	0.689	0.16	46	0.785	0.074
1912	40	0.14	2.18	44	0.634	0.226
1914	39	0.039	1.036	43	0.624	0.24

Another consideration in explaining why Irish Members asked so many constituency questions can be found in the attitude of Irish constituents themselves. How, to take an example already familiar, did Thomas Moore, the Queen's County evicted tenant referred to above, come to be the subject of a parliamentary question put by his local MP., Patrick Meehan? Arguably, it was not simply because the 1907 Evicted Tenants Act gave Moore the chance of reinstatement, or that Meehan was an MP born and raised in Queen's County. More probably, it was because Moore- or a third party- lobbied Meehan to help him, and to understand how and why this happened, it is necessary to examine the process by which questions were researched and drafted, before being 'handed in at the Table'.

Writing in 1898, R. Barry O'Brien recounted a story of how when Parnell first entered the House of Commons in April 1875, he asked one of his fellow Irish Members, 'How do you get materials for questioning the Ministers?'. His colleague 'smiling at the simplicity of the novice', replied, 'Why, from the newspapers, from our constituents, from many sources.'<sup>46</sup> In fact the level of initiative required of Irish Members in finding suitable subject-matter for questioning Ministers varied very greatly. In certain circumstances, for example, Edwardian Members were supplied with information centrally. For example, in February 1910, the Standing Committee of the UIL reported that the League's 'Old Age Pension Bureau' (which had assisted nearly 20,000 claimants under the 1908 Old Age Pension Act) 'has been of great value in enabling information to be supplied to the Irish Party, so that the defects of the Act and its administration might be exposed by questions and discussion in the House of Commons'.<sup>47</sup>

However, by no means all questions were instigated in this way. For instance, in July 1917, a question which Arthur Lynch had placed on the notice paper (asking whether an air escort for Princess Mary, the king's daughter, had been comprized of fighter aircraft) was directly contradicted on a public platform by a government Minister. In defending his question, Lynch explained his grounds for putting it: 'I knew of the incident...partly by reading the description of the visit in various London papers, including the *Times*, the *Daily Chronicle* and the *Daily Telegraph*. I had also received letters on the subject, one of them adding details which had not appeared in the press.'<sup>48</sup> Clearly, Lynch had carefully researched his question, relying both on private correspondence and the

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<sup>46</sup> R.B. O'Brien, *The Life of Charles Stewart Parnell* (London, 1898), vol. i, p. 85.

<sup>47</sup> *FJ*, 11.2.10., 7.

<sup>48</sup> *Weekly Dispatch*, 15.7.17, 1.

press. Undoubtedly, the latter source was particularly important for Irish Members. For newspapers constituted a vital link for Irish MPs with Ireland, since unlike many of their English counterparts, Irish Members did not have the opportunity of frequently returning to their constituencies. The House of Commons' library (as well as the reading rooms of several London clubs) took all the major national Irish titles, but for most Members to stay in touch with their constituency press while in London took personal initiative.<sup>49</sup> What proportion of Irish questions were directly inspired by newspaper reports is unknown, but doubtless some Irish MPs would, like the English MP, J.C. Wedgewood, have read the daily and weekly press over breakfast seeking 'ammunition' to form questions.<sup>50</sup>

But, arguably, much the most important and personal source of information on which to base parliamentary questions seems to have been an MPs postbag, and in particular, those communications from public bodies and private correspondents in a Members' constituency. In the case of the former, it seems to have been quite common for organisations and societies to ask their local MP to put questions in the House of Commons on their behalf. In July 1911, William Duffy, MP, for South Galway, received a memorial from the parish priests and district councillors of South Galway concerning the need for the drainage of the Waterdale and Cregg rivers in the constituency. They added, 'We suggest that you could ask a question in the House of Commons on the subject, and you might also write to the CDB and ask them to do something for us'.<sup>51</sup> Constituency organisations were not always satisfied with the manner in which MPs handled these requests; James Halpin's constituents complained that his questions always missed the point,<sup>52</sup> while David Sheehy clashed with his local UIL executive on one occasion after he had refused to ask a question as requested.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Lucy Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers* (Oxford, 1985), p. 44. Willie Redmond, for example, received the *Clare Champion* every week. *FJ*, 11.6.10., 7. In 1907, one of James O'Mara's Kilkenny supporters offered to send him the Kilkenny papers weekly. R. O'Ryan to James O'Mara, 19.[?].07, NLI, OMP, ms 21544 [3]. In 1892, John Redmond asked the editor of the *Waterford News*, C.P. Redmond, to 'order the paper to be sent to me weekly'. John Redmond to C.P. Redmond, 7.1.92. quoted in Charles Stewart Parnell Hamilton, *East, West: An Irish Doctor's Memories* (London, 1955), p. 20.

<sup>50</sup> Wedgewood, *Memoirs*, p. 64; Robert Farquharson, *The House of Commons From Within* (London, 1912), pp. 58-9. Those British MPs with private secretaries sometimes used them to research questions. Given the modest incomes of many Irish Members it seems unlikely that this was common among Nationalist MPs. Graham, *Mother Of Parliaments*, p. 240.

<sup>51</sup> *FJ*, 28.7.11., 10. For other examples, see *FJ*, 10.1.10., 5; *Leitrim Observer*, 10.2.12., 5; *FJ*, 11.4.14., 7; James Ahern [Postmens' Federation, Cork Branch] to J.F.X. O'Brien, 25.3.97., NLI, OBP, ms 13,432 [1].

<sup>52</sup> M. McCormack to John Dillon, 30.7.09, NLI, DP, ms 6782/1198.

<sup>53</sup> *Leinster Leader*, 27.9.13., 4. this was not the first time Sheehy's constituents had felt it necessary to remind him that he was a 'public servant'. See *Meath Chronicle*, 5.8.11., 5.

In contrast to such public requests for parliamentary assistance, were those made by private correspondents who wrote to Irish members asking them to bring their individual grievances before Parliament. For instance, in July 1904, James O'Mara received a letter from Michael Phelan of Thomastown, formerly a soldier in the 43rd Light Infantry, seeking the Kilkenny MPs 'assistance to try and get something added to my pension.' Phelan had served 21 years in the British army before retiring, but had subsequently been unable to work due, at least in part, to the illness of his wife, who was an epileptic. Having written to the Adjutant-General without apparent success, Phelan wrote to O'Mara. He put a question to the secretary for War, though he was unable to offer any assistance, since Phelan was already receiving the largest pension he was entitled to.<sup>54</sup>

However, not all cases were so easily dealt with. The correspondence between O'Mara and several evicted tenants has survived and suggests that the pursuit of such grievances could involve years of correspondence. One such case was that of Patrick Kelly, a general merchant from Thomastown. Kelly's father (also apparently named Patrick) had been evicted from his farm on the Clifford estate in 1902 and his appeal to the Land Commissioners had subsequently been rejected. After bringing his case to the attention of the local UIL (without success), Kelly wrote to O'Mara in 1903 and regularly thereafter.<sup>55</sup> In July 1904, for example, he wrote 'Will you kindly do what you can for us in the case, and if you think it well put a question in the House (as it might deter covetous people from grabbing it on the 11 months system...)'.<sup>56</sup> Interestingly, O'Mara did not act on Kelly's advice, and instead he seems to have advised Kelly to make another direct claim to the Estates Commissioners.<sup>57</sup> The response to this effort not (apparently) proving successful, O'Mara seems to have corresponded with the Estates Commissioners himself,<sup>58</sup> since the following year he received a letter from its office explaining that there were then currently no proceedings for the sale of the Clifford estate, though when such proceedings were instituted, Kelly's case would be considered.<sup>59</sup> By the following year, negotiations were being conducted for the purchase of the Clifford property, but as Kelly junior wrote to O'Mara, in the meantime his father's farm had been 'grabbed' by a local Protestant farmer

<sup>54</sup> Michael Phelan to James O'Mara, 9.7.04, NLI, OMP, ms 21544 [3]; *Parlt. Debs.* (series 4) vol. cxlv, cols. 57-8 (13.4.05.).

<sup>55</sup> Patrick Kelly to James O'Mara, 14.8.03, NLI, OMP, ms 21544 [4]; Patrick Kelly to James O'Mara, 29.5.05, NLI, OMP, ms 21544 [4].

<sup>56</sup> Patrick Kelly to James O'Mara, 14.7.04, NLI, OMP, ms 21544 [4].

<sup>57</sup> Patrick Kelly to James O'Mara, 23.3.05, NLI, OMP, ms 21,544 [4].

<sup>58</sup> This fact provides further evidence to suggest that Irish MPs could and did deal with constituency matters without having recourse to question time.

<sup>59</sup> E. O'Farrell to James O'Mara, 6.4.05, NLI, OMP, ms 21,544 [4].

who insisted that Patrick Kelly senior had been an '11 month grazier' and had thus never been evicted. Kelly added that the other tenants were incensed at this, and had resolved that unless the Kellys were reinstated they would not purchase.<sup>60</sup> In June 1906, O'Mara tabled a question on the matter, but was simply told that the estates commissioners would investigate the circumstances.<sup>61</sup> Eight months later, the estate was finally sold, although as Kelly had predicted 'the independent men and women tenants refused to sign' unless he was reinstated and included in the sale on the same terms as the other tenants. R.J. Ryan, who informed O'Mara of these events, added 'I hope you will put a question before the matter is settled.'<sup>62</sup> However, O'Mara did not put another question, despite the added encouragement of Patrick Kelly himself.

We all feel very grateful to you for having put the question to the Chief Secretary and when the Estates Commissioners give notice that "proceedings for sale" have come before them, I shall let you know, that you may be able to ask by question...to have same confirmed, as you have kindly intimated you would do.<sup>63</sup>

Another case of an evicted tenant seeking reinstatement, was that of Edmund Hilba of Rossenara, who, having stated the facts of his case in a letter dated March 1907, added ' I kindly request of you to lay before the House this case of mine and do all that you can'.<sup>64</sup>

A considerable number of constituency cases seem to have been brought to the attention of MPs by third parties, often local Party supporters. Thus, for instance, R. O'Ryan, a regular correspondent of O'Mara, wrote to him in 1906 'I was on the look out for the evicted tenants question and saw or heard nothing of same since. You should put a question on the matter enclosed which speaks for itself. There is scarcely such a Protestant Tory Bench in such a Catholic district in Ireland.'<sup>65</sup> Similarly, Father Brennan, one of O'Mara's closest clerical supporters in his constituency, forwarded a letter he had received, regarding the case of a Ladyswell women who had complained about the trespass of a neighbour's cattle onto her land, and who wanted him 'to put a question in the House'.<sup>66</sup>

By no means all those letters which Members received in relation to the putting of questions, concerned land or welfare issues. For instance, in 1898 the Derry nationalist,

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<sup>60</sup> Patrick Kelly to James O'Mara, 26.3.06, NLI, OMP, ms 21,544 [4].

<sup>61</sup> *Parlt. Debs.* (series 4) vol. 159 clxx, cols. 1098-9 (28.6.06.).

<sup>62</sup> R.J. Ryan to James O'Mara, 15.2.07., NLI, OMP, ms 21,544 [4].

<sup>63</sup> Patrick Kelly to James O'Mara, 23.3.07., NLI, OMP, ms 21,544 [3].

<sup>64</sup> Edmund Hilba to James O'Mara, 17.3.07., NLI, OMP, ms 21,544 [4].

<sup>65</sup> R. O'Ryan to James O'Mara, 24.[7?].06., NLI, OMP, ms 21,544 [4].

<sup>66</sup> Father Brennan to James O'Mara, 5.12.06m NLI, OMP, ms 21,544 [4].

Joseph Davison, wrote to John Dillon asking him to ‘interrogate’ Balfour concerning allegedly corrupt practices during a recent Poor Law election.<sup>67</sup> A different correspondent, F.J. Fenelly, wrote to Dillon in October 1909 regarding another important grievance, this time the perceived sectarian bias in the veterinary branch of the Department of Agriculture: ‘In the hope that you may see your way to table it, I enclose a draft question.’<sup>68</sup> While not common, the inclusion of draft questions was not unknown. The Galway City MP., John Pinkerton, received a similar letter in 1888 from F. Kingscote who was angry at the leniency shown to a convicted murderer because of his political connections. He added ‘I write to you as the member of our town to ask if you will kindly ask the enclosed question in the House.’<sup>69</sup>

There are two important points to grasp from this survey of constituency correspondence. Firstly, that Members tabled parliamentary questions *in addition* to corresponding with, and interviewing, Ministers and departmental officials. And secondly, that many of these groups and individuals were not simply consulting their Member of Parliament, but actually suggesting a specific course of action, i.e. the putting of questions. In asking constituency questions, then, Irish Members would seem, in part, to have been responding to the targeted lobbying of their constituents.

The reasons why the Irish general public seem to have placed such importance on parliamentary questions are several. According to some scholars of modern Ireland who have considered a similar question in the context of post-independence Irish politics, an important part of the answer lies in the character of Irish society in the first half of the twentieth century. Writing in the late 1950s, for instance, Basil Chubb argued that peasant farmers dominated Irish political life. He characterized this groups’ collective personality as ‘conservative, parochial, shrewd...and intensely locally oriented’, and went on to argue that these qualities predisposed these rural owner-occupiers towards the belief that in order to secure assistance, employment or patronage from the state, the ‘intervention or good offices of a man “in the know”’ were required. Moreover, according to Chubb, this preference was reinforced by a pronounced ambivalence towards government: the state being both a ‘potential source of help, jobs or favours’ but also, ‘[f]orty years’ experience of independence notwithstanding’, being regarded with suspicion.<sup>70</sup> Whether this

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<sup>67</sup> Joseph Davison to John Dillon, 20.5.98, TCD, DP, ms 6771/103a.

<sup>68</sup> F.J. Fenelly to John Dillon, 6.10.09, NLI, DP, ms 6782/1213.

<sup>69</sup> F. Kingscote to John Pinkerton, 11.12.88, PRONI, PP, D/1078/P/41.

<sup>70</sup> Chubb, “‘Persecuting Civil Servants’”, p. 273. For the debate Chubb’s work has generated, see Komito, ‘Irish Clientelism’, pp.237-63.

description of the rural Irish political landscape in the post-war period can also pass for an earlier point in the century is debatable, but certainly perceptions of TDs as ‘brokers’ and the government as both the dispenser of state resources and the object of local suspicion, has resonance for those studying pre-1914 Irish political society.

Indeed, the position of the government in ‘British Ireland’ may, in itself, have been an important stimulus to the putting of questions by MPs. As T.P. O’Connor explained during the debates on the government’s proposed reform of question time in 1902

a question which might appear trifling and personal, was, perhaps, a question which meant a great deal to the very lowest of the people who were without any court to defend themselves, and without any court of appeal except the high court of Parliament through questions asked by their representatives. Take the case of the Irish constituencies. What protection had they against officials in Ireland, who were in no sense responsible to public opinion in Ireland? The only way there could be an appeal against acts of outrage, violence, and tyranny, in a country where the constitution was suspended, was to the House of Commons, and the only method by which that appeal could be made, except in occasional discussion, was by questions addressed daily to the Ministers responsible.<sup>71</sup>

This was, of course, a familiar nationalist criticism of the Union and, in particular, the Dublin Castle administration. But the familiarity of this argument (and the dramatic language in which it was often framed) should not obscure its validity. For as Lord Dunraven observed of Castle government ‘[it was] a very bad sort...of bureaucracy- a government by departments in Ireland uncontrolled by Parliament, uncontrolled by any public body in Ireland, subject only to a department in London.’<sup>72</sup> More recently, scholars have described Ireland’s administration as ‘anomalous’ and ‘marginalized...[from the] debate in the remainder of the United Kingdom on how to render a standardized bureaucracy accountable to parliamentary government.’<sup>73</sup> Indeed, this very lack of accountability may partly explain why many Irish men and women seem to have preferred to lobby their Member of Parliament rather than resolving their grievances through formal channels. For not only did Irish men and women apparently feel alienated from the Dublin Castle administration, but they were confronted by a confused and chaotic government system which many did not understand. In fact, in many ways the very eclecticism of Irish

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<sup>71</sup> *Parl. Debs.* (series 4) vol. cvii, col. 143 (28.4.02.). However, even in 1902, not all Irish Members were equally convinced of the relevance of many constituency matters to question time. See Edward Blake’s comments, *Parl. Debs.* (series 4) vol. cil, cols. 756-7 (7.2.02.). It is germane though to recall that Blake was a carpet-bagger *par excellence*. See, Banks, *Blake*, p. 11, 24.

<sup>72</sup> Quoted in Kieran Flanagan, ‘The Chief Secretary’s Office, 1853-1914: A Bureaucratic Enigma’, *IHS*, vol. xxiv, no. 94 (1984), p. 198.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 201.. See also the similar comments of Joseph Nolan and Jerry MacVeagh. *Parl. Debs.* (series 4) vol. cvii, cols. 210, 220 (29.4.02.).

questioning reflected the breadth and confusion of the Chief Secretary's portfolio, because he 'seemed to be accountable for everything, from the difficulties of Irish education, to the actions of the constabulary, and the powers of Poor Law boards, but also "in addition to other duties, had the responsibilities of the cesspools of the country being cleaned."'74

What emerges from this analysis is the idea that, in the political environment created by the administration of Ireland from London, parliamentary questions, rather than being simply a backbench procedure, became institutionalized as a semi-official channel for the airing of local complaints and grievances. However, it is clear that for this to have been the case, constituents must have believed that by having a question put in the House of Commons their interests were being somehow furthered. No doubt, a question to a Minister probably did command greater attention from an Irish government department than a letter from the aggrieved individual (though, on the other hand, it seems that such questions antagonized Irish civil servants), and it may have been that constituents were more likely to accept disappointment if they felt that some effort had been made. But the question still remains as to whether the use of question time by Irish Members did anything more than advertise Irish grievances. For while multiple questions could be asked daily, and though they received far more attention than any equivalent amount of parliamentary effort,<sup>75</sup> only rarely was an important concession won at question time. As J.P. Boland explained, ultimately questions were 'of a limited character' because '[g]reat matters of policy were best reserved for supply, when all the expenses of...[a] department came under review'.<sup>76</sup>

The Irish public (or at least sections of it) were not entirely unaware of the limitations of questioning Ministers. At a public meeting on Irish intermediate education at the Mansion House in November 1910, for example, Father Cullen observed, in front of an audience which included John Dillon and several backbench MPs 'We are far from losing sight of the useful points scored now and again by Members of the Irish Party...But a glib and vague reply from a Chief Secretary too often brushed aside a wrong that had been pressing for instant redress.'<sup>77</sup> Similarly, the *Kerryman* complained in 1912 that J.P. Boland's questions invariably received the 'usual vague, indefinite official reply'. Nonetheless, as the same paper commented 'there can be no doubt that the responsible authorities will be a little more on the alert as a result of Mr Boland's [questions]'.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Flanagan, 'Chief Secretary's Office', p. 205; *FJ*, 4.12.11., 8.

<sup>75</sup> Chester, *Questions*, p. 222.

<sup>76</sup> Boland, *Irishman's Day*, p. 90.

<sup>77</sup> *FJ*, 7.11.10., 4.

<sup>78</sup> *Kerryman*, 29.6.12., 1.



Indeed, there is some evidence to suggest that questions were seen by some as a crude check on the excesses of Dublin Castle. R. Barry O'Brien, for example, explained in 1907 that

the explanation of the difference in the conduct of the police dealing with a man who was simply drunk and in dealing with a man whose intoxication was complicated by views on the land question is this; the latter case might lead to a question in the House of Commons, the former, humanly speaking, could not.

This prospect, according to one anonymous police source O'Brien interviewed, had the consequence of producing greater 'timidity' among the RIC.<sup>79</sup> Yet, frustration was probably a more common experience among those who tabled questions, since (just as some critics observed) answers were often evasive or simply repetitive.<sup>80</sup> Indeed, the exasperation of Irish Members was occasionally hard to disguise. In June 1912, for example, J.P. Nannetti, commenting on the answer to his question concerning labour exchanges in Dublin, asked 'When does "as soon as possible" mean? I have had the same answer the last two years.' Similar feelings of frustration were expressed later the same year by William Duffy in response to the Chief Secretary's answer regarding land purchase in Galway 'Has not practically the same reply been given to this question for the past four or five years? Can the right hon. Gentleman hold out any hope that in the near future the Congested Districts Board will deal with the estate?'<sup>81</sup> In private Irish MPs were even more candid. As one correspondent wrote to James O'Mara

Thanks very much for your letter of the 6th inst. enclosing printed question which you put relative to the Tyndall Estate. I myself pointed out the futility to Father Costigan of a question in Parliament. You could not put the question in any other shape save that in which it is put, and, though I have not seen the answer, I expect it will be the usual shilly shally that if the matter is formally brought before the Estates Commissioners it will receive their favourable consideration etc. I agree with you that parliamentary questions are humbug and do little or no good...<sup>82</sup>

Of course, some expression of frustration was natural, and O'Mara was, after all, already some way down the path that would eventually lead him to defect to Sinn Féin the

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<sup>79</sup> O'Brien, *Dublin Castle*, p. 125.

<sup>80</sup> Questions could also, occasionally, be the cause of tension within the Party, when Irish Members tabled questions concerning matters in a colleague's constituency. See, John Redmond to James O'Mara, 20.2.06, NLI, OMP, ms 21545 [7]; Larry Ginnell to John Redmond, 28.2.08, TCD, DP, 6747/268; John Redmond to Larry Ginnell, 2.3.08, TCD, DP, 6747/270; *FJ*, 10.2.10., 7.

<sup>81</sup> *Hansard*, HC (series 5) vol. xxxix, col. 1299 (17.6.12.); (series 5) vol. xxxvii, col. 2031 (2.5.12.).

<sup>82</sup> P.A. Murphy to James O'Mara, 7.7.06, NLI, OMP, ms 21544 [3].

following year. But his reservations were also shared by some more orthodox MPs. John Roche, for instance, wrote to Dillon in May 1899 asking him to table several questions in his name, adding 'I well know its of no practical benefit but the priests there who are all new and Healyites are sure to ring the changes on it if I don't do something or appear to have done so.'<sup>83</sup>

Seen in these terms then, parliamentary questions can be viewed not only as a means of serving constituency interests, but also of placating them. For, as well as securing information and action from the government, questions provided tangible public evidence of a Member's constituency service. Irish Members simply had to supply their local newspaper with copies of their questions and the corresponding Ministerial answers, and these would then appear weekly throughout the session.<sup>84</sup> P.A. Murphy observed in a letter to James O'Mara in 1906, that 'as a bit of advertisement for MPs [questions]...are eminently useful. I notice that your colleague of North Kilkenny has half of the *Kilkenny People* every week under the questions he puts in Parliament and their answers.'<sup>85</sup> The *Gaelic-American* was rather more blunt, observing that 'the[y are the] very best advertising medium open to stupid representatives in the direction of earning a reputation for ability.'<sup>86</sup>

If Irish Members were occasionally, or even commonly, motivated to ask parliamentary questions for the 'human' reason of expediency,<sup>87</sup> they could also conceive of question time in altogether more elevated terms. For it is notable that in opposing Balfour's parliamentary reforms in 1902 (the occasion when the Party most publicly deposed on the nature and purpose of question time), the right of MPs to put questions was discussed not alone in terms of Irish constituency service, but also with reference to notions of the scrutiny role of the House of Commons. As J.G.S. MacNeill put it 'An Irish Member's work was more or less, so far as he could, to control the executive government. As had been so often said, the House of Commons was the grand inquisition of the nation, and hon. Members must criticize the actions of the government'.<sup>88</sup> Of course, MacNeill was the Party's resident constitutional expert, but he was not alone in expressing the view that it was the responsibility of Parliament, in part through question time, to make the executive

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<sup>83</sup> John Roche to John Dillon, 9.5.99, TCD, DP, ms 6750/28.

<sup>84</sup> Boland, *Irishman's Day*, p. 89.

<sup>85</sup> P.A. Murphy to James O'Mara, 7.7.06, NLI, OMP, ms. 21544 [3].

<sup>86</sup> *G-A*, 5.2.10., 3.

<sup>87</sup> Lee, *Modernisation*, p. 21.

<sup>88</sup> *Parl. Debs.* (series 4) vol. cv, col. 1478 (8.4.02.).

accountable for its actions. James Flynn remarked that 'He looked upon the privilege of putting questions in the House as one of the most important functions of the House',<sup>89</sup> while T.P. O'Connor observed that

The power of addressing questions to Ministers was the symbol and the sign that the executive power of the country was subject to the supervision and constantly under the control of the representatives of the people...He repeated that it was an essential part of the constitution, and of their democratic institutions that they should have the right of putting questions to Ministers unlimited by time or number...<sup>90</sup>

John Dillon also expressed his belief that questions 'compelled [Ministers], from day to day, to account to the representatives of the people for the way in which they administer the law.'<sup>91</sup> Doubtless, the desire of MPs to limit the reforms introduced by Balfour was behind some of this elevated rhetoric. Equally, such high-mindedness should certainly not be seen as actuating every Irish question about postal facilities, pension entitlements or the funding of Ireland's intermediate education system, but it was, nonetheless, one of the motives behind Irish questions.

Commenting on question time on Thursday March 5, 1914, the parliamentary sketch-writer of the *Freeman's Journal* observed that

The questions, as usual on Thursdays, had been mostly Irish. The pressmen who were not Irish put their pencils down, as Mr Birrell rattled off replies that would be of immense importance in an Irish Parliament, but do not interest Britishers-questions about Irish land, education, police, floods of rivers and cataloguing of ancient manuscripts...<sup>92</sup>

Evidently the *Freeman's* correspondent was frustrated with the businesslike manner of the Chief Secretary and the indifference of his colleagues in the Press Gallery, and he attributed their reactions to a disregard for Ireland and the Irish. Doubtless, this was in part true. But, arguably also, Irish questions were of a different order to most other queries put to Ministers of the crown. For not only did many Irish questions concern matters and interests which had no direct parallel in the rest of the United Kingdom (such as the massive scheme of land transference), but the majority of Irish questions operated on a human scale regarded by many British MPs as so parochial as to both belittle and congest

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<sup>89</sup> *Parl. Debs.* (series 4) vol. cvii, col. 104 (28.4.02.).

<sup>90</sup> *Parl. Debs.* (series 4) vol. cvii, col. 139 (28.4.02.).

<sup>91</sup> *Parl. Debs.* (series 4) vol. cil, col. 687 (7.2.02.).

<sup>92</sup> *FJ*, 6.3.14.,7.

the imperial Parliament.<sup>93</sup> Contrary to the views of many Unionists, however, this preoccupation with the 'parish-pump' (at least by 1914) stemmed, as this chapter has argued, not from sheer bloody-mindedness, but from a combination of impulses, not the least of which was a strong sense of constituency service.

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<sup>93</sup> See the comments of Sir Albert Rollit and Sir Francis Channing. *Parl. Debs.* (series 4) vol. cil, cols. 736, 745 (7.2.02.).

### **Chapter 7: The Irish Party in the House of Commons**

When J.P. Boland came to write about his parliamentary career in the late 1940s, he presented his experience of the House of Commons as he saw it in his 'mind's eye...telescoped into the routine of one parliamentary day'.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, his book, subtitled 'A Day in the Life of an Irish MP', was supposedly structured around a 'typical' Westminster day of a Nationalist MP of the Edwardian era. According to Boland, the average working day began at 10.45 with interviews with government Ministers or officials. From midday until mid afternoon, a Member might attend the sittings of a grand (standing) committee or a private Bill committee. With perhaps 20 minutes in the Members' Lobby before the start of the sitting, an Irish MP would be in his seat for question time, and (with some short interruptions) remain there during the various debates which occupied the late afternoon and evening of an average parliamentary day.

Obviously, this was (as Boland admitted) a composite picture. That said, it does convey a sense of the day-to-day routine which was much more a part of the average Irish Members' life (of all periods) than the occasional high-profile periods of obstruction. Still, as a financially independent, Oxford educated, Party whip, Boland himself was not typical of Irish backbenchers, so it is necessary to consider more carefully what it actually meant to 'sit, act and vote' with the Party in Parliament on a regular basis.<sup>2</sup>

The physical location of the Irish Party within the chamber of the House of Commons seems to have remained constant throughout its forty year history; and, indeed, appears to have followed the custom set by a section of Irish parliamentarians at least as far back as the 1870s.<sup>3</sup> Certainly by 1910, four of the five benches below the gangway had become by custom those habitually occupied by Nationalist Members. Whether this had any acoustic consequences is unknown, but arguably it did convey the impression that while their neighbours above the gangway might periodically change, the Irish Party would retain possession of their seats until Home Rule had been secured.<sup>4</sup> Although the chamber was (and is) insufficient to accommodate every MP, this only proved problematic during the most important debates. On such occasions Members in general, and Irish MPs in

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<sup>1</sup> Boland, *Irishman's Day*, p. v.

<sup>2</sup> For reasons of time and space, the business of select and standing committees has been excluded from this chapter.

<sup>3</sup> *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. xxxvii, col. 142 (15.4.12.). However, where the Party sat in Parliament was by no means a foregone conclusion in 1880. O'Connor, *Memoirs*, p. 77.

<sup>4</sup> *FJ*, 9.3.18., 3.

particular, were known to go to extreme lengths to secure a seat within the chamber.<sup>5</sup> Those unable to find a place might instead 'stand at the Bar, sit on the gangway steps or overflow into the galleries overhead', though the latter disqualified Members from contributing to debate.<sup>6</sup>

Although such overcrowding only proved problematic during full-dress debates, routine congestion was increased by the emergence of the Labour Party after 1900. At the beginning of 1910, for example, the 397 Nationalist, Labour and Unionist Members had to divide the 230 available seats among themselves. The solution eventually found, was for the Labour Party to occupy the first two benches below the gangway on the government side.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, the appearance of the AFIL MPs under William O'Brien also created some initial difficulty. O'Brien and his retinue took the second bench below the gangway,<sup>8</sup> with the result that on some occasions the 'Irish Party were quite inconveniently crowded'.<sup>9</sup>

Although as a rule Members sat wherever they could find space, some individual Irish Members seem to have occupied specific seats by virtue of their status or long-service. John Redmond and John Dillon, 'to whom', according to Stephen Gwynn, 'something like the standing of frontbenchers was accorded', habitually sat at the top corner seat below the gangway and on the corner of the third bench below the gangway, respectively.<sup>10</sup> Tim Healy's habitual place on the Irish benches was the same seat that Butt had taken, which (after 1900) had the added advantage of allowing Healy to always have his back turned to Dillon.<sup>11</sup> Possibly also, more senior members of the Party may have occupied certain seats by custom,<sup>12</sup> though not all junior Members were respectful of age and experience.<sup>13</sup>

In 1914, Unionist MPs sought (unsuccessfully) to force the Irish Party to vacate their traditional position and relocate themselves 'among their own friends, who may enjoy their society better than we do.'<sup>14</sup> The proximity of Irish Members to the Unionist benches, and in particular the Ulster Unionist MPs, seems to have occasionally sparked tension. This found physical expression in the contested status of the front bench below the

<sup>5</sup> For instance, see Harry Furniss, *Victorian Men* (London, 1924), p.111

<sup>6</sup> Boland, *Irishman's Day*, p. 75.

<sup>7</sup> *FJ*, 16.2.10., 7; 17.2.10., 7.

<sup>8</sup> *FJ*, 22.2.10., 5.

<sup>9</sup> *FJ*, 19.4.10., 7.

<sup>10</sup> *FJ*, 1.11.12., 6. According to his brother-in-law, T.P. O'Connor usually sat next to Dillon. O'Malley, *Glancing Back*, p. 123.

<sup>11</sup> Callanan, *Healy*, p. 443.

<sup>12</sup> Boland, *Irishman's Day*, p. 45.

<sup>13</sup> O'Malley, *Glancing Back*, p.195.

<sup>14</sup> *Hansard*, HC (series 5) vol. lviii, col. 1093 (18.2.14.). also see *Hansard*, HC (series 5) vol. lviii, col. 1093 (10.2.14.).

gangway, control of which, according to the Unionist MP Arthur Griffith-Boscawen, was 'frequently disputed' in the early 1890s between Nationalists and Unionists (under the redoubtable Colonel Sauderson).<sup>15</sup> The available evidence also suggests that the gangway which separated Nationalists from Unionists frequently witnessed verbal exchanges. According to Arthur Lynch, sometimes these were 'imbued with the friendliness of this great stage', but at other times they were 'barbed with the sting of irony'.<sup>16</sup> Occasionally, such remarks precipitated confrontation. In April 1910, for example, when a Unionist MP taunted the government benches, he and Willie Redmond almost came to blows.<sup>17</sup> During the period 1910-14, there were several reports that the Unionists deliberately seated the most 'aggressive and offensive young Tories' as close as possible to the Irish benches. Certainly, they occasionally came into conflict.<sup>18</sup> On other occasions, however, the close and habitual proximity of the two parties gave rise to practical jokes.<sup>19</sup>

In his study of the internal life of the Edwardian House of Commons, the parliamentary commentator Harry Graham revealed how the curiosity of constituents could add to the work of a backbench MP.

When constituents call upon him at the House he must greet them with a display of effusiveness which gives no hint of his annoyance at being interrupted in the middle of important business. They may want to be shown round the House, and such a natural desire on their part must be acquiesced in...<sup>20</sup>

Welcoming guests (invited or otherwise) to the House could be not only time-consuming but also sometimes costly.<sup>21</sup> A select committee in 1920 found that among the 'incidental expenses' born by MPs was that of entertaining constituents or deputations 'to a lemonade, or a glass of whisky, or tea, or lunch, or dinner'. According to one MP, this, while not necessarily leaving Members 'out of pocket', was nonetheless an extra cost (though one apparently born gladly).<sup>22</sup>

<sup>15</sup> A.S.T. Griffith-Boscawen, *Fourteen Years in Parliament* (London, 1907), p. 20.

<sup>16</sup> Lynch, *O'Rourke*, p. 70.

<sup>17</sup> *FJ*, 15.4.10., 7.

<sup>18</sup> *FJ*, 12.2.12., 7; *Punch*, 4.5.10., 49; *London Opinion*, 14.3.14., 466; 28.3.14., 563.

<sup>19</sup> King, *Asquith Parliament*, p. 120.

<sup>20</sup> Graham, *Mother Of Parliaments*, p. 48.

<sup>21</sup> Farquharson, *Parliament*, p. 208.

<sup>22</sup> *HC, Select Committee on Members Expenses, Report*, p. 12.

Irish Members welcomed a considerable number of Irish deputations from an enormous range of social, professional, and educational organisations, and often accompanied them in their interviews with government Ministers or departments. In late March 1910, for example, a deputation representing the public bodies of Cork and Queenstown arrived in London to wait on the Postmaster General concerning the recent decision of the Cunard Company not to use Queenstown as a port of call for its transatlantic steamers. Several members of the deputation visited the House in advance of the interview and were entertained by the MPs.<sup>23</sup> Doubtless, this 'work' would probably have been irritating at times, but not only do some Members seem to have enjoyed it,<sup>24</sup> but at least some of those Nationalists who visited the House of Commons seem to have gone away with a greater appreciation of the Party's work than when they came. 'My recent visit to the House of Commons was a practical illustration', wrote one visitor in May 1912, 'of how things are done there'.<sup>25</sup>

Nationalist Members also received visitors from among the London-Irish community and from among the wider Irish population resident in Great Britain.<sup>26</sup> But much the most important visitors were the Party's 'VIP' guests. Irish Catholic Bishops who were passing through London on their way to or returning from the continent, invariably visited the House of Commons, thus allowing the Party to remain in personal contact with the Irish hierarchy.<sup>27</sup> A second (much more numerically significant group) were those Irishmen, or men of Irish descent, who travelled to London from America and the empire. In the period 1910-14, the Party entertained many senior American, Canadian, South African, Australian and New Zealand politicians, civil servants and lawyers.<sup>28</sup> Contact with such hyphenated Irishmen from among the diaspora, underlined the Nationalist argument that Home Rule was an international issue.<sup>29</sup>

William O'Brien claimed that Parnell's Party 'only met at rare intervals as a party, and then principally to bring some recalcitrant weakling to heel. I recollect no great question of

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<sup>23</sup> FJ, 8 Mar. 1910, 7.

<sup>24</sup> O'Malley, *Glancing Back*, p. 191.

<sup>25</sup> John Walsh to John Dillon, 1.5.12., TCD, DP, ms 6783/1385.

<sup>26</sup> McCarthy, *Irish Revolution*, p. 460.

<sup>27</sup> FJ, 28.7.10., 7; 28.11.12., 6; 29.5.13., 6; 19.2.14., 6; 17.6.14., 6; 19.6.14., 6.

<sup>28</sup> FJ, 7.8.12., 6; 21.6.10., 7; 15.6.10., 7; 7.8.12., 6; 26.7.12., 6; 8.3.13., 6; 23.4.13., 6; 6.5.13., 6; 17.7.13., 6; 24.7.13., 6; 14.7.14., 6.

<sup>29</sup> In many cases the Party whips took on the responsibility for this entertaining. However, responsibility for the most distinguished guests seems to have been placed in the hands of Joe Devlin, who received £50 quarterly to cover his expenses. Joe Devlin to John Dillon, 2.4.19., TCD, DP, ms 6730/220.



policy throughout the Parliament of 1880-85 which was ever decided at a Party meeting.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, M.J.F. McCarthy claimed that Party meetings in the 1880s were essentially rubber-stamp exercises, called 'when the chief wanted to carry a point'.<sup>31</sup> In contrast, the Irish Party after 1900 claimed that its deliberations were essentially democratic. J.P. Nannetti, for instance, insisted that 'Mr Redmond never put any strain on any of them, because on every occasion he took every Member into the meeting room, where every question was discussed, and as a result of the vote taken, the Party acted as a solid phalanx.'<sup>32</sup> Similarly, E.H. Burke claimed that 'discussion had never been gagged. The chairman had done more than formally invite discussion. He (the speaker) had known him press for it. The rawest recruit had got the same fair play as the oldest veteran.'<sup>33</sup> At Redmond's death Hugh Law remembered that 'At meetings of the Party it was his habit to express his own opinions with the utmost candour: if these were not approved he was always ready to submit to the decisions of the majority',<sup>34</sup> while in his retirement, William O'Malley recalled that Redmond had often said little during Party meetings in order to facilitate the free exchange of views, leaving it instead to Dillon to 'clear...the air'.<sup>35</sup>

Redmond's critics did not dispute his apparent even-handedness as chairman: they simply placed a different construction on it. Arthur Lynch's account of Party meetings clearly suggests what store he placed on the Party's claims of open and free debate.

Redmond, who always made an impressive chairman, dignified and yet sufficiently concessive in manner...invariably opened the proceedings with a non-committal introductory address, which gave him a loophole of escape in every sentence. He always invited the frankest expression of opinion, although I am bound to say that those who accepted his assurances at their face value and delivered their souls in candour were likely to suffer in attacks in newspapers representing the Party, which looked upon independence as a mortal sin. After a few speeches, John Dillon would rise to the full height of his tall, spare figure, and instantly one could feel the expectancy that now we were going to have the policy of the Party announced. John Redmond looked diplomatic; T.P. O'Connor took snuff as he observed the character in the room; the whips were all attentive; and then Dillon would begin in deprecating utterance, as if he were trying to put a brake upon a temper which was naturally somewhat arrogant, then as he still proceeded he would warm with his delivery, and authoritatively lay down the law.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>30</sup> O'Brien, *"The Party"*, p. 7.

<sup>31</sup> McCarthy, *Revolution*, pp. 463-4. This view has, however, been contested by Alan O'Day, 'Irish Parliamentary Party', pp. 34-5.

<sup>32</sup> FJ, 3.6.10., 8.

<sup>33</sup> FJ, 28.12.09., 6.

<sup>34</sup> Law, 'Redmond', p.4.

<sup>35</sup> O'Malley, *Glancing Back*, pp. 125-6.

<sup>36</sup> For a similar but more stylized account of a Party meeting, see Lynch, *O'Rourke*, pp. 64-8.

Lynch, of course, had an uneasy relationship with both Redmond and Dillon,<sup>37</sup> which stemmed not a little from his feelings of being unappreciated by the leadership.<sup>38</sup> That said, he was not alone in holding such views. Conor O’Kelly’s comments about Redmond’s ambition have often been quoted.<sup>39</sup> After Dillon’s death, the *Independent* recalled that during Redmond’s chairmanship

There were whispers occasionally from inside the closed doors of the Irish Party meetings of differences of views on one policy or another between the followers of Mr Dillon and those of Mr Redmond. As a rule those of the former prevailed, but when, rarely enough it was otherwise, there was no public manifestation of dissent from Mr Dillon.<sup>40</sup>

D.D. Sheehan claimed that while Redmond had a ‘matchless faculty for stating the case of Ireland in sonorous sentences’, Dillon was the real ‘power...behind the throne’.<sup>41</sup> Certainly, Dillon seems to have possessed the stronger personality, and reserved to himself an independence of action which (at least in the early years of Redmond’s chairmanship) made Redmond’s task a difficult one. However, according to Dillon’s biographer, his personal relations with Redmond were characterized by a mutual respect and consideration, which may not have always been apparent to rank and file Members.<sup>42</sup>

While Redmondites claimed that the Party respected and admired Redmond,<sup>43</sup> many of Redmond’s supporters within the Irish Parliamentary Party nonetheless acknowledged that his pride, shyness and reserved manner made him occasionally difficult to work with. Stephen Gwynn remembered that.

His relations with all his followers in the Party were courteous and cordial; yet without the least appearance of aloofness he was always aloof. He did not invite discussion. It needed some courage to go to him with a question in policy, and if you went, the answer would be simply “Yes” or “No”.

Hugh Law recalled that ‘If one asked his counsel he gave it frankly. If one did not, he took no steps to sway one’s judgement’,<sup>44</sup> while William O’Malley found Redmond distant and

<sup>37</sup> Arthur Lynch to John Dillon, 26.10.25., TCD, DP, ms 6757/950.

<sup>38</sup> *DNB, 1931-1940* (London, 1949), p. 552; Lynch, *Life Story*, p. 262.

<sup>39</sup> *Irish Times*, 27.7.[19]93., 11. For instance, see Bew, *Ideology*, p. 5; Michael Wheatley, ‘John Redmond and federalism in 1910’, *IHS*, vol. xxxii, no. 127 (2001), p. 364.

<sup>40</sup> *II*, 5.8.27., 6.

<sup>41</sup> Sheehan, *Parnell*, p. 72. Maurice Healy made similar claims. *FJ*, 31.1.10., 5.

<sup>42</sup> Lyons, *Dillon*, p. 326. The need for a critical re-assessment of this crucial relationship underlines, once again, the urgent requirement for a full-scale life of Redmond.

<sup>43</sup> Wells, *Redmond*, p. 65.

<sup>44</sup> Hugh Law, ‘John Redmond: A Remembrance’, *Dublin Review*, vol. 163, no. 327 (1918), p. 4.

inaccessible.<sup>45</sup> All three men respected Redmond, but others saw arrogance and pomposity in his manner. D.D. Sheehan referred to Redmond's 'royal aloofness', while Maud Gonne remembered wondering whether he slept in the top hat he habitually wore.<sup>46</sup>

However, Redmond's supporters claimed that his leadership style reflected not only his natural reserve, but also the circumstances of his controversial election. One Redmondite later claimed that his election owed 'less to a sense of his general fitness than to despair of reaching a decision between the claims of the other [candidates]'.<sup>47</sup> To his credit, Redmond worked hard to heal the divisions of the 1890s,<sup>48</sup> and appreciated that his leadership of the Party was peculiarly circumscribed.<sup>49</sup> A.G. Gardiner observed in 1908 that 'He is not the autocrat of his party, as Parnell was: he rules by consent',<sup>50</sup> while Stephen Gwynn described Redmond's position as being '[a] chairman, not [a] leader...he was not to act except after consultation with the Party as a whole: he was not to commit them on policy'.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, Redmond described himself as 'the servant of the Irish Party- I speak their views. I am proud to be their spokesman...I have never attempted in the smallest matter to impose my will upon the will of the Irish Party...I have [always] taken a constitutional view of my position'.<sup>52</sup>

Attempting to better understand the internal government of the Party after 1900 is particularly problematic because its meetings were held in secret. This, of course, had not always been the case: up until 1883 the Party had conducted its meetings in public, but in that year it was decided that the lack of secrecy was too much of a liability.<sup>53</sup> Consequently, Party meetings were only reported in the press in the most general of terms. 'At the request of the chairman', went one such report, 'a very full discussion of the existing political situation took place. A unanimous agreement was arrived at, and the chairman was authorized to act on behalf of the Party pending another meeting'.<sup>54</sup>

However, in 1911, the proceedings of one Party meeting were leaked to the press. On February 6, 1911, the Party met to discuss the government's proposal to pay MPs a

<sup>45</sup> O'Malley, *Glancing Back*, p. 125.

<sup>46</sup> *II*, 10.11.10., 6; MacBride, *Servant of the Queen*, p. 224.

<sup>47</sup> Gwynn, *Last Years*, p. 25.

<sup>48</sup> Justin McCarthy, *British Political Portraits* (London, 1903), p. 5.

<sup>49</sup> *FJ*, 3.1.10., 8.

<sup>50</sup> A.G. Gardiner, *Prophets, Priests and Kings* (London, 1908), p. 81, 87.

<sup>51</sup> Gwynn, *Last Years*, p.25. On this, see also *Redmond*, p. 18; Harold Spender, 'John Redmond: An Impression', *Contemporary Review*, vol. cxiii (1918), p. 379.

<sup>52</sup> *FJ*, 24.5.10., 4.

<sup>53</sup> O'Day, *English Face*, p. 37. Also see John Dillon's comments on this. *FJ*, 29.4.10., 10.

<sup>54</sup> *FJ*, 10.2.10., 7.

parliamentary salary. While supporting the principle of payment, the Party resolution, which was subsequently published by the press, called for the exclusion of Nationalist Members, on the grounds that acceptance might compromise the independence of the Party.<sup>55</sup> However, several days later, the *Independent* published what it alleged to be an account of this meeting, which suggested that there had, in fact, been a considerable difference of opinion among Irish MPs. According to this report, the question of payment 'was practically the only matter discussed at the three hour meeting'. Dillon, it continued, had been among '[s]everal prominent Members', who 'spoke emphatically in favour of excluding the Irish representatives', but 'an equally strong attitude...was taken up by a number of other Members'. A vote was then taken and 'little more than half' the MPs voted for the proposal, with the rest either opposing payment or abstaining.<sup>56</sup>

This instance (if true) would suggest that Party meetings could be genuinely deliberative. But, it would also seem to indicate that the votes taken were not necessarily decisive, but rather advisory, and that while the final decision rested with Redmond, the attitude of Dillon was, indeed, significant. The surviving memoir and manuscript material would certainly seem to confirm that debate at Party meetings could be robust. Stephen Gwynn recalled one occasion during the Irish Council Bill when 'one of the disaffected [MPs] took on himself to say that the old fenian element had no trust in John Redmond',<sup>57</sup> while J.P. Farrell wrote to Dillon in early 1909 'I would strongly advise you not to defend too strongly Birrell's [Land] Bill. The [incident?] at [the] last Party meeting in reference to it must have shown you that you have no [help?] to rely on to defend the Bill if strongly assailed.'<sup>58</sup>

However, there is also evidence to suggest that Redmond's leadership style, while 'concessive', was not necessarily indecisive or spineless. For instance, Redmond wrote to John Dillon in March 1906 that he had called a meeting before the Easter recess, at which he anticipated that there were 'two questions that may give rise to some discussion': the matter of the importation of Canadian cattle and a recent speech by D.D. Sheehan criticising the Party for neglecting the labourers. Redmond was convinced that the Party should vote against the introduction of Canadian cattle, but was aware that 'there are some few members of the Party who take another view', while on Sheehan he suspected that John Roche might move a vote of censure. On both issues, Redmond felt matters could be

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<sup>55</sup> *FJ*, 7.2.11., 7.

<sup>56</sup> *II*, 10.2.11., 2.

<sup>57</sup> Gwynn, 'Long John', p. 85.

<sup>58</sup> J.P. Farrell to John Dillon, 29.[1?].09., TCD, DP, ms 6753/426.

‘put right’ during his speech,<sup>59</sup> which would suggest that Redmond’s preferred style of leadership was to manage Party meetings; aware of the mood of the rank and file and which Members might speak on a controversial issue, he chose to convene a meeting and deal with these questions directly by persuading Members of the rightness of his position. In showing such qualities, it is worth recalling that as a junior Member, Redmond had been a whip known for his shrewd tactical abilities.<sup>60</sup>

In the five years preceding the First World War, meetings played a much smaller role in determining the policy of the Party than probably at any point since 1900. With one or two notable exceptions, backbenchers were excluded from involvement in the Home Rule negotiations of 1911-12, and the negotiations over Ulster in 1913-14, which were conducted between the Party leadership and the cabinet.<sup>61</sup> Redmond acknowledged this fact in a speech he gave in late 1914.

I have had in the last three years, and especially I would say in the last twelve months, many moments of danger, of anxiety, and of crisis. Many of these crises centred practically around Ulster, and I have often been unable to tell even my colleagues all that I knew of the forces that were opposed to us.<sup>62</sup>

Historians have echoed this view. Patrick Maume has argued that throughout the Home Rule crisis, rank and file Irish MPs were ‘kept in the dark’ about the negotiations between the Irish leadership and the Liberal cabinet over the exclusion of ‘Ulster’.<sup>63</sup> In fact, if technically correct, the situation was more complicated than this would suggest. For what is often overlooked by scholars, is that the Home Rule crisis unfolded amidst intense media scrutiny and speculation- much of it emanating from the Lobby (to which Irish MPs had privileged access). For example, well before it was officially announced, the *Times* reported that the Primrose Committee’s financial recommendations (favoured by Nationalists), were being opposed by prominent members of the cabinet.<sup>64</sup> Within days of Redmond being informed by Asquith about his ‘conversations’ with Bonar Law in November 1913, the *Times* reported that the cabinet was preparing to offer Ulster

<sup>59</sup> John Redmond to John Dillon, 29.3.06., TCD, DP, ms 6747/170.

<sup>60</sup> McCarthy, *Portraits*, p. 2.

<sup>61</sup> Viscount Samuel, *Memoirs* (London, 1945), p. 72.

<sup>62</sup> *FJ*, 26.10.14., 8.

<sup>63</sup> Maume, *Gestation*, p. 143.

<sup>64</sup> *Times*, 6.12.11, 6. According to rumour (vigorously denied by the leadership and backbenchers) this was also the view taken by Devlin and a ‘strong insurgent section’ within the Party, in opposition to Redmond and the ‘official Party’. *FJ*, 30.12.11., 9; 8.1.12., 10; *Morning Post* quoted in *II*, 30.11.11., 6.

temporary exclusion.<sup>65</sup> And, in late February 1914, *Reynold's Newspaper* published an authoritative report that the government intended to propose a scheme of county option.<sup>66</sup> Of course, many such rumours proved incorrect and several Irish Members advised their supporters to take '[a]ll this talk of compromise...with a pinch of salt'.<sup>67</sup> However, the parliamentary correspondent of the *Independent* regularly reported that such rumours had a 'disquieting' effect on Irish MPs,<sup>68</sup> and after the *Reynold's* scoop of February 1914, Irish Members were described as being in 'severe shock'.<sup>69</sup>

From November 1913 onwards, much of the press speculation strongly suggested that in the matter of government concessions to Ulster, it was not a question of if, but when and just how much. Irish MPs were very much aware of this. In late October 1913, Jerry MacVeagh reluctantly wrote to Redmond concerning his anxieties about the prospect of 'Home Rule within Home Rule', which he claimed would 'mean the placing of the neck of the Ulster minority under the heel of a majority that has never failed to make a tyrannical use of its power'. Instead, MacVeagh advocated a system by which the Ulster counties could 'contract out' after a ten year trial-period under Home Rule.<sup>70</sup> One and a half months later, in mid December, Richard McGhee wrote to John Dillon expressing his concern that the government might concede to the Ulster Unionists additional representation in the Irish House of Commons and some form of veto. He insisted that if these concessions were made 'the Home Rule Bill...would be one of the most effective instruments ever devised for the perpetuation of sectarian strife in Ulster'.<sup>71</sup> What reception these letters received is unknown. Although the leadership initially favoured a form of Home Rule within Home Rule, they did later advocate an opt-out clause for Ulster after a 'trial period' and the increased parliamentary representation which McGhee feared.<sup>72</sup> Certainly, when two other Ulster Members (Hugh Law and James Lardner) later communicated their concerns about the Ulster situation, they were ignored.<sup>73</sup>

Exactly when backbench Irish MPs were formally told about the government's exclusion plans is unclear. In a letter written in July 1914, Arthur Lynch recalled that the Party had

<sup>65</sup> Gwynn, *Redmond*, pp. 234-5; *Times*, 17.11.13., 8, 9.

<sup>66</sup> *II*, 23.2.14., 4.

<sup>67</sup> *FJ*, 7.1.14., 7. Also see, 1.1.14., 7; 13.1.14., 8.

<sup>68</sup> For instance, see *II*, 10.10.13., 4; 27.10.13., 4; 25.2.14., 4; 5.3.14., 4.

<sup>69</sup> *II*, 23.2.14., 4.

<sup>70</sup> Jerry MacVeagh to John Redmond, 28.10.13., NLI, RP, ms 15,205 [9].

<sup>71</sup> Richard McGhee to John Dillon, 15.12.13., TCD, DP, ms 6757/1059.

<sup>72</sup> Gwynn, *Redmond*, p. 259.

<sup>73</sup> Maume, *Gestation*, p. 132.

originally been told that exclusion was to be for three years,<sup>74</sup> which suggests that Irish MPs were informed of the government's intentions at some point between February 27 and March 6. On the former date, Redmond, Dillon and Devlin (who had already been supplied with a copy of Lloyd George's proposals) met with the Chancellor and Birrell and agreed that the Party would support the three year exclusion proposal on condition it was recognized as a final concession. This was still the case when on March 2, Redmond met Asquith. But on March 6, Birrell interviewed Redmond and secured his assent to the extension of the time-limit to five years, subsequently further extended to six years.<sup>75</sup> Certainly when Jerry MacVeagh and J.C.R. Lardner accompanied Devlin to Ulster to convert local nationalists (Lardner and MacVeagh interviewed Cardinal Logue and Bishop O'Neill of Dromore),<sup>76</sup> they did so in the belief that exclusion would be for three years.<sup>77</sup> Presumably it was the further extension of the time-limit which was divulged to the Party at its meeting on March 9.<sup>78</sup>

Although Redmond formally accepted the government's proposals without consulting the Party, the rank and file were aware of the government's intentions before Asquith's announcement. Undoubtedly, there were misgivings among Irish backbenchers. P.J. Brady, for example, later acknowledged that 'Many people will say we have gone too far; we have made too great a sacrifice; we have asked too much of the faithful nationalists of the north'.<sup>79</sup> However, criticism of Redmond's handling of the situation was muted. Arthur Lynch attempted to mobilize opposition within the Party towards the policy of exclusion, but without success. Some, like Stephen Gwynn, while later expressing regret that these matters were not 'adequately discussed in the meetings of the Irish Party...[because] [o]nce the principle of option was admitted, a great deal had to be considered', abstained from stronger criticism at the time because of the 'delicate and difficult' nature of the situation.<sup>80</sup> However, the majority of Members would appear to have been persuaded by Pat O'Brien's appeal for the Party to trust the leadership.<sup>81</sup> This stemmed not alone from Members confidence in (or subservience to) Redmond, but because despite their unease (which was manifest on March 9, 1914), many MPs were

<sup>74</sup> Arthur Lynch to John Redmond, 12.7.14., NLI, RP, ms 15,182 [25].

<sup>75</sup> Patricia Jalland, *The Liberals and Ireland: The Ulster Question in British Politics to 1914* (1980, Aldershot, 1993), p. 200.

<sup>76</sup> Jerry MacVeagh to John Redmond, 6.3.14., NLI, RP, ms 15,205 [9]; Joe Devlin to John Redmond, 6.3.14., NLI, RP, ms 15,181 [3].

<sup>77</sup> *Westminster Gazette* quoted in *II*, 12.3.14., 5.

<sup>78</sup> *II*, 10.3.14., 6.

<sup>79</sup> *FJ*, 17.3.14., 8.

<sup>80</sup> Gwynn, *Last Years*, pp. 100-1.

<sup>81</sup> Maume, *Gestation*, p. 143.

probably sufficiently aware of the wider situation that they saw no alternative course of action.

It is for this, and other, reasons, that the *Morning Post*'s report of May 1914, that a memorial or remonstrance signed by 65 Members of the Party had been submitted to Redmond seems unlikely. The document allegedly stipulated several conditions for future Party action; that there should be no further concessions on the Home Rule Bill, that if the Unionists did not accept the existing proposals the original Bill should be passed, and that if the government postponed the Bill the Party should withdraw its support. The *Freeman*'s claimed that the memorial was an 'obvious forgery', while numerous Members (including J.P. Farrell) went on the record to deny the existence of any such document.<sup>82</sup> However, that such a memorial existed seems quite possible. Similar documents (sponsored by Arthur Lynch) were circulated in later years. However, even in the much more embattled circumstances of politics after 1916, such memorials attracted few signatures, suggesting that even if true, the figure of 65 names was probably grossly inflated.<sup>83</sup>

This is not to suggest that there was not considerable unease among rank and file MPs about the progress of politics in the summer of 1914.<sup>84</sup> Press reports that Asquith intended introducing an Amending Bill irrespective of whether Unionists accepted its conditions, created (according to William O'Malley) 'quite a sensation among the Nationalist[s]', while Lynch described the situation as 'grave and critical'.<sup>85</sup> By July 1914, the *Independent* reported that 'it is not surprising to find in the Nationalist ranks a strong reaction against the unfortunate proposals of last March, and a desire to get back to the main Bill as the Irish demand.'<sup>86</sup> Indeed, according to the Press Association, within the Party 'There are known to be differences of opinion on the subject of Ulster concessions'.<sup>87</sup> Yet the crucial point is that despite this frustration, disagreement was contained within the Party. As Arthur Lynch (who had described the Home Rule Bill in July 1914 as 'repugnant' and 'a mockery of the struggle of Wolf Tone, the vow of Emmet, the songs of Davis, [and] the ideals of Parnell'),<sup>88</sup> put it in a letter to Redmond 'I have as far as possible offered myself in order that an unbroken front might be shown to the enemy, even in regard to those portions of the Bill in which my personal opinion was in disaccord with that of the majority.' And he continued 'I have contented myself with making known my view at the

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<sup>82</sup> *FJ*, 11.5.14., 6-7.

<sup>83</sup> Arthur Lynch to John Redmond, 11.5.17., NLI, RP, ms 15,202.

<sup>84</sup> *II*, 16.4.14., 4;

<sup>85</sup> *FJ*, 18.5.14., 4; 26.5.14., 5.

<sup>86</sup> *FJ*, 17.7.14., 4.

<sup>87</sup> *FJ*, 29.7.14., 7.

<sup>88</sup> Arthur Lynch to John Redmond, 12.7.14., NLI, RP, ms 15,182 [25].



meetings of the Party, and, considering unity as the greatest factor of success, I have acquiesced in the decisions of the Party.'<sup>89</sup>

The assumption by Redmond of much greater discretionary powers between 1912 and 1914 is important to any explanation of his decision to commit the Volunteers to home defence in August 1914. According to Stephen Gwynn, Redmond's speech was completely unexpected. 'There had been no consultation in our Party, such as was customary and almost obligatory on important occasions.'<sup>90</sup> Having consulted only J.P. Hayden and T.P. O'Connor, Redmond proceeded with his speech. J.J. Horgan claimed that Redmond had had 'no opportunity for consultation with the rest of the Irish Party'.<sup>91</sup> In fact, even when the Party had met the previous week Europe was 'within measurable distance of a catastrophe',<sup>92</sup> while the *Independent* described Irish MPs as 'keenly exercising their minds as to the effect the coming campaign is likely to produce upon...[the] great issue [of Home Rule]'.<sup>93</sup> Granted, Dillon and Devlin were in Ireland, while many Irish Members may have used the bank holiday weekend to briefly return home. However, Michael MacDonagh was convinced that Redmond's speech was not spontaneous and thought it possible that he deliberately chose not to consult the Party because 'he was afraid that...some of them would have opposed the decision to which he had come.'<sup>94</sup> Certainly, if there were others like O'Connor (who felt beforehand that the 'risk [was] too great'), they concealed it, though one commentator noted that Irish cheers had been 'subdued' when Sir Edward Grey had tendered Britain's assistance to France.<sup>95</sup>

Between 1900 and 1910, Party meetings do seem to have had a genuinely deliberative role in the decisions reached by the leadership. Between 1911 and 1914 this was much less the case. Doubtless, most MPs (like Gwynn) appreciated why this was so, but the (admittedly scant) evidence suggests that their formal exclusion created a certain insecurity among the rank and file, as they were buffeted by leaks, rumours and 'spin' from all sides.

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<sup>89</sup> Arthur Lynch to John Redmond, 15.1.5., NLI, RP, ms 15,182 [25].

<sup>90</sup> Gwynn, *Last Years*, p. 129.

<sup>91</sup> Horgan, *Parnell*, pp. 259-60.

<sup>92</sup> *FJ*, 30.7.14., 7; 31.7.14., 6.

<sup>93</sup> *II*, 29.7.14., 4.

<sup>94</sup> MacDonagh, *O'Brien*, p. 198.

<sup>95</sup> *II*, 4.8.14., 4.

Although among Edwardian statesmen and journalists the Irish Parliamentary Party had a reputation for eloquence in debate,<sup>96</sup> as F.S.L. Lyons pointed out, when the Irish Party was spoken of with regard to parliamentary oratory, it was to a small group of speakers (comprising veterans, subject specialists and one or two younger men of talent) that contemporaries referred.<sup>97</sup> For instance, in 1910, the ten most frequent speakers accounted for 57.75 per cent of the Party's contributions to debate. Of this group, nine were both graduates and from 'upper middle class' backgrounds, and five had been elected in or before 1885. One of these, John Clancy, was the Party's expert of public finance, and four were forty or younger.

Obviously the age, social background and education of these MPs marked them out from the rank and file of the Party. Indeed, of the ten MPs who spoke most frequently over the period as a whole (accounting for approximately 60 per cent of all Irish contributions), eight were graduates, seven were 'upper middle class' and seven had been elected before 1885.

Lyons saw this feature of Irish parliamentary behaviour essentially in terms of the national interest: Nationalists had to reassure British public opinion that there were Irishmen capable of self-government.<sup>98</sup> This was certainly an argument which contemporaries recognized, but the domination of the Party by a small elite of speakers was also the consequence of less strategic factors. For one thing, after 1900 the Party suffered from a dearth of new speaking talent.<sup>99</sup> Arthur Lynch observed in October 1913 that 'We have young men of ability in Ireland who are fitted to become Members of Parliament, but who for some reason have not been able to secure a seat.'<sup>100</sup> Although the financial position of men in their twenties was probably a consideration, there seems little doubt that Lynch would have been aware that one of the main reasons for the generational profile of the Party was the leadership's attitude towards the younger generation of Irish nationalists. According to Senia Paseta, the Party did nurture Dick Hazleton and Tom Kettle's parliamentary aspirations, but 'overlook[ed] other talented young politicians such as Cruise O'Brien and Francis Sheehy-Skeffington.'<sup>101</sup> In fact, neither of these men would probably have been regarded as particularly suitable material, but there seems little doubt

<sup>96</sup> King, *Asquith Parliament*, p. 266; Sir James Agg-Gardner, *Some Parliamentary Recollections* (London, 1927), p. 109; MacDonagh, *O'Brien*, p. 233.

<sup>97</sup> Lyons, *Parliamentary Party*, p. 222. Also see, Sheehan, *Parnell*, p. 143.

<sup>98</sup> Lyons, *Parliamentary Party*, p. 172.

<sup>99</sup> Brooks, *Aspects*, p. 219.

<sup>100</sup> *FJ* 18.10.13., 9.

<sup>101</sup> Senia Paseta, 'Ireland's Last Home Rule Generation: The Decline of Constitutional Nationalism in Ireland, 1916-30', in Michael Cronin and J.M. Morgan (eds.), *Ireland: The Politics of Independence, 1922-49* (Basingstoke, 2000), p. 15.

that the Party leadership dismissed many of the rising generation of nationalists as 'crude young men in a hurry'.<sup>102</sup> Stephen Gwynn characterized Redmond as a man who 'was more apparently aware of the qualities which made T.M. Kettle difficult to handle in his team than of those which made the brilliant personality an ornament and a force in our party.'<sup>103</sup> Another Redmondite, Hugh Law, remarked on Redmond having been 'out of touch with that new Ireland which was growing up in Gaelic League branches and among the younger generation of the students at Maynooth.'<sup>104</sup> Dillon also 'had closed the Party against all but his personal adherents, and he had failed to attract the representatives of the younger generation.'<sup>105</sup> while T.P. O'Connor 'was quite indifferent to, and indeed, ignorant of, the new Ireland'.<sup>106</sup> Doubtless this to some extent explains why many commentators regarded the Edwardian Party as largely unchanged since Parnell's day.<sup>107</sup>

But along with the lack of young nationalist talent entering the Party, the accession (after 1900) of a greater number of local men may also have restricted the pool of ready speakers at the disposal of the Party. One English commentator observed in 1912 that

the last twenty years have witnessed a steady decline in the personal and representative character of the Irish MPs. Men have been foisted upon the Party who...represent the local publican, moneylender, or priest far more faithfully than they represent the national cause, [men] who...are fitted neither by education nor experience nor inclination for any kind of politics higher than those of the committee room.<sup>108</sup>

Anecdotes abounded about the rusticity of these Members, many of whom were thought to be ill at ease in the 'Mother of Parliaments'.<sup>109</sup> As one correspondent to the *Irish Independent* put it in 1909

[They] are, no doubt, men most worthy in many respects...men who might be excellent shopkeepers and successful farmers, but at the same time be entirely out of place among such an assembly as the British Houses of Parliament. In this vast assembly you have some of the best intellects, educated and trained men, taken from all ranks and professions. You have journalists, lawyers, doctors, and university men. Now I ask, can some of our candidates for parliamentary honours,

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<sup>102</sup> Lyons, *Dillon*, p.325; Stephen Gwynn, *The History of Ireland* (London, 1923), p. 492.

<sup>103</sup> Gwynn, *Last Years*, p.60

<sup>104</sup> Law, 'Redmond', p. 3.

<sup>105</sup> Sullivan, *Old Ireland*, p. 151.

<sup>106</sup> Horgan, *Parnell*, p. 153.

<sup>107</sup> Griffith-Boscawen, *Memories*, p. 263; Gwynn, *Literary Man*, p. 250. It is worth noting that this was not how Redmond saw matters. See, *FJ*, 26.10.14., 9.

<sup>108</sup> Brooks, *Aspects*, p. 219.

<sup>109</sup> For instance, see Michael MacDonagh, *Irish Life and Character* (London, 1905), p. 281.

without previous training, and with poor education, take part in debates that require both knowledge and long previous study?<sup>110</sup>

Such sentiments echoed those of the *Irish Independent*, which periodically returned to the shortcomings of such MPs: 'Irish journalists who have been compelled to listen to the pitiful efforts of a Member of this type in trying to make a case on some matter of great importance to his constituents, do not care to recall the sensation of mingled shame and sympathy they experience.'<sup>111</sup>

Certainly, some of the men elected after 1900 were not noted for their oratorical ability. As James Johnston put it 'Parliamentary experience proved [the idea] that [all Irishmen are eloquent] to be a false generalisation. The rank and file of the Party had no pretensions to eloquence and some of the most inveterate bores were to be found in it.'<sup>112</sup> Edward Barry, for instance, was described as 'a better speaker in the board room than in the House of Commons'.<sup>113</sup>

One of the principal features of the speeches of 'local' Members was their alleged preoccupation with Ireland and Irish matters, to the exclusion of almost everything else.<sup>114</sup> True, a substantial minority of Irish MPs (34) spoke at least once on a 'British' subject between 1910 and 1914, and approximately 35.03 per cent of Irish interventions related to British matters. Indeed, at just over one-third of all Irish interventions, the participation in non-Irish debates might be seen as evidence that the Party was, in fact, very much interested in British affairs. However, closer scrutiny reveals that Irish involvement in non-Irish debates was of a very particular kind. For example, despite their much trumpeted affection for the empire, Irish Members showed very little interest in foreign and colonial matters. John Dillon told Wilfred Scawen Blunt in 1908 that he intended to make a speech in the House on Egypt, but that 'it is difficult to keep the Irish Members in London, except when it is a case of Irish questions.' William O'Malley recalled that the Edwardian Party took little interest in British or foreign affairs 'They were sent to Parliament to fight for Ireland, and only on Irish matters were they interested.'<sup>115</sup> Thus, though 45 speeches on

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<sup>110</sup> *II*, 28.12.09., 6.

<sup>111</sup> *II*, 14.12.09., 4

<sup>112</sup> James Johnston, *Westminster Voices: Studies in Parliamentary Speech* (London, 1928), p. 21<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>113</sup> *PMG 'Extra'*, 1906, p. 63.

<sup>114</sup> Brooks, *Aspects*, p. 218.

<sup>115</sup> Blunt, *Diaries*, vol. i, p. 327; O'Malley, *Glancing Back*, p. 58. Also see, Sheehan, *Parnell*, p. 144; *FJ*, 18.7.10., 9; *II*, 28.11.11, 4; *Leader*, 23.3.18., 149.

foreign and colonial matters were delivered from the Irish benches in the period 1910-14, they were made by only ten MPs.

Perhaps more importantly, just as Dillon (who accounted for the lion-share of these speeches) acted 'not as an Irish Member...but rather as one of...[a] group of Liberals', so the other Irish Members who intervened in foreign and colonial debates did so for individual and idiosyncratic, rather than Irish and nationalist, motives. According to his son, for instance, Hugh Law possessed 'a Victorian sense of duty and...an entirely laudable wish to alleviate distress'. He travelled on several humanitarian missions abroad, for instance to North Africa and to Turkey (on behalf of the Armenians), and he was a member of Macedonian Relief Fund organisation.<sup>116</sup> This was the context in which he told the House in December 1911 that Britain had an obligation to the Christians under Turkish rule, and that vigilance was required in ensuring their welfare.<sup>117</sup> T.P. O'Connor, who was a member of the Armenian Committee of the House, also spoke on the Armenian question in relation to Turkey.<sup>118</sup> Arthur Lynch appointed himself guardian for the interests of Australia.<sup>119</sup>

J.G.S. MacNeill was another of the small handful of Irish MPs who took some interest in imperial and foreign policy issue. According to Charles King, MacNeill would often be seen 'almost inarticulate with white passion; another time uttering a long scream as of pain at some statement about the punishment of a native murderer in Egypt, India or Africa.'<sup>120</sup> One such example was that of the 'gallows tragedy of Sitapur' which highlighted how the 'double jeopardy' laws in British India operated differently for Europeans and Indians.<sup>121</sup> Doubtless, MacNeill was a humanitarian, but his chief interest in this case, as in most of his speeches, was with due process and constitutional law. As Speaker Lowther described him 'He seemed to have the gift of discovering great constitutional points in ordinary occurrences, and in his zeal for the constitution and his dread lest in any particular it should be infringed, constituted himself its guardian.'<sup>122</sup> MacNeill was well placed to carry out this brief; in the 1880s he had been Professor of

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<sup>116</sup> Law, *Man at Arms*, p. 24, 27; *Strabane Chronicle*, 30.11.12., 7. Law gave an account of one such trip he made in Hugh Law, 'The Situation in the Balkans', *Independent Review*, vol. ii (1904), pp. 244-54.

<sup>117</sup> *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. xxxii, cols. 2569-73 (14.12.11.).

<sup>118</sup> *FJ*, 29.5.13., 6; *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. lii, cols. 2321-2 (8.5.13.); (series 5) vol. liii, col. 369 (29.5.13.).

<sup>119</sup> *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. xviii, cols. 973-6 (29.6.10.); (series 5) vol. lx, col. 1299 (1.4.14.).

<sup>120</sup> King, *Asquith Parliament*, p. 273.

<sup>121</sup> *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. liv, cols. 168-70 (25.6.13.); (series 5) vol. lvi, col. 1819 (7.8.13.). MacNeill's protest drew the attention of the India Office. See, Lord Crewe to Lord Hardinge, 25.7.13., c/24. The author would like to thank Mr Richard Hooper for this reference.

<sup>122</sup> Ullswater, *Commentaries*, vol. ii, p. 15.

Constitutional and Criminal Law at the King's Inns, Dublin, and on the establishment of the National University in 1909, he was appointed to the Chair of Constitutional Law.<sup>123</sup> But while MacNeill was widely acknowledged as a constitutional expert,<sup>124</sup> others (including some of his Irish colleagues), found his excitable character and obsession with the precise observance of the law sometimes trying.<sup>125</sup> MacNeill himself was not unaware that he was regarded by some as a 'faddist' and as a 'voice crying in the wilderness'.<sup>126</sup> Nevertheless, he was ever watchful for breaches of parliamentary procedure,<sup>127</sup> persistently called the House's attention to instances of ministerial and parliamentary conflicts of interest,<sup>128</sup> and to the need for greater transparency and accountability in the sphere of British foreign diplomacy.<sup>129</sup>

The notion that extra-parliamentary experiences or interests had an important bearing on Members' parliamentary interventions is also evident in the number and kind of interventions Irish Members made in debates concerning British domestic matters. Indeed, there seems to have been a custom among Irish Members, and an expectation among English MPs, that the former would not participate in debates unconnected with Ireland, unless they could explicitly demonstrate an 'interest'.<sup>130</sup> One such cause was if an Irish MP had sat on the select committee of a Bill which later came before Parliament. Several Irish Members gave this by way of explanation for their speeches on such parochial matters as the Corporation of London (Bridges) Bill, the Cambridge Borough License Duties Bill and the Water Orders Confirmation Bill.<sup>131</sup> More significant to the number of speeches on non-Irish matters made by Nationalist MPs may have been the incidence of residential, educational or employment links with Britain among the Party. When P.J. Power, for instance, intervened on a debate on the treatment by the Admiralty of George Archer-Shee (the child at the centre of the 'Winslow Boy case'), he made it clear that he did so 'as an old Stonyhurst boy', the school to which Archer-Shee had gone following his expulsion

<sup>123</sup> *DNB, 1922-1930* (London, 1937), p. 549.

<sup>124</sup> Philip Snowden, *An Autobiography* (London, 1934), p. 304; *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. xviii, col. 210 (21.6.10.).

<sup>125</sup> O'Connor, *Memoirs*, pp. 45-6; John Redmond to John Dillon, 22.6.17., TCD, DP, ms 6749/655.

<sup>126</sup> *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. lxiv, col. 102 (29.6.14.); (series 5) vol. xxxii, col. 2598 (14.12.11.).

<sup>127</sup> Boland, *Irishman's Day*, p. 45.

<sup>128</sup> *Hansard, HC* (series 5), vol. 1, col. 387 (23.4.13.); MacNeill, *Seen and Heard*, p. 236, 238.

<sup>129</sup> *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. xxxii, col. 2592 (14.12.11.); (series 5) vol. xli, col. 3281 (7.8.12.); (series 5) vol. liii, col. 401 (29.5.13.); (series 5) vol. lxiv, col. 102 (29.6.14.).

<sup>130</sup> *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. xviii, col. 1717 (6.7.10.).

<sup>131</sup> *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. xxvi, col. 1613 (14.6.11.); (series 5) vol. xxviii, col. 1626 (25.7.11.); (series 5) vol. xlv, col. 402 (10.12.12.).

from the Royal Naval College at Osborne.<sup>132</sup> J.P. Boland, who had been educated at the Oratory School, Edgbaston (under Cardinal Newman) and who lived in London, acted as the Party's spokesman on Catholic educational questions in Britain. Several Irish Members who were involved in pan-British organisations representing particular interests also intervened in debates. For example, Michael Joyce, who was twice president of the United Kingdom Pilots' Federation and a member of the Marine Advisory Committee to the Board of Trade, spoke in the House on maritime matters and was nicknamed 'the pilot of the House'.<sup>133</sup> The barrister and English resident, 'Long John' O'Connor, used his background at the English bar to comment on the government's proposed reform of the higher courts in 1910,<sup>134</sup> and his experience of handling cases under the Workmen's Compensation Act informed his criticism of the Act in Parliament.<sup>135</sup> During the consideration of the National Insurance Bill, Dr John Esmonde spoke frequently in the interests of the medical profession, drawing on his experience as a doctor in the North of England.<sup>136</sup> Arthur Lynch was also a doctor (he had a practice in North London),<sup>137</sup> and he spoke in the interests of the profession during the passage of the National Insurance Bill,<sup>138</sup> and the National Insurance Act (1911) Amendment Bill of 1913.<sup>139</sup> Lynch also used his scientific background to contribute to debates on public health, such as the debate on the Dogs Bill of 1914 which discussed the ethics of vivisection.<sup>140</sup> Lynch's other interest, writing, also led him to occasionally intervene in debate. 'Being an author myself', he told the House in 1911, he supported the principle of a Copyright Bill, and in 1913, expressed conditional support for the establishment of a national theatre.<sup>141</sup> T.P. O'Connor's career as a writer and journalist also occasionally involved him in debate. In 1912, during the discussion of the Employment of Children Bill he claimed that he did not regard the employment of minors in selling newspapers as the same as other forms of child labour, while, in 1914,

<sup>132</sup> *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. xxiii, col. 2483 (6.4.11.); Rodney Bennett, *The Archer-Shees against the Admiralty* (London, 1973), p.163.

<sup>133</sup> Newspaper cutting from the *Irish Times*, undated, Joyce Papers, INAD, Lim 23/20/30; Donnelly, 'Michael Joyce', p. 44. See, *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. xlv, cols. 753-6 (22.11.12.); (series 5) vol. xxxviii, cols. 1776-7 (12.5.12.); (series 5) vol. lv, cols. 1296-7 (16.7.13.). Joyce was ship-wrecked three times during his career. JP, INAD, Lim 23/20/18.

<sup>134</sup> *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. xvi, col. 2045 (19.4.10.); (series 5) vol. xviii (5.7.10.).

<sup>135</sup> *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. lxii, col. 2085 (20.5.14.).

<sup>136</sup> *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. xxv, cols. 717-18 (4.5.11.); (series 5) vol. xxvi, col. 315 (24.5.11.); (series 5) vol. xxix, col. 268 (1.8.11.); (series 5) vol. xxix, col. 511 (2.8.11.).

<sup>137</sup> *Dictionary of National Biography, 1931-1940* (London, 1949), p. 552.

<sup>138</sup> *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. xxvii, col. 1256 (5.7.11.); (series 5) vol. xxvii, col. 412 (12.7.11.).

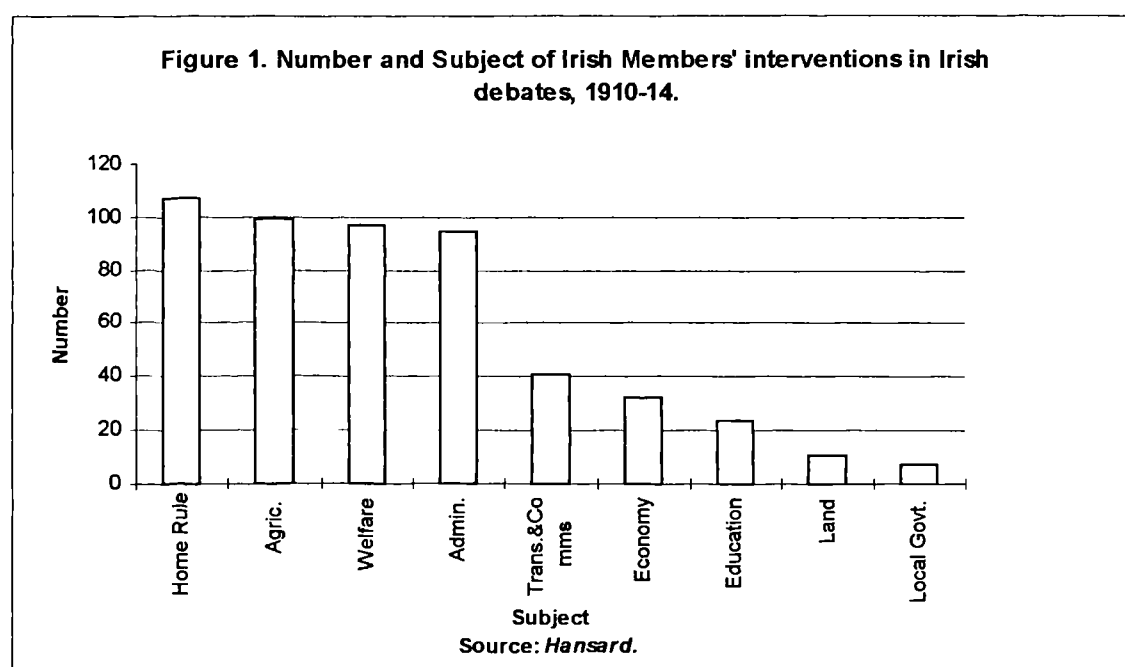
<sup>139</sup> *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. lvi, col. 1383 (5.8.13.).

<sup>140</sup> *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. lx, cols. 534-42 (17.4.14.). Also see *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. xxxix, col. 180 (5.6.12.); (series 5) vol. xlvii, col. 2163 (4.2.13.).

<sup>141</sup> *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. xxiii, cols. 2626-8 (7.4.11.); (series 5) vol. l, col. 470 (23.4.13.).

O'Connor urged the government to involve more professional journalists in the work of war censorship.<sup>142</sup>

Although the intervention of Nationalist MPs in debates concerning Ireland was much more frequent (64.97 per cent of Irish speeches concerned Ireland and 62 MPs intervened at least once on an Irish matter between 1910 and 1914), figure 1 suggests that although the single greatest number of Nationalist interventions concerned some aspect of Home Rule, only a minority of MPs intervened in the Home Rule debates, and that the great majority of Irish interventions concerned matters which were often only 'political' in a tangential sense.



However, unlike the parliamentary questions tabled by Irish Members, very few Irish interventions in debate concerned constituency matters. Granted, the majority of Irish MPs between 1910-14 did make at least one speech concerning their constituency, but only approximately 11.79 per cent of Irish speeches during the period were constituency related.

Instead (as with the discussion of British and imperial matters in the House of Commons), Irish backbenchers seem to have intervened in those debates in which they were in some way 'qualified' to do so. Thus, when Tom Lundon spoke on the Weekly Rest

<sup>142</sup> *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. xxxvi, cols. 810-11 (29.3.12.); (series 5) vol. lxv, col. 2231 (8.8.14.); (series 5) vol. lxvi, col. 739 (10.9.14.).



Day Bill, which would have had the consequence of preventing the playing of organized sport on Sundays, he explained that he had been asked to intervene by the GAA with whom he had been associated 'from infancy'.<sup>143</sup> Landon was also chairman of one of the sections of the divided Land and Labour Association (which under the 1911 National Insurance Act had formed an approved society), and it was with regard to this that he spoke in 1913 concerning the application of National Health Insurance to Ireland.<sup>144</sup> Like Landon, James Lardner was a senior member of an approved society, in his case the Irish National Foresters, and during the discussion of the Bill urged that medical benefit be extended to Ireland.<sup>145</sup> John Cullinan was a chairman of a pension committee and chairman of the All-Ireland Pension Committee. He drew on his experience to criticize the government's policy concerning 'collateral testimony' as against census evidence.<sup>146</sup> Similarly, P.J. Power drew on his experience as chairman of the Waterford Board of Guardians in considering the National Insurance Bill in November 1911.<sup>147</sup>

A further group of members intervened on behalf of specific occupational groups. William Field, who was a butcher and chairman of the Irish Cattle Traders' and Stockowners' Association,<sup>148</sup> and Patrick Crumley, who was a member of the Irish Pig Dealers' Association, both spoke on livestock issues in the House, and were particularly active in defending these interests during the foot and mouth outbreaks in Ireland between 1912-14. Other, usually reticent, backbenchers were also prompted to speak by the foot and mouth epidemic. Peter Ffrench, who was an 'extensive farmer' spoke on behalf of 'my brother farmers',<sup>149</sup> while F.E. Meehan, who was a merchant in Manorhamilton, emphasized that the foot and mouth outbreak affected not only farmers, but shopkeepers too.<sup>150</sup>

Other Nationalist MPs also drew on their personal (often formative experiences) when intervening in debates on British and Irish matters. Matt Keating spoke on the committee stage of the Minimum Wage Bill in March 1912, because as he put it 'I still recall my early days working as a miner in South Wales'.<sup>151</sup> In seconding a motion calling for Irish to

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<sup>143</sup> *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. xlix, col. 316 (7.2.13.).

<sup>144</sup> *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. xlix, col. 316 (7.2.13.); *FJ*, 30.6.11., 6-7.

<sup>145</sup> *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. xxxi, col. 444 (15.11.11.).

<sup>146</sup> *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. xv, cols. 663-70 (18.3.10.).

<sup>147</sup> *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. xx, col. 441 (15.11.11.).

<sup>148</sup> *FJ*, 9.1.11, 8; 'M.A.' and Reid, *Field*, p. 30.

<sup>149</sup> Bew, *Ideology*, p. 14.

<sup>150</sup> *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. xlviii, cols. 390-2 (8.2.13.).

<sup>151</sup> *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. xxxv, col. 2339 (22.3.12.); Joseph Keating, *My Struggle for Life* (London, 1916), p. 45, 87.

have parity with other 'foreign' languages in terms of educational endowments at secondary school level, Edward Kelly confessed that 'but for these exhibitions I would not have been able to obtain a university education.'<sup>152</sup> During the Home Rule debates, both Stephen Gwynn and J.G.S. MacNeill delivered speeches on the place of Trinity College, Dublin, within a self-governing Ireland. MacNeill had spent a year studying at TCD and his father and grandfathers had all studied there, while Gwynn's father was Regius Professor of Divinity at TCD until 1917.<sup>153</sup> MacNeill also contributed towards the debates on the Established Church (Wales) Bill; admitting that as the son of a Church of Ireland clergymen he had been strongly opposed to the dis-establishment of the Church of Ireland in 1869, but had subsequently come to see its advantages.<sup>154</sup> Arthur Lynch may also have been drawing on his own experiences of incarceration (for his part in the Boer War) when he highlighted poor prison conditions.<sup>155</sup> Certainly, Lynch's memories of flogging in his native Australia led to his strong opposition to that punishment during the passage of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill.<sup>156</sup>

Clearly, Irish Members felt the need to justify their interventions. The reason for this was closely bound up with the position of the Party after 1906. Prior to this, the reunited Party had pursued a vigorous policy of parliamentary obstruction,<sup>157</sup> rediscovering their 'talent' (as Arthur Balfour put it) 'for turning everything into an Irish debate'.<sup>158</sup> However, this attitude towards debate changed when a sympathetic Liberal government came into power. As Stephen Gwynn remembered:

When a party is in opposition, all its Members can talk, and are encouraged to talk, to the utmost; little harm can be done to one's own side by what is said in criticism of measures proposed. Support and exposition is a much more ticklish business...[in such changed circumstances] the best service that a Member can render to government is to say nothing, but vote.<sup>159</sup>

It seems likely, therefore, that because backbench speech-making was now largely superfluous, Irish Members felt compelled to state their cause for speaking. This seems

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<sup>152</sup> *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. xvi, col. 2242 (20.4.10.).

<sup>153</sup> *FJ*, 30.12.12., 135, 150; *DNB, 1912-1921* (London, 1927), p. 235.

<sup>154</sup> *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. xlvii, cols. 2306-7 (5.2.13.); (series 5) vol. lv, cols. 319-22 (8.7.13.).

<sup>155</sup> *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. xxxiv, col. 1317 (27.2.12.).

<sup>156</sup> *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. xliii, cols. 764-5 (1.11.12.).

<sup>157</sup> Boland, *Irishman's Day*, p. 17.

<sup>158</sup> Lady Randolph Churchill, *The Reminiscences of Lady Randolph Churchill* (London, 1908), p.

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<sup>159</sup> Gwynn, *Last Years*, pp. 57-8; Boland, *Irishman's Day*, p. 25.

even more likely when the parliamentary strategy which the Irish Party pursued in the years 1911-14 is considered.

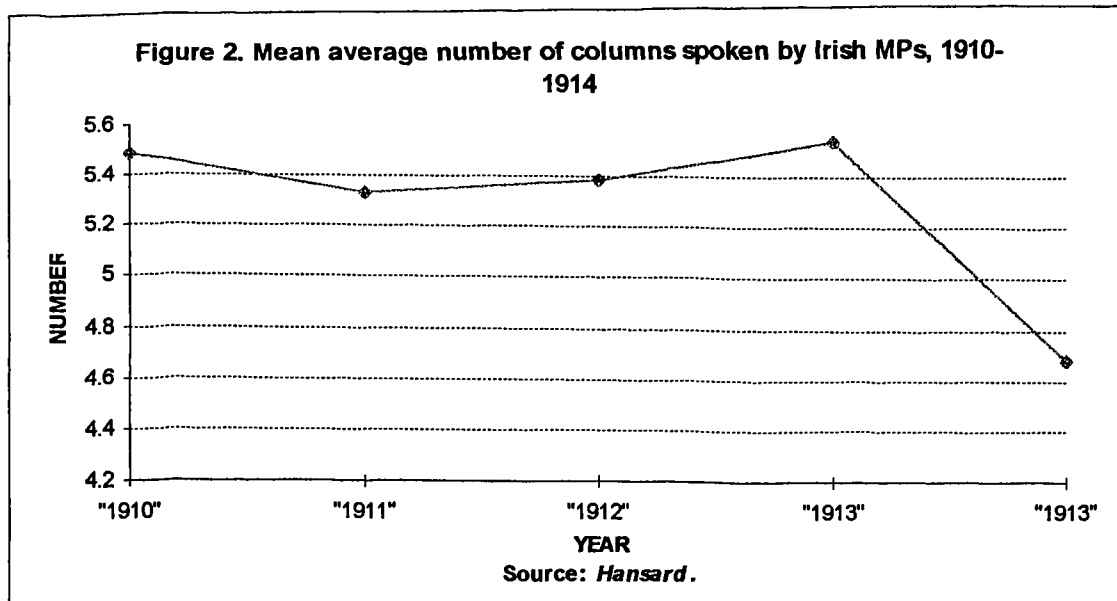
The determination of which, when and how often Irish Members intervened in debate had long been the concern of the Party. According to John Redmond, when the Party periodically met during the session, the question of forthcoming major debates was discussed, and Members were 'unanimously' selected to speak on behalf of their colleagues.<sup>160</sup> A list would then be drawn up and given to the Speaker. On two occasions during 1911, the ranch war veteran, Larry Ginnell, forcefully criticized Speaker Lowther for colluding with the whips (of all parties) in stifling free debate through the so-called 'list system'. Although controversial, he received considerable support from the Radical benches. Privately, several members of the Party sympathized with his complaint.<sup>161</sup>

But although Ginnell and other MPs protested bitterly about the control exercised by the party whips through the list system, the management of debate affected by the Irish Party in the crucial Home Rule sessions of 1912 and 1913 was much more extensive and aggressive. This is not immediately apparent from the average number of columns spoken in debate by Irish Members. As can be seen in figure 2, the average number of columns spoken fluctuated between five and six columns per MP between 1910 and 1913, before dropping below five columns during 1914.

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<sup>160</sup> *FJ*, 21.2.11., 7. Several letters from J.G.S. MacNeill asking for a 'look in' on various debates suggest, however, that the leadership had the principal role in selecting speakers. J.G.S. MacNeill to John Redmond, 5.3.08., NLI, RP, ms 15,205 [1]; MacNeill to Redmond, undated, ms 15,205 [1].

<sup>161</sup> *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. xxi, cols. 7-12 (31.1.11.); (series 5) vol. xxi, cols. 1435-9 (17.2.11.); Ullswater, *Speaker's Commentaries*, vol. i, pp. 98-9; Wedgewood, *Memoirs*, p. 74-5; *Hansard, HC*, 20.2.11., 1550-70; MacDonagh, *Pageant*, vol. ii, p. 251; *FJ*, 1.2.11., 6; Lynch, *Life Story*, p. 262.



However, when compared to the figures for the other parties in Parliament, a difference is immediately evident. Despite the efforts of the Unionist press to demonstrate otherwise,<sup>162</sup> according to the *Parliamentary Gazette*, during the 1912 session (which ended in March 1913), Irish MPs contributed the equivalent of an average of eight columns to debate,<sup>163</sup> whereas Unionist MPs averaged 36 columns, Liberal MPs 27, Labour MPs 23 and AFIL MPs 30.<sup>164</sup> The following session, Nationalist MPs spoke on average four columns, whereas Liberal, Unionist and O'Brienite MPs all spoke 17, while Labour Members spoke on average 14.<sup>165</sup>

Even allowing for some margin of error in the calculation of these averages, the discrepancy between the Irish Party's figure and those of all the other parliamentary groupings is considerable. The explanation for this 'epidemic of silence', as it was described by one Unionist MP, was that it was the result of 'the settled policy laid down at the beginning of the [1912] session [by the Irish Party] of doing nothing to help the Tory game of obstructing the [Home Rule] Bill'.<sup>166</sup> As 'Toby MP' explained (in his truncated style)

<sup>162</sup> *FJ*, 22.8.12., 6.

<sup>163</sup> It will be noted that this figure differs from that given in fig. 1 of six columns. The discrepancy is accounted for by reference to different methods of calculation. The higher figure was probably arrived at by counting columns and half-columns rather than lines, whereas the lower figure was produced by counting each separate line. Using this data, the numbers of columns was calculated by taking an average of 62 lines per column.

<sup>164</sup> *Parliamentary Gazette*, (April, 1913), p. 47.

<sup>165</sup> *FJ*, 22.10.13., 9.

<sup>166</sup> *FJ*, 18.4.13., 6. *Hansard*, HC (series 5) col. xlv, col. 804 (12.12.12.).

As a rule the harp that once though Tara's halls the soul of music shed now hangs as mute on Westminster's walls as if that soul were dead. Of course it isn't. Current circumstances arise out of shrewd appreciation of opportunity. Home Rule Bill must be got through all its stages in order to be sent on to the Lords as what Lord Halsbury would call "a sort of" Christmas card. Time is short; every quarter of an hour precious. If an Irish Member uses one or more for the delivery of a speech he increases pressure and imperils passage of Bill.<sup>167</sup>

Lucy accepted that 'in [the] matter of ruthless discipline it [the Party] has never been excelled.' However, for its critics, the Party's silence simply confirmed their belief that its members were 'hopelessly invertebrate and pusillanimous...automatons'.<sup>168</sup> But, arguably, much more important for the Party was what effect this collective vow of silence had on the Party's profile in Ireland.

There was a belief among a section of the Edwardian political and journalistic establishment that because of the advances (both in terms of speed and cost) in electric telegraphy during the latter half of the nineteenth century, many more provincial newspaper readers could read the parliamentary debates, and that this, in turn, was an important stimulus to parliamentary action on the part of backbench MPs.<sup>169</sup> Many Irish Members probably shared this belief; J.P. Boland, for instance, observed that 'you have constituents, and they like to know from time to time whether your voice is ever heard at all in the Commons.'<sup>170</sup> Indeed, one veteran of the press gallery described an anonymous Irish MP as declaring "'I absolutely disregard all press criticism, except those of my own local paper *The Skibbereen Eagle*'".<sup>171</sup>

Yet, it is necessary to appreciate that the *Skibbereen Eagle* (like almost every provincial Irish paper) would not have had its own parliamentary correspondent. By c.1910 three nationalist newspapers (the *Freeman's Journal*, the *Irish Independent* and the *Cork Examiner*),<sup>172</sup> maintained parliamentary correspondents in London. Of course, by 1910 (and, indeed, long before that date) provincial papers had the opportunity to receive parliamentary reports from news agencies in a format which suited their print-run and readership.<sup>173</sup> However, the evidence would suggest that in the period under consideration, most newspapers did not avail themselves of this service.

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<sup>167</sup> *Punch*, 27.11.12., 438.

<sup>168</sup> Sheehan, *Parnell*, p. 143.

<sup>169</sup> Farquharson, *Parliament*, p. 196; Sir Henry Lucy, *Later Peeps at Parliament* (London, 1906), pp. 442-3; Hughes, *Press, Platform and Parliament*, p. 97; MacDonagh, *Pageant*, vol. ii, p. 87.

<sup>170</sup> Boland, *Irishman's Day*, p. 89.

<sup>171</sup> Michael MacDonagh, *The Reporter's Gallery* (London, 1913), pp. 68-9.

<sup>172</sup> Boland, *Irishman's Day*, p. 82.

<sup>173</sup> A.J. Lee, *The Origin of the Popular Press, 1955-1914* (London, 1976), p.123.

Obviously, the three daily newspapers which had dedicated parliamentary correspondents (and so invested the most in parliamentary reportage), contained the most parliamentary news.<sup>174</sup> In the week ending June 22, 1912, the *Freeman's* allocated considerable space (32.5 columns) to its coverage of Parliament, in addition to which it carried a daily parliamentary sketch (which supplemented its 'London Letter'). The investment of the *Cork Examiner* (pre-eminent among southern newspapers) in its coverage of Parliament was also evident within its pages. Taking the week ending June 22 again, it devoted 36 columns to the proceedings of the House of Commons, in addition to its daily 'London Letter'. The *Irish Independent*, by contrast, adhered to a policy of greater brevity, though it still carried a considerable amount of parliamentary news. In the week ending June 22, it devoted 17.5 columns to reporting the proceedings of Parliament, along with its daily 'London Letter'.

Many parliamentarians clearly believed that the public read these long, dense reports. John Cullinan, for example, remarked in December 1912 that 'from the splendid reports in the *Freeman's Journal* [they could see] that the whole of the argument in the House of Commons was with the supporters of Home Rule.'<sup>175</sup> In reality, however, it seems unlikely that the majority of the *Freeman's* readers would have read its parliamentary reports in their entirety. As Frank McDermott observed (when rebuking the *Freeman's* London correspondent for criticising a speech of his relative, Lord Killanin) 'I am not at all afraid of anyone who has read the speech agreeing with your London correspondent, but such persons must be comparatively few, whereas everyone of your readers probably peruses the *Freeman's* London Letter'.<sup>176</sup> The importance of such short, often humorous reports, is given particular weight when the parliamentary coverage of provincial newspapers is considered.

For examination of the amount of space allocated by the provincial press to reporting Parliament reveals a very different picture to that given by the Dublin newspapers. Of 14 titles examined for the week ending June 22, 1912, eight had no parliamentary coverage of any kind,<sup>177</sup> four had 'London Letters' and just two had some

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<sup>174</sup> In the following analysis the amount of space each paper allotted to its parliamentary reporting is given in columns.

<sup>175</sup> *FJ*, 7.12.12., 9.

<sup>176</sup> *FJ*, 4.2.13., 6. Such columns invariably affected a style which implied that they were 'in constant and confidential communication with the leading statesman'. See, MacDonagh, *Book of Parliament*, p. 333.

<sup>177</sup> These were, *Clare Champion*, *Kilkenny Journal*, *Limerick Leader*, *Longford Leader*, *Mayo News*, *Meath Chronicle*, *Roscommon Journal*, and *Sligo Champion*.

form of parliamentary report. In the case of the 'London Letters', these included the *Anglo-Celt's* 'Across from London', and those written by Irish MPs, such as J.P. Hayden's 'Ireland at Westminster' column for his *Westmeath Examiner*, or William O'Malley's weekly letter for the *Connacht Tribune*. These mainly related to parliamentary affairs, though some (like the *Leitrim Observer's* letter) mostly consisted of amusing anecdotes about London social life. Of the two papers which reported the proceedings of the House of Commons, the *Kerry People* devoted approximately two and a half columns to a summary of the debate on the committee stage of the Home Rule Bill, while the *Wicklow People* reported verbatim John Redmond's speech of the previous week during the same debate.<sup>178</sup>

Obviously, this survey is hardly exhaustive. Moreover, some of the newspapers mentioned here carried on a more erratic coverage than is evident from the study of a single week. The *Longford Leader*, for instance, had an irregular column by its editor and one of the Members for Longford, J.P. Farrell.<sup>179</sup> The same paper also occasionally lifted parliamentary reports from the *Freeman's*.<sup>180</sup> Other papers used their editorials to comment on the proceedings of Parliament.<sup>181</sup> But, that said, it seems that before the First World War, the Irish provincial press devoted very little regular space to reporting the events of the House of Commons *per se*. This is in contrast to the picture of the Irish provincial press in the 1870s, presented by Marie Louise Legg, when 'Even in smaller papers, the space devoted to reporting parliamentary debates was enormous'.<sup>182</sup> However, it is consistent with the 'conspicuous decline...in parliamentary reporting' which can be generally observed in the British press during the final years of the nineteenth century.<sup>183</sup>

The fact that in June 1912 the provincial press devoted little space to the proceedings of Parliament should not necessarily be taken as indicating a lack of interest in all aspect of Parliament's proceedings. Although the Home Rule Bill was passing through its committee stage in the House of Commons in the week ending June 22, 1912, owing to its policy of silence, only two Irish Members actually spoke, namely John Redmond and Sam Young. Young spoke in Parliament very rarely, but his intervention (as a Protestant Home Ruler) was an important one, and it was reported not only in the *Freeman's*, but in at least one

<sup>178</sup> *Kerry People*, 22.6.12., 8, 10; *Wicklow People*, 22.6.12., 5.

<sup>179</sup> *Longford Leader*, 18.2.11., 1; 19.10.12., 6.

<sup>180</sup> *Longford Leader*, 15.6.12., 8.

<sup>181</sup> See, for example, *Kilkenny Journal*, 22.6.12., 5; *Mayo News*, 22.6.12., 4.

<sup>182</sup> Marie Louise Legg, *Newspapers and Nationalism The Irish Provincial Press, 1850- 1892* (Dublin, 1999), pp. 74-5.

<sup>183</sup> Lucy Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers* (Oxford, 1985), p. 246. Also see Lee, *Popular Press*, p. 123.

paper in his constituency.<sup>184</sup> This may suggest that with regard to backbench speeches, provincial papers were only interested if they were of local interest, i.e. if they were made by a local MP or concerned matters effecting the constituency.

Space does not permit a more extensive discussion of this point, but the following very limited survey is suggestive. In the week of December 9-13, 1912, 15 Irish Members spoke in Parliament. Eight Members received no mention in the papers surveyed. Doubtless, in some cases, this was because some of these speeches were extremely brief. Neither the *Leinster Leader* nor *Anglo-Celt*, respectively, took any notice of the short speeches (of less than ten lines) contributed by Denis Kilbride and J.C.R. Lardner to the debate on the foot and mouth outbreak held on December 9. Similarly, Tom O'Donnell's short interjection three days later during the committee stage of the Home Rule Bill was passed over in silence by the *Kerryman*. Of course, in some instances, the relationship between Members and sections of their local press may have weighed as heavily with editors as whether the speech was of local interest. Neither of the speeches made by Patrick White or David Sheehy, on the question of the foot and mouth outbreak, for instance, were reported in the *Meath Chronicle*. In fact, the paper implicitly criticized both county Members for being ineffective;<sup>185</sup> a stance broadly consistent with the coolness of its attitude towards the Party in general.<sup>186</sup> Similarly, the estrangement between William Doris, MP for West Mayo, and his brother, who was editor of the *Mayo News*, may account for why Doris' speech on December 10 went unreported.<sup>187</sup> Equally, however, the fact that it related to the Water Orders Confirmation Bill (the committee on which Doris had sat), meant that it had no relevance to Mayo, or Ireland. Another such example is that of Arthur Lynch, whose speech on the Criminal Law Amendment Bill went unreported by the *Clare Champion* (with whom he had an uneasy relationship).<sup>188</sup>

However, this could not be said of Sir Walter Nugent's speech during the debate of December 10, on the foot and mouth outbreak. Although the *Westmeath Examiner* reported that Nugent had had an interview with T.W.Russell and that he had secured a

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<sup>184</sup> *A-C*, 22.6.12., 10.

<sup>185</sup> *Meath Chronicle*, 14.12.12., 5. However, the fact that the *Meath Herald* also did not cover these speeches may suggest that little interest was taken in the county Members' speeches in Parliament. See, *Meath Herald*, 14.12.12.

<sup>186</sup> *Meath Chronicle*, 6.1.12., 3.

<sup>187</sup> The paper did, though, give a brief report on the passage of the Home Rule through its committee stage. *Mayo News*, 14.12.12., 4.

<sup>188</sup> Lynch contributed to many debates which did not relate to Clare or Ireland and were not reported in the Clare press. In late February 1912, for example, he raised the case of a man who, following imprisonment, had gone mad a short time later, and in June, he spoke in a debate about vaccination methods. Neither speech was reported in the *Clare Champion*.



partial relaxation of restrictions on the movement of livestock in the county, no mention was made of his speech.<sup>189</sup> Nor did the *Anglo-Celt* report J.C.R. Lardner's speech during the same debate, which related to the operation of such restrictions in county Monaghan.

Of the papers which did report the speeches of local MPs, the extent of the reporting varied. In the case of the Members for Dublin county and city, the *Freeman's* effectively operated as their local paper, and given that it covered debates in depth, the speeches of Dublin Members were invariably reported in full. William's Field's speech of December 9 on the Irish cattle embargo, for example, was reported verbatim the following day,<sup>190</sup> while P.J. Brady's speech concerning the future of the RIC under Home Rule received similar coverage.<sup>191</sup> The *Dundalk Democrat* reported that Joe Nolan had pressed on the government the injustice to county Louth of the restrictions relating to the foot and mouth outbreak. However, it did not give a detailed report of his speech, perhaps because it was made the day before the paper went to press.<sup>192</sup> That said, the *Frontier Sentinel* (whose editorial offices were in Newry, County Down) of December 14 reported the speeches made during the debate of Decembers 13, including that of the Member for South Down, Jerry MacVeagh.<sup>193</sup> The *Dungannon News* of December 12 reported the brief intervention of the MP for Mid Tyrone, W.A. Redmond, in the discussion on December 9 of the foot and mouth outbreak.<sup>194</sup> The *Longford Leader* gave a full report of J.P. Farrell's short speech during a debate on the Home Rule Bill in its issue of the following Saturday.<sup>195</sup>

From this analysis, certain features of provincial parliamentary press coverage are evident. In the first place, (except in Dublin) a pre-condition of being reported was that the paper was nationalist in sentiment. Not surprisingly, the length and importance of the speech also played a role in determining the level of its provincial coverage. Moreover, local issues were much more likely to be reported than speeches relating to a Members' wider political interests (unless the MP happened also to be editor of the paper). Even so, some speeches on Irish or constituency matters were simply referred to in passing or sometimes not reported at all. This may have reflected the belief that since the *Freeman's Journal* was almost certain to report the speech anyway, it was not essential that a local paper should also do so. If so, this may have been the belief of Members of Parliament as well, although

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<sup>189</sup> *Westmeath Examiner*, 14.12.12., 5.

<sup>190</sup> *FJ*, 10.12.12., 7.

<sup>191</sup> *FJ*, 11.12.12., 8.

<sup>192</sup> *Dundalk Democrat*, 14.12.12., 4.

<sup>193</sup> *Frontier Sentinel*, 14.12.12., 7.

<sup>194</sup> *Dungannon News*, 12.12.12., 8.

<sup>195</sup> *Longford Leader*, 14.12.12., 1.

J.P. Boland's 'chats' with the lobby correspondent of the *Cork Examiner* ('which circulated throughout Kerry'), and the fact that he definitely supplied the Kerry press with details of his parliamentary questions for publication, suggests that the reporting of speeches may also have reflected individual Members' own initiative.<sup>196</sup> Whatever the case, it seems clear that in the years immediately before the First World War it was comparatively rare for provincial newspapers to single out backbench speeches for praise or notice.

Speaking in October 1914, John Redmond acknowledged public comment concerning the recent conspicuous silence of the Party in Parliament: 'I dare say many of you, in the last two or three years, have been surprised at the small part which the Irish Party have taken in debate... We have been the most silent party there.'<sup>197</sup> Redmond did not apologize for this strategy; indeed, he pointed to the sessional division records as proof that the Party was doing its job. This was wholly consistent with the parliamentary party's longstanding reputation for stern, 'machine'-like, discipline when at Westminster.<sup>198</sup> Depending on their outlook, contemporaries attributed this variously to the dictatorship of the Party's vanguard or the pusillanimity of its rank and file. Yet whether achieved through coercion or timidity, the management of the Party was not accomplished effortlessly. Indeed, despite the much trumpeted dedication of Irish Nationalists to the cause of Home Rule, ensuring that the majority of MPs were actually on hand to 'sit, act and vote' was by no means an easy task (the figures between 1900 and 1910, for instance, fluctuated considerably from year to year).<sup>199</sup> For parliamentary service had to be reconciled with the personal and professional commitments of backbench Members. The day-to-day responsibility of making sure that the rank and file always gave due attention to their parliamentary duties fell to the Party's whips.<sup>200</sup>

Being an Irish whip could be an onerous task. They were charged with the responsibility of securing seats for the Party leadership at full-dress debates,<sup>201</sup> organising the order of Nationalist speakers and ensuring that they spoke,<sup>202</sup> supervising the printing

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<sup>196</sup> Boland, *Irishman's Day*, p. 82, 89. For instance, see *Kerryman*, 4.3.11., 3. That MPs provided their local papers with copies of their speeches was apparently a common practice in Britain. See, Farquharson, *House of Commons*, p. 61.

<sup>197</sup> *FJ*, 26.10.14., 9.

<sup>198</sup> MacDonagh, *O'Brien*, p. 232.

<sup>199</sup> Jackson, *Unionist Party*, p. 92.

<sup>200</sup> MacDonagh, *Book of Parliament*, p. 367.

<sup>201</sup> Bodkin, *Recollections*, p. 199.

<sup>202</sup> Pease, *Elections*, p. 250.

and issuing of the whips,<sup>203</sup> recording daily attendance,<sup>204</sup> keeping tabs on the whereabouts of 'the boys' in the course of each sitting,<sup>205</sup> and directing their Members into the appropriate lobby during divisions.<sup>206</sup> For this, as MacDonagh described, they required 'good temper, accessibility, persuasive manners, tact, and prudence'.<sup>207</sup> A.J.C. Donelan was chief whip; popular with his colleagues, the evidence suggests that like his predecessor, Sir Thomas Esmonde, he was more of a 'social ornament' than a party manager. Much of such day-to-day business was instead conducted by Pat O'Brien, who was accused sometimes of 'whipping with scorpions'.<sup>208</sup> However, such qualities were not always enough. As early as the 1880s, frustration was vented at the failure of some members to attend Parliament regularly.<sup>209</sup> And such problems continued. In 1897, Donelan complained to John Dillon about those Irish Members in receipt of the Party stipend whose corresponding attendance was less than satisfactory.<sup>210</sup>

Various tactics were used to bring pressure to bear on those Members who attended irregularly. Perhaps the most discrete method was for the Party leadership to privately write to those concerned. In 1902, for instance, Redmond wrote to the solicitor, J.J. O'Shee, concerning his poor attendance record.<sup>211</sup> O'Shee, though regretting his absence, replied that professional commitments in Waterford prevented him from giving closer attendance at Westminster.<sup>212</sup> A more aggressive sanction was to make payment of the stipend conditional on attendance. Critics of the Party claimed that payment was linked to obedience,<sup>213</sup> though Conor Cruise O'Brien has cast doubt on this claim.<sup>214</sup> However, if the Party did not use the allowance to punish those who failed to respond to whips, it did penalize them. As of March 1907, MPs who did not attend the House had the equivalent monetary amount deducted from their allowance.<sup>215</sup>

But probably the most common and effective form of exerting pressure on MPs, at least in the years after 1900, was through the publication in the national press of sessional

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<sup>203</sup> A.J.C. Donelan to John Dillon, 16.3.96., DP, TCD, ms 6753/313.

<sup>204</sup> Boland, *Irishman's Day*, p. 22.

<sup>205</sup> MacDonagh, *Pageant*, vol. i, p. 250.

<sup>206</sup> Bodkin, *Recollections*, p. 193; Sir Benjamin Stone, *Pictures: Records of National Life and History* (London, 1906), p. 10; Gwynn, 'Long John', p. 87.

<sup>207</sup> MacDonagh, *Pageant*, vol. ii, p. 120.

<sup>208</sup> *CT*, 30.11.12., 4.

<sup>209</sup> O'Day, 'Irish Parliamentary Party', p. 343.

<sup>210</sup> A.J.C. Donelan to John Dillon, 8.2.97., TCD, DP, ms 6753/316; A.J.C. Donelan to John Dillon, [1897?], TCD, DP, ms 6753/618.

<sup>211</sup> John Redmond to J.J. O'Shee, 16.4.02., NLI, RP, ms 15,219 [7].

<sup>212</sup> J.J. O'Shee to John Redmond, 22.4.02., NLI, RP, ms 15, 219 [7].

<sup>213</sup> Lyons, *Parliamentary Party*, p. 202.

<sup>214</sup> O'Brien, *Parnell*, p. 265.

<sup>215</sup> For instance, see Treasurers IPP to Tom O'Donnell, 17.7.08., NLI, ODP, ms 15,456 [8].

division lists which showed how many divisions Members had voted in.<sup>216</sup> As a settled practice the publication of divisional lists does not seem to have been customary before 1900,<sup>217</sup> but with the reunification of the Party a stronger line with regard to voting seems to have been adopted.<sup>218</sup> Indeed, at the general election of 1900, the newly formed National Directory advised those constituencies in which the UIL had yet to establish itself (and thus where a convention was impractical), to carefully examine 'the record of the Member's attendance in Parliament...before deciding if he is worthy of the renewal of the people's trust.'<sup>219</sup>

Although technically a crude form of measuring attendance (and one occasionally resented by MPs),<sup>220</sup> such lists were believed by the Party to provide a very simple 'rule of thumb' by which, according to one junior whip: '[t]he natural desire of the Irish people to know from day to day how their representatives were attending to their parliamentary duties' could be satisfied.<sup>221</sup> That this was believed by others beyond the whips office, is evidenced by various statements made during the January 1910 general election. On December 3, 1909, the Irish press published a full record of how Members had voted during the previous session,<sup>222</sup> and those Members who had been assiduous in their voting duly sought to capitalize on their records. W.D. Power, in a letter to the *Independent*, for instance, brought the attention of its readers to the services of the West Limerick MP, P.J. O'Shaughnessy: 'The record of the present parliamentary representative...is very good. Nothing can be more satisfactory than his attendance and voting as a member of the Irish Party. The official list shows that he takes 20th place.'<sup>223</sup> In fact, approximately 15 MPs drew, or had others draw, attention to their voting records in the course of the campaign.<sup>224</sup> Conversely, some candidates sought to criticize their opponents on their poor showing. Of course, elections were not won or lost because of individual or even sessional voting

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<sup>216</sup> This practice was not unknown before 1900, but it was not regular. O'Brien, *Parnell*, p. 264.

<sup>217</sup> A.J.C. Donelan and John Dillon corresponded on the matter in 1896; Donelan explaining that while desirable, no official records of voting were kept by the Party, because it was too time-consuming. Four years later, Jerry MacVeagh suggested to Dillon that a table of attendance should be produced to identify those Members most frequently absent. By way of suggestion he mentioned the names of 28 members of the Party whose records he felt would show unacceptable levels of absenteeism. A.J.C. Donelan to John Dillon, 25.10.96., TCD, DP, ms 6753/312; Jerry MacVeagh to John Dillon, 23.4.00., TCD, DP, ms 6757/1179.

<sup>218</sup> Lyons, *Parliamentary Party*, p. 208

<sup>219</sup> *FJ*, 20.9.00., 4.

<sup>220</sup> *FJ*, 29.7.12., 6; *CT*, 11.1.13., 4. *FJ*, 3.6.14., 6.

<sup>221</sup> Boland, *Irishman's Day*, p. 21.

<sup>222</sup> *II*, 3.12.09., 7.

<sup>223</sup> *II*, 27.12.09., 3.

<sup>224</sup> Also see *Western People*, 18.12.09., 4. This feature of electoral politics was also evident at the 1906 General Election. For instance, see the statement of Kendal O'Brien at the Mid Tipperary convention. *FJ*, 29.12.05, 5.

figures, but this evidence does suggest that at the very least, MPs attached some importance to these records.

Clearly, the degree of importance attached by contemporaries to voting and attendance depended on 'the exigencies of the moment'. At the general election the following December, much less was made of the matter. But in the ensuing four years it assumed increasing importance, commensurate with the relevance to Ireland of the legislation before Parliament. Of particular interest here is the strategy that Redmond- via the Party whips- adopted between 1911 and 1914 to ensure Members attended at Westminster. For, in a real tactical departure, the Party resorted not only to the standard issuing of whips and the publication of sessional figures, but to making attendance a public matter and (to borrow more recent jargon) to 'naming and shaming' absent Members. This was affected through the *Freeman's* London correspondent, whose column was used by the whips to publicly encourage, cajole, browbeat and bully wayward Members.<sup>225</sup> For instance, in March 1911, he wrote

It is earnestly hoped that there will not be a single avoidable absentee from the divisions on the Parliament Bill this week. Very exceptional importance is attached by the Chairman of the Irish Party, to the presence of every Member from Monday onward. There will be divisions of the utmost importance on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday and any member who fails to attend them, without adequate reason, will be incurring a very heavy responsibility. The whips will publish an analysed list of the attendance from day to day henceforward on the Parliament Bill.<sup>226</sup>

During the latter part of 1911 the commentary of the *Freeman's* correspondent's waned.<sup>227</sup> However, it returned with a vengeance during the following session.<sup>228</sup> Indeed, during the course of 1912, the *Freeman's* correspondent urged much greater vigilance as a consequence of Unionist efforts to defeat the government by engineering 'snap' votes.<sup>229</sup> In February, July and August, the government came perilously close to defeat. So anxious was the whips office that it began issuing daily whips. Absenteeism was punished with increasing severity. At one division, in early November, when the government's majority was 121, the London correspondent nevertheless made the point that it 'would still have

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<sup>225</sup> From 1881 until 1912, James Tuohy was the *Freeman's* parliamentary correspondent. *II*, 8.9.23., 6; *Times*, 8.9.23., 10.

<sup>226</sup> *FJ* 1.4.11., 7.

<sup>227</sup> *FJ*, 21.4.11. 4; 22.4.11., 7.

<sup>228</sup> *FJ*, 9.2.12., 6.

<sup>229</sup> *FJ*, 29.2.12., 7.

been larger had not Mr John Fitzgibbon and Mr T.F. Smyth left the House prior to the division,<sup>230</sup>

The accumulated anxiety of months finally came to a head in mid November 1912 when the Unionists did eventually defeat the government in a snap vote on the financial resolutions of the Home Rule Bill.<sup>231</sup> Although it was soon evident that the defeat would only delay the government's timetable and not result in the abandonment of the measure, the absentees felt the *Freeman's* wrath. 12 Irish Members had been absent- only three had been ill- and for the rest 'there can be no excuse, in view of the express and daily repeated warnings from the chairman and the whips of the Party'.<sup>232</sup> The following day, Redmond, in a press interview, made it clear that he too regarded the conduct of the nine men absent without leave unfavourably, adding 'I think...that the constituencies in Ireland ought to insist upon their Members, at any cost, attending here every hour during the future progress of the Bill.'<sup>233</sup>

Redmond's comments are interesting because not since the 1870s had it been customary for constituencies to individually hold their Members to account for their voting records. Moreover, during the previous twelve months, the commentary and scrutiny of the *Freeman's Journal* had had apparently little echo in Ireland. Granted, MPs wrongly classified as absent were swift to have such errors quickly corrected,<sup>234</sup> but generally, Members who were truant did not publicly account for their absences and locally, neither grass-roots nationalists nor the press sought explanations.<sup>235</sup>

However, at Redmond's behest, the constituencies of the offending Members proved willing to openly criticize their parliamentary representatives. For instance, John Fitzgibbon (perhaps the most important among those caught out), was subjected to strong criticism by his South Mayo constituents. The *Mayo News* reported that '[c]onsiderable excitement prevails in the towns and rural districts...We learn on the most reliable authority that many branches of the United Irish League in South Mayo are about to call upon Mr Fitzgibbon to resign.'<sup>236</sup> In fact, although the local UIL did not go so far, the Claremorris Guardians did 'demand' an explanation from Fitzgibbon. Similarly, the Ballinrobe Guardians were also vocal in their criticism. One member reminded those

<sup>230</sup> *FJ*, 8.11.12., 6.

<sup>231</sup> For the context to this, see Jalland, 'Home-Rule Finance', p. 248.

<sup>232</sup> The three MPs 'absent ill' were Joe Devlin, P.A. Meehan and John Roche.

<sup>233</sup> *FJ*, 13.11.12., 7.

<sup>234</sup> See, *FJ*, 17.7.12., 6; 29.7.12., 6.

<sup>235</sup> Three exceptions to this are Swift MacNeill, John Fitzgibbon and John O'Dowd. *FJ*, 5.8.12., 6; 17.7.12., 9; *Sligo Champion*, 27.4.12., 6. Despite his explanation, O'Dowd was later criticized by members of the North Kilkenny UIL executive. *Sligo Champion*, 11.5.12., 7.

<sup>236</sup> *Mayo News*, 16.11.12., 4.

present that Fitzgibbon had a record of missing important divisions, though criticism here was complicated by animosity towards him over charges that he was a landgrabber.<sup>237</sup> Fitzgibbon's response was suitably penitent, and his explanation that he had been attending to the business of the CDB in Dublin, received a sympathetic reception.<sup>238</sup> Indeed, one local paper even criticized the Claremorris Union for acting too hastily in judging him.<sup>239</sup> However, the editor of the *Roscommon Journal*, Jasper Tully, remained unsatisfied, and published an anonymous letter claiming that on the day in question Fitzgibbon had not in fact been on CDB business, but had been in his shop in Castlerea.<sup>240</sup>

Although Fitzgibbon's treatment was perhaps the most robust, other absentee Members were also treated quite roughly. 'Sharp comment', for instance, was passed on the absence of T.F. Smyth by the Leitrim County Council (which also had a poor relationship with the local MP), and a resolution was passed by the Gortagh UIL branch postponing the current collection for the IPF.<sup>241</sup> However, his local UIL executive were satisfied that his absence was unavoidable after he wrote explaining that he had been only minutes too late.<sup>242</sup> The North Mayo constituents of Fitzgibbon's neighbour, Daniel Boyle, were described as indignant and further action was threatened.<sup>243</sup> He, however, successfully defused the situation by promptly writing to the Connaught press, explaining that only adverse weather conditions between Manchester (where he lived) and London had prevented him from being in his place.<sup>244</sup> The criticism of the Meath MP, Patrick White, was more subtle. Rather than criticising White himself, a section of the Trim Guardians proposed a resolution congratulating David Sheehy for his 'close attention' to the House of Commons. This, however, was objected to by the chairman and others, and eventually an uncontentious motion was passed.<sup>245</sup> Other absentees, while not criticized, were still asked for explanations. Sir Walter Nugent received resolutions from the Athlone UDC and the Ballmahon Guardians querying his absence, both of which were satisfied by his answer that he had been absent with the permission of John Redmond.<sup>246</sup> The Dublin MPs, William Field and Joseph Nannetti, made separate explanations to the Wood Quay Ward

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<sup>237</sup> *ibid*, 23.11.12., 7.

<sup>238</sup> *Leitrim Observer*, 30.11.12., 1.

<sup>239</sup> *Connaught Telegraph*, 23.11.12., 4.

<sup>240</sup> *Roscommon Herald*, 16.11.12., 1, 5; 23.11.12., 1, 4.

<sup>241</sup> *Roscommon Herald*, 23.11.12., 5. D.P. Moran also singled Smyth out for particular censure. *Leader*, 16.11.12., 324; 23.11.12., 347.

<sup>242</sup> *Leitrim Observer*, 16.11.12., 5; 7.12.12., 5.

<sup>243</sup> *Mayo News*, 16.11.12., 4.

<sup>244</sup> *Connaught Telegraph*, 23.11.12., 5.

<sup>245</sup> *Meath Chronicle*, 30.11.12., 7.

<sup>246</sup> *Westmeath Independent*, 16.11.12., 4.

and Arran Quay Ward, respectively, as well as issuing a joint letter of explanation.<sup>247</sup> By contrast, James O'Shee escaped very lightly- the *Dungarvan Observer* even commiserated with him in his 'hard luck' at missing the crucial division after five weeks of constant attendance.<sup>248</sup> Hugh Law's letter to the Glenties branch of the Donegal UIL was full of anguish and self-reproach: 'for my own part, I was and am so thoroughly disgusted with it all and myself that I would most willingly have given place to someone who might prove more trustworthy'.<sup>249</sup> However, Law's explanation, that he had been helping the Macedonian Relief Fund, was accepted without argument.<sup>250</sup>

In the immediate aftermath of the snap defeat Irish Members seem to have redoubled their efforts to give constant attendance.<sup>251</sup> As the *Freeman's* put it 'One mishap has proved sufficient to cure the heedlessness of the few who were inclined to take risks and expose the Irish cause to fatal injury'.<sup>252</sup> The Unionists, however, also remained determined to inflict further embarrassment on the government, and throughout 1913 and 1914 continued to attempt 'snap' votes. Accordingly, the *Freeman's* maintained its running commentary on the attendance of Members; at times encouraging, at others sharply critical.<sup>253</sup>

Between 1911 and 1914, the Party (and specifically its leader, John Redmond) relentlessly pursued a policy of full attendance. In so doing, the Party showed itself willing to employ methods not used by other parties. In the case, for instance, of publishing daily and sessional division lists, members of the Liberal 'shadow cabinet' had approached newspaper editors in 1905 with such a proposal, but apparently without success.<sup>254</sup> As late as 1913, *The Nation* suggested that the publication of such lists might have a 'salutary

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<sup>247</sup> *FJ*, 21.11.12., 9; 23.11.12., 8.

<sup>248</sup> *Dungarvan Observer*, 23.11.12., 4.

<sup>249</sup> *Strabane Chronicle*, 30.11.12., 7. This statement would seem to give weight to the rumour that at least one of the absentee Members had tendered his resignation to Redmond. However, it was believed that the chairman was unwilling to precipitate a by-election in Ireland at that time. *II*, 13.11.12., 6.

<sup>250</sup> Within the Party, opinion was divided. J.P. Farrell admitted that 'I was quite upset by the whole thing, I could neither rest or talk to anyone for quite an hour or two; and numbers of my colleagues were the same.' However, within a week he had recovered and felt that further constituency criticism was unnecessary. Publicly, J.P. Hayden observed a studied silence on his offending colleagues. William O'Malley was less circumspect. *Longford Leader*, 16.11.12., 4; 23.11.12., 4; *Westmeath Examiner*, 16.11.12., 5; *CT*, 16.11.12., 5.

<sup>251</sup> *FJ*, 30.11.12., 6.

<sup>252</sup> *FJ*, 27.12.12., 4.

<sup>253</sup> *FJ*, 20.12.12., 6; 21.12.12., 7; 27.12.12., 4; 23.1.13., 6; 4.2.13., 6; 15.2.13., 6; 1.3.13., 6; 18.3.13., 6; 23.5.13., 6; 25.7.13., 6; 23.7.13., 6; 14.3.14., 6; 8.4.14., 6; 15.5.14., 6; 23.5.14., 6.

<sup>254</sup> Leigh Hughes, *Parliament*, p. 36.



effect' on those Liberal MPs who were persistently absent.<sup>255</sup> However, it seems that while the Liberal whips introduced technical innovations into the business of managing Members, it was not until after the War that such aggressive techniques became more widespread.<sup>256</sup>

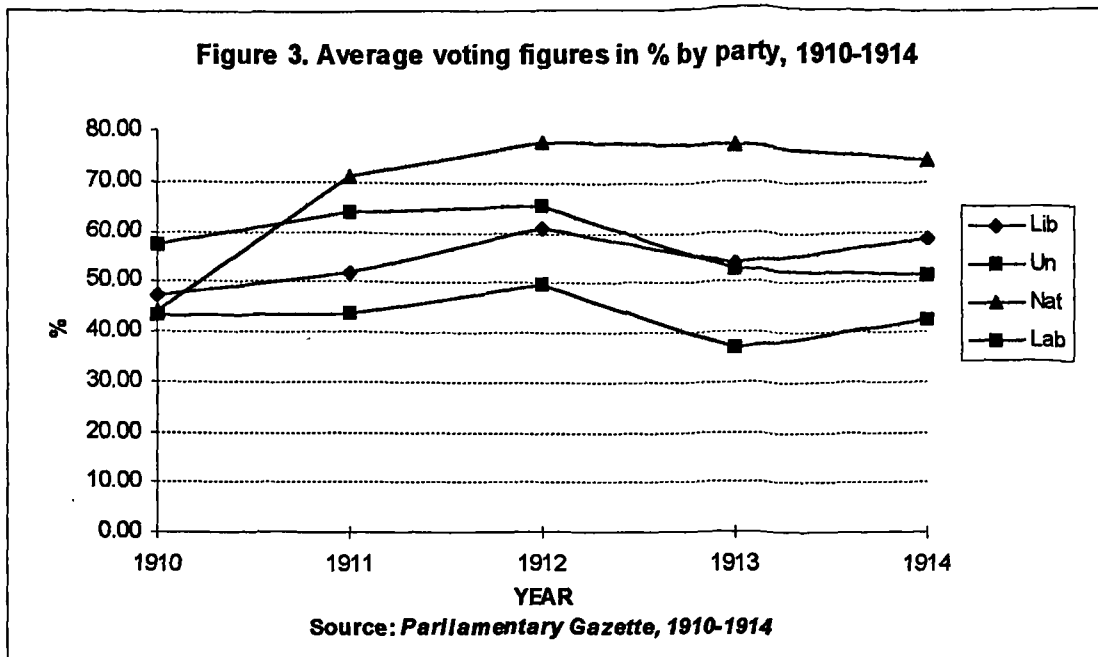
Doubtless, one reason for this was that other British parties simply did not have the same kind of relationship with any single press organ. Because the *Freeman's* did not regard itself as an 'ordinary commercial company',<sup>257</sup> it allowed the Party leadership to annex its 'London Letter' column and convert its parliamentary correspondent into, effectively, a fifth whip, thereby providing the Party leadership with a platform by which it could address MPs and electors simultaneously. However, ultimately the effectiveness of this strategy depended not on vocal constituency opinion. Except in November 1912, the constituencies were silent. Instead, it rested on the leadership's willingness to publicly shame MPs, thus breaking one of the cardinal principles of the post-1890s consensus: to always present a united front. The leadership played up the (admittedly very real) threat, thus making attendance a question of patriotism. It was a unique approach, maintained over several sessions and represents a remarkable achievement. Figure 3, illustrates the fact that the mean average attendance figure for the Party as a whole was consistently the highest (at over 70 per cent of all divisions) of any of the parties in the sessions 1911-14.

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<sup>255</sup> *The Nation*, 12.4.13., 46.

<sup>256</sup> MacDonagh, *Pageant*, vol. i, p. 78.

<sup>257</sup> *FJ*, 24.2.10., 10.



The record of the Redmondites between 1910 and 1914 reveals that the Party (already known for its discipline and organisation) attained an unprecedented level of parliamentary control over its members in these years. Aware that the progressive coalition of parties was in many ways fissile, and that there existed latent (later explicit) tensions within the Liberal party over Home Rule, the Irish Party strained itself to the utmost in steering Home Rule through Parliament and keeping the government in power. Proportionately, Irish Members were at Westminster longer, voted more often and spoke less frequently than probably at any time since 1893. But this enormous effort came at a price. In being so closely identified with the government between 1910 and 1914, the Irish Party seemed to confirm its opponents' claims that it was a 'Liberal tail'. Individual Members also were forced to sacrifice long-held convictions (for instance, Dillon over naval expansion and Willie Redmond over women's suffrage) for the sake of Home Rule.<sup>4</sup> There was also a personal cost to MPs: Irish Members (excluding those resident in London) were absent from their homes, families and jobs for long periods of time (though the parliamentary salary may have off-set some of the associated costs of greater attendance).

<sup>4</sup> For Dillon, see *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. xxii, col. 2530 (16.3.11.); (series 5) vol. lix, cols. 309-9 (3.3.14.). On Redmond, see *FJ*, 29.3.12., 7.

Although boredom was a constant problem,<sup>259</sup> for the rank and file of the Party, its unvarying diet of close attendance with minimal activity during these years was not only personally inconvenient, but also frustrating. William Field grumbled in 1914 that the private Member had been 'almost reduced to a cypher. Except to ask a question or to vote according as he is told, they appear to have very few rights'.<sup>260</sup> J.P. Farrell (speaking for the average backbencher) complained that 'his oration is not wanted- it would be only obstructive if he indulges in it- and so his occupation to a greater extent is gone'. Farrell also described Members 'wandering aimlessly around the House of Commons striving to kill time while waiting to give the one thing...[they have] to give- a vote when the division is called'.<sup>261</sup> In a revealing speech of May 1913, John Dillon explained

You do not know- nobody knows who has not gone through the experience- what a tiresome and wearisome thing it is to stand about the House of Commons night after night, month after month, away from your friends and all associates that are dear to you, waiting for a division, and knowing that you cannot leave for a moment without the risk of having a defeat, and, above all, as I have often heard our friends say, when you have got nothing to do but wait. I have heard colleagues of my own in the Irish Party say- "I wish we were back in the old days when we fighting the government."<sup>262</sup>

But, perhaps, the most important consequence of the Party's parliamentary strategy was the effect it had in Ireland. Members appeared less frequently in their constituencies during these years, and were often invisible when at Westminster. The *Kerryman* complained in 1912 that 'it would be to the good of the country, as a whole...if Irish MPs in general displayed some tangible proofs of...watchfulness regarding their constituents' interests....Enthusiasm about Home rule...is undoubtedly a very commendably thing; but after all, smaller questions...are of vital importance also'.<sup>263</sup> The *Cork Free Press* made a similar point when it highlighted the inadequacy of 'The "Party's mad belief that punctual sprinting through the division lobbies by 74 Redmondites alone suffices to...[advance] Home Rule'.<sup>264</sup> Indeed, according to Stephen Gwynn the result of Nationalist efforts in Parliament was that 'Ireland lost interest in the bulk of the Party...They did not any longer see their Members heading a fiery campaign against rents, or flamboyant in attack on the

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<sup>259</sup> Jeremiah Jordan spoke of the 'tread mill' of parliamentary work in 1901. Jeremiah Jordan to John Pinkerton, 23.4.01., PRONI, PP, D/1078/P/70.

<sup>260</sup> *Hansard, HC* vol. lviii, col. 1078 (18.2.14.).

<sup>261</sup> *Longford Leader*, 23.11.12., 4.

<sup>262</sup> *FJ*, 19.5.13., 7.

<sup>263</sup> *Kerryman*, 29.6.12., 1.

<sup>264</sup> *CFP*, 13.11.12., 5.

government; they heard very little of them at all.<sup>265</sup> This is perhaps to overstate the argument. It ignores the fact that the Party leadership had long extolled the virtues of the 'silent Member',<sup>266</sup> and that even before 1910, 'when 'Redmond, Dillon and Devlin spoke there was no necessity, and often no opportunity for other speakers.'<sup>267</sup> Moreover, Gwynn exaggerated the extent to which (as argued above) provincial newspaper editors and the general public took an interest in the parliamentary debates. That said, his point is still a valid one, and surely worth incorporating into any assessment of the Party in and after August 1914.

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<sup>265</sup> Gwynn, *Last Years*, p. 58.

<sup>266</sup> For instance, see T.P. O'Connor's speech in September 1883, quoted in O'Day, 'Irish Parliamentary Party', p. 70.

<sup>267</sup> O'Malley, *Glancing Back*, p. 58.

## Chapter 8: The Irish Parliamentary Party in Victorian and Edwardian London

Writing of Lord Morley's biography of his father in 1928, Herbert Gladstone observed that, while it was 'a comprehensive exposition of his public life', it 'left but little room for the domestic life, which in the matter of time far exceeded the days given by Mr Gladstone to public affairs.'<sup>1</sup> Arguably, the same criticism can be made of many modern political biographies and party histories, including those concerning the Irish Parliamentary Party. For despite the attention of historians to the Party's activities at Westminster and in Ireland, there is little sense of lives being led outside the chamber or beyond the platform. In short, the fact that as well as being MPs, these men also had professional and personal lives is rarely glimpsed.

The reasons for this oversight are several. This aspect of MPs' lives was by its very nature private and so largely unpublicized. Moreover, unlike the Gladstones,<sup>2</sup> the private correspondence between Members and their families largely no longer exists. However, probably the most important consideration in this regard, is the assumption that private lives are of little consequence to public actions. Yet the study of Ireland's most famous parliamentarian, Charles Stewart Parnell, serves as a useful corrective to this view. For, despite the absence of a Parnellite manuscript collection, scholars have considered in some detail not only Parnell's family background in Wicklow,<sup>3</sup> but his long-standing relationship with the wife of one of his Party colleagues.<sup>4</sup>

Of course, Parnell's private life has been so closely considered because not only were contemporaries fascinated by his family background,<sup>5</sup> but because his marital situation did have such an impact on the history of the Irish Party and the course of British politics. By contrast, the personal lives of Irish backbench Members were nowhere near as interesting or important. But on a more modest level, their private lives were seen as having a direct bearing on the performance of their public functions. For separatist and heterodox nationalists opposed attendance at Westminster not only on political grounds, but also because of the fear of 'anglicisation'.<sup>6</sup> In 1878, for example, John O'Leary told Parnell that 'Nine out of ten Irishmen entering the British Parliament with honest intentions are

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<sup>1</sup> Gladstone, *Thirty Years*, p. xiii.

<sup>2</sup> For instance, see A.T. Bassett (ed.), *Gladstone to his wife* (London, 1936).

<sup>3</sup> Roy Foster, *Charles Stewart Parnell, The Man and His Family* (Brighton, 1976); *Paddy and Mr Punch*, pp. 40-61.

<sup>4</sup> Joyce Mallow, *The Uncrowned Queen of Ireland* (London, 1975).

<sup>5</sup> Foster, *Parnell*, p.216.

<sup>6</sup> Maume, *Gestation*, pp. 9-10, 50; Lavelle, *O'Mara*, p. 72.

corrupted soon...if Irishmen are to save their honour, they must keep aloof from everything English'.<sup>7</sup> The *Gaelic-American* described Irish MPs in 1910 as 'Politically effete and enervated by association with English Liberals'.<sup>8</sup> Parnell himself (as Arthur Griffith was at pains to later point out) 'said that he did not believe in the permanence of an Irish Party in the British Parliament, because sooner or later the British influences would sap the best party they could return (applause).'<sup>9</sup> The image of the 'poor savage celt' divesting himself of the most obvious indications of his peasant background in order to 'edge...his way into some Bayswater drawing-room' was a motif employed in some contemporary literature.<sup>10</sup> The *Cork Accent* claimed in 1910 that the Liberal's 'dinner table napkin policy' towards the nominal Home Rulers of the 1870s had been revived and applied to the Party.<sup>11</sup>

However, before 1916, this view, while not without some influence on popular attitudes towards Irish Members of Parliament, co-existed with the countervailing idea that life and work at Westminster in fact imposed unique financial, social and domestic pressures on those Irishmen self-sacrificing enough to represent Ireland at Westminster.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, this was a central component of the Party's self-image. As Father O'Dwyer told an election meeting in North Cork in 1909 'They knew that Irish National Members...[had to] abandon their homes, leave their own country, and as aliens live in London. No party in the world showed such a whole-hearted example of patriotism'.<sup>13</sup>

The classic description of the embattled condition of the Party at Westminster was produced by the veteran Nationalist, T.P. O'Connor, in his 1929 *apologia*, *Memoirs of an Old Parliamentarian*.<sup>14</sup> O'Connor's account of everyday life for the average backbench Irish MP of the 1880s, working at Westminster and living in London, was essentially a story of self-sacrifice, loneliness and extreme stoicism. 'I must drop a reminiscent tear' he wrote, 'as I think of these humble, uncomplaining, penniless men, some of them middle-aged, who gave all those years of silent and uncomplaining servitude to the cause'. O'Connor recounted how '[t]heir method of living was for two of them to take two small

<sup>7</sup> Ranelagh, 'Irish Republican Brotherhood', p. 137.

<sup>8</sup> *Gaelic-American*, 1.1.10., 3.

<sup>9</sup> *FJ*, 13.10.10., 9; *Sinn Féin*, 16.12.12., 2. R. Barry O'Brien in his biography of Parnell supports this view. O'Brien, *Parnell*, p. 87.

<sup>10</sup> George Moore, *Parnell and his Island* (London, 1887), pp. 142-3.

<sup>11</sup> *CA*, 17.2.10., 1.

<sup>12</sup> See O'Day, *English Face*, p.30. For a contemporary version of this, see Brooks, *Aspects*, pp. 217-8.

<sup>13</sup> *FJ*, 5.1.10., 8. This point was made with particular force during the passage of the Home Rule Bill in 1912-13. See, *FJ*, 3.3.13., 8.

<sup>14</sup> O'Connor, *Memoirs*.

bedrooms and a small sitting-room in the cheap district of Pimlico, which had the additional advantage of being close to the House of Commons.' When at Westminster '[t]hey looked as they were- bored, and without steady purpose or work...mostly silent, shabbily dressed, and poor men whose contributions to the Party mainly consisted in their constant attendance at the House of Commons and, therefore in the division lobbies'. On Wednesday evenings and weekends they occupied themselves wandering 'round the streets until they got to their rooms...[as] [f]ew of them could afford the money for a theatre or music-hall.' Moreover, poverty defined not only their standard of living, but determined how Irish MPs regarded Parliament and, in turn, how they were perceived. 'Apart from the favourite charge- believed by a good many people, and perhaps not unnaturally- of being enemies of the empire, the comrades and the subsidized servants of revolutionaries and assassins, we were reproached with our poverty; we were not criminal, but low-born and vulgar.'<sup>15</sup>

Clearly, O'Connor's description of the Party (written when he was in his late seventies) was both deeply sentimental and nostalgic, and was consciously penned as a posthumous defence of his former colleagues.<sup>16</sup> But how accurate was O'Connor's account as a description of the experiences of backbench MPs living in London?

As with all Members of Parliament, the amount of time Nationalist MPs actually spent 'sitting, acting and voting' in the chamber, was only a portion of the total time they spent within the precincts of the House of Commons. As the Durham MP, L.A. Atherley-Jones explained: 'save during the speeches of representative men in a "full-dress" debate, you will find them [the general body of Members] in the library, the tea-room, and the smoking rooms; or in the summer weather on the terrace entertaining fair ladies'.<sup>17</sup> Such facilities earned the late nineteenth century Palace of Westminster the frequently used sobriquet of 'the best club in London'. For although individual MPs were entitled to nothing more than a peg for their hats and a locker, the nine acre site included for the use of Members a library of five rooms with about 500,000 volumes, space for about 90 MPs to work, and a telegraphic type machine,<sup>18</sup> a newspaper reading room,<sup>19</sup> several smoking rooms, a post

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 61-6..

<sup>16</sup> O'Day, *English Face*, p. 30.

<sup>17</sup> Atherley-Jones, *Looking Back*, p. 146.

<sup>18</sup> *HC Select Committee on House of Commons Accommodation Report* (HC Paper (1901) vi), p. 328; Farquharson, *House of Commons*, p. 204; *Hansard, HC* (series 4) vol. cxii, col. 912 (9.7.02.).

<sup>19</sup> The House of Commons received several Irish newspapers, including the *Cork Free Press*, *Irish Times* and *Independent*. These arrived at the House by early evening. *FJ*, 23.7.12., 5; Major Jameson to John Dillon, 27.3.96., TCD, DP, ms 722/6755; *FJ*, 20.2.14., 6.

office,<sup>20</sup> a terrace which ran almost the full length of the Palace (and which in summer was a 'society resort'), several dining rooms (including the famous Harcourt Room), and 'vast kitchens' for the preparation and cooking of meals.<sup>21</sup>

A combination of close attendance, poverty and a prohibition on pairing (at least during the 1880s and after 1900),<sup>22</sup> meant that many Irish MPs spent a considerable amount of time in the precincts of the House of Commons and had frequent opportunities to use its facilities. Indeed, as Michael McCarthy, the anti-clerical pamphleteer and former parliamentary lobbyist put it '[in the 1880s they] literally squatted at St. Stephen's, coming down early and never leaving until the attendants shouted "Who goes home."'<sup>23</sup> Boredom would have been an ever present problem, and so Irish MPs found different ways to occupy themselves.<sup>24</sup> According to T.P. O'Connor, some Irish MPs smoked and played cards in the Irish whips' room.<sup>25</sup> By 1914 William Field had a 'usual place in the shady corner of the Library' which he habitually occupied.<sup>26</sup> Alfred Webb also remembered how '[during the 1890s] I spent much of my time when in the House reading and writing in the library, where I soon came to have a table of my own looking out on the Thames.'<sup>27</sup> Webb also recalled pleasant occasions with Irish colleagues on the terrace,<sup>28</sup> as did a later MP, J.P. Boland.<sup>29</sup> Stephen Gwynn recalled that Willie Redmond had been the 'best company in the House of Commons'.<sup>30</sup> Gwynn also had fond memories of conversations with 'Long John' O'Connor 'Many and many a bottle of claret we drank together, at the table by the window in the east dining room where members of the government generally have the central table.'<sup>31</sup> Others, by contrast, engaged in more intellectual interests. Arthur Lynch, for example, read some of the 'extraordinary' books from the library.<sup>32</sup> Tom O'Donnell

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<sup>20</sup> *FJ*, 4.8.10., 7.

<sup>21</sup> King, *Asquith Parliament*, p. 82.

<sup>22</sup> McCarthy, *Irish Revolution*, p. 460; Boland, *Irishman's Day*, p. 23; Boland, *Mother's Knee*, p. 43; Webb, *Quaker Nationalist*, p. 60; Michael McCartan to A.J.C. Donelan, 28.2.95, UCDA, MP, [622]; Secretary of the Gateshead Union to J.F.X. O'Brien, 26.1.96, NLI, OP, ms 13,432 [4].

<sup>23</sup> McCarthy, *Irish Revolution*, p. 460.

<sup>24</sup> Bodkin, *Recollections*, p. 194, 203. This seems to have been a particular problem during the passage of the third Home Rule Bill in 1912. See John Dillon's speech reported in *FJ*, 19.5.13., 7.

<sup>25</sup> O'Connor, *Memoirs*, p. 63 According to the Liberal MP, Sir Alfred Pease, the Irish Members particularly favoured 'a dismal underground smoking-room' This is probably a reference to the whips' room. Pease, *Elections*, p. 250.

<sup>26</sup> *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. lxi, col. 477 (17.4.14.).

<sup>27</sup> Webb, *Autobiography*, p. 60.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 56-7.

<sup>29</sup> Boland, *Irishman's Day*, pp. 99-100.

<sup>30</sup> *FJ*, 19.6.17., 4.

<sup>31</sup> Gwynn, "'Long John'", p. 84.

<sup>32</sup> Lynch, *Life Story*, p. 262.



gave Irish lessons at one point to several of his colleagues,<sup>33</sup> William Lundon occasionally discussed Celtic literature with Lloyd George,<sup>34</sup> while Justin McCarthy recalled conversations with John Dillon on their mutual passion for Herodotus.<sup>35</sup> In turn, others had fond memories of their conversations with McCarthy. Indeed, for Michael Bodkin, his company at dinner time was 'a delightful oasis in the dreary desert of the parliamentary day.'<sup>36</sup>

During the 1890s Bodkin dined in Parliament not only for the stimulating company, but because poverty forced him to take 'all his meals except breakfast within the precincts of the House of Commons'.<sup>37</sup> The practice of Irish MPs taking meals in the House because of their impecunity, was one which, in fact, pre-dated the Parnellite Party.<sup>38</sup> It continued after 1900; as Sir Henry Lucy, writing at the beginning of the twentieth century, observed in his diary 'As for tomorrow, the House adjourns at six o'clock, and no one, not even an Irish Member, stays for dinner.'<sup>39</sup> Although such comments were occasionally the cause of tension,<sup>40</sup> in truth, (as one parliamentary commentator observed) 'for quality and quantity combined, [the House of Commons's shilling dinner] can hardly, I think, be got for the money anywhere else in this country.'<sup>41</sup>

According to Sir Richard Temple 'Out of several rooms there used to be one where the Irish Nationalist Members dined. A Conservative would not care to dine there; for that would be unsociable of him, and embarrassing for them.'<sup>42</sup> Clearly, the political distinctions of the chamber were also reflected beyond it. Indeed, one slightly later MP claimed that 'the social relations existing between the three political parties and the two social grades are purely formal, invariably polite, and restricted to the business which brings them together.'<sup>43</sup> Certainly, the social gulf which existed between some Members was occasionally apparent (in 1912 one Unionist MP referred to Irish Members as 'burly

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<sup>33</sup> Gaughan, *Odyssey*, p.32.

<sup>34</sup> *FJ*, 19.5.13., 8.

<sup>35</sup> Justin McCarthy, *Reminiscences* (London, 1899) vol. ii, p. 379.

<sup>36</sup> Bodkin, *Recollections*, p. 241.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, p. 188.

<sup>38</sup> Charles Dickens, 'A Parliamentary Sketch', in Michael Slater (ed.), *Dickens' Journalism* (London, 1994), p.158. The author is obliged to Mr A.J. Heesom for this reference.

<sup>39</sup> Sir Henry Lucy, *The Balfourian Parliament, 1901-05* (London, 1906), p.484.

<sup>40</sup> *Parl. Debs.* (series 4) vol. cil, col. 575 (6.2.02.).

<sup>41</sup> King, *Asquith Parliament*, p.88. Also see Farquharson, *House of Commons*, p. 155. This high opinion was not shared by all. For instance, see the comments of the *Freeman's* parliamentary correspondent. *FJ*, 21.2.12., 7.

<sup>42</sup> Temple, *House of Commons*, p.44. This custom was maintained into the new century, as evidenced by the picture of 'The Irish Round Table at the House of Commons' 'in the seats reserved for them by courtesy', printed in the *Illustrated London News*, 30.10.09, 615.

<sup>43</sup> Snell, *Parliament* (London, 1930), p. 67.

looking ruffians whom they would not care to meet on a dark night').<sup>44</sup> The surviving evidence, however, suggests that relations between Irish Members and the members of other parties were more casual and friendly than was sometimes admitted in public. As William O'Brien explained in 1896

Man by man, the House of Commons is full of *bonhomie*. Its judgements of men are often wrong, but they are never wrong by reason of any undue regard for the length of a man's purse or the number of his quarterings....[it is only] when the hearty, tolerant (once in a way stupid) Englishmen of the smoking room or terrace flock in at the division-bell...[that they] speak, as it were, *ex cathedra*, in the name of England, ruler of the waves...<sup>45</sup>

Beyond the chamber, then, friendships could develop between Irish Members and their British colleagues. Although not all Irish Members appreciated its conviviality, the smokingroom was one location where MPs encountered one another in an informal environment.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, for many Members, the smoking room was where the 'social freemasonry' of the House was at its most evident. Michael Bodkin, for instance, who neither smoked nor drank while in Parliament, found it an agreeable environment in which to pass his time in.<sup>47</sup>

Bodkin himself was on good terms with both Herbert Gladstone and the Irish Unionist MP, Richard Dane. John O'Connor was close to Robert Reid. Indeed, as T.P. O'Connor later recalled, 'every night they were seen together, and usually without any other companionship, dining'.<sup>48</sup> O'Connor was also 'intimate friends' with the Liberal MP, Sir John Brunner, and Stephen Gwynn remembered how on one memorable occasion O'Connor had a drink with Captain Craig (later Lord Craigavon) 'the most unbending of Ulstermen'.<sup>49</sup> Pierce Mahony was friends with the Liberal MP, Sir Alfred Pease.<sup>50</sup> William O'Malley was on friendly terms with the Unionists Charles Beresford and Edward Carson. Dr Tanner and Willie Redmond were on good terms with the Unionist Sir William Mowbray. J.G.S. MacNeill had a wide circle of friends from his days at Oxford.<sup>51</sup> Pat

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<sup>44</sup> *FJ*, 3.12.12., 6.

<sup>45</sup> William O'Brien, 'London Revisited', *Contemporary Review*, vol. lxi, (1896), pp.808-9.

<sup>46</sup> Alfred Webb avoided the smoking-room, since he disliked the drunken behaviour of some of his British colleagues, which he considered an 'utter disgrace and weakness'. It is possible that others may have avoided being overly sociable because of their poverty. Certainly this was the experience of some Labour MPs in the 1920s. Webb, *Autobiography*, p. 9; *HC Select Committee on Members Expenses Report* (HC (1920) vii), p. 632; Balfour, *Wings*, p. 75.

<sup>47</sup> Bodkin, *Recollections*, pp.202-3.

<sup>48</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 29.10.28., 15.

<sup>49</sup> *Times*, 29.10.28., 19; Gwynn, 'Long John', pp. 84-5.

<sup>50</sup> Pease, *Elections*, p. 215.

<sup>51</sup> *G-A*, 15.1.10., 3.

O'Brien was reputedly popular even with old Tory squires 'who treat all other Irish Members with Tennyson's stormy British stare.'<sup>52</sup> T.P. O'Connor was also generally popular. Bodkin recalled how when he 'walked down the terrace everyone he met, men and women, wanted a word with him.'<sup>53</sup> O'Connor himself said in 1904 that

There are few Members now whom I do not know personally, and few, I am proud to say, with whom I am not on terms of friendly feeling, but I remember the time when out of the 600 Members I did not speak to more than three outside the thirty-five men who then constituted the Party to which I belonged.<sup>54</sup>

Of course, these personal friendships were made between individuals and did not necessarily effect relations between the parties. That said, it is clear that attitudes (perhaps barring those of Tory backwoodsmen) towards Irish Members as a group (as opposed to their Party) did soften between c.1885 and 1914.<sup>55</sup> Men who were, according to Michael McCarthy, regarded with curiosity, not to say hostility, in the 1880s, came in time to be seen as part of its political furniture.<sup>56</sup> In part this followed the decline of obstruction and the advent of the Liberal alliance. But within the House of Commons itself, as distinct from politics more generally, the reputation of Irish Members rested on their reputed capacity for humour. For as Bodkin observed 'Humour is indeed keenly appreciated in the House of Commons, which loves a joke however poor or small'.<sup>57</sup>

Historically, Parliament had laughed at, rather than with, Irish Members. E.M. Whitty wrote in 1853 that the House was grateful to 'Celtic Gentlemen' for the amusement they provided, '[they] are as silly, as broguey, as useless, as quarrelsome, and as contemptible as ever they were.'<sup>58</sup> Though perhaps less disdainful, later generations of British parliamentarians also found Irish MPs entertaining. In particular 'bulls', (mistakes or unintentionally humorous mixed metaphors), were synonymous with Nationalist MPs.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Untitled newspaper cutting, 'Men of the Times', 27.2.04 in JP, NAI Lim 23/20/33.

<sup>53</sup> Bodkin, *Recollections*, p. 240, 275.

<sup>54</sup> Fyfe, *O'Connor*, p. 68. O'Connor was on particularly good terms with Lloyd George, whom he accompanied on motor tours of the continent. John O'Connor also accompanied his friend Lord Loreburn to Canada on one occasion. *FJ*, 7.2.13. 6; 24.2.13., 6.

<sup>55</sup> For instance, see *FJ*, 3.12.12., 6.

<sup>56</sup> McCarthy, *Revolution*, p. 459; A.T.Q. Stewart, *The Ulster Crisis* (1969, Belfast, 1997), p.36. Doubtless, some of this hostility was a hang-over from earlier decades. See Hoppen, *Elections*, p. 335.

<sup>57</sup> Bodkin, *Recollections*, p. 204.

<sup>58</sup> E.M. Whitty, *History of the Session 1852-3, A Parliamentary Retrospect* (London, 1853), pp. 127-8.

<sup>59</sup> Thomas (ed.), *Fifty Years of Fleet Street*, p. 47. Also see, Hughes, *Press, Platform and Parliament*, p. 161; Sir Henry Lucy, *Lords and Commoners* (London, 1921), p. 90.

According to Shane Leslie 'There was always a new Irish story passing through the lobbies.'<sup>60</sup>

However, Irish MPs seem also to have made a reputation for themselves as wits and humourists.<sup>61</sup> The Unionist MP, Sir James Agg-Gardner, remembered how '[d]uring the [1886 and 1893] contests of Home Rule, often protracted and angry...[debates were] relieved by the wit and repartee of Irish Members'<sup>62</sup> Another Member of Parliament with fond recollections of Irish humour was A.C. Murray, the brother of the Liberal chief whip: 'The diminutive figures of Joe Devlin and of "Jerry" MacVeagh spluttered "fire and wrath" in lofty flights of oratorical eloquence in the chamber, whilst in the lobbies and smoking rooms their kindly hearts and twinkling sense of humour endeared them to all.'<sup>63</sup> Indeed, the former lobby correspondent, Sir Alexander Mackintosh, wrote '[after 1918] Irish Nationalists were missed by old British colleagues. Life was seldom dull while they were in force at Westminster, with their vivacity and humour. Personally they were not unpopular.'<sup>64</sup> Clearly, much of this laughter was affectionate, though it may still have undermined the political credibility of individual MPs.<sup>65</sup>

Michael Bodkin put Parliament's appreciation of humour down to the fact that 'all [other] forms of entertainment are rigorously excluded from the precincts of Westminster.'<sup>66</sup> Chess was the exception to this rule, and, interestingly, was played by several Nationalist Members to a high standard. Colonel John Nolan, for instance, had a reputation, while in Parliament, as the best chess player in the House of Commons.<sup>67</sup> James O'Mara's daughter recalled her father's success at chess in the House.<sup>68</sup> On another, more famous, occasion the House of Commons' 'chess circle' played a match via cable with the American House of Representatives. Among the Commons' team was John Howard

<sup>60</sup> Shane Leslie, *The Film of Memory* (London, 1938), p. 369.

<sup>61</sup> See, for instance, MacDonagh, *Irish Life*, p. 279; *Pageant*, vol.i, p. 127. This story forms the basis for a similar episode in Lynch's, *O'Rourke*, pp. 87-90.

<sup>62</sup> Agg-Gardner, *Recollections*, p. 494.

<sup>63</sup> A.C. Murray, *Master and Brother* (London, 1945), p. 24. However, according to one former MP, writing in 1912, 'since the Irish have got so deadly in earnest over Home Rule their native commodity has dried up.' Farquharson, *The House of Commons*, p. 121.

<sup>64</sup> Sir Alexander Mackintosh, *Echoes of Big Ben: A Journalist's Parliamentary Diary (1881-1940)* (London, 1946), p. 85. Also see, Furniss, *Victorian Men*, p. 111; Griffith-Boscawen, *Memories*, p. 263; Lucy, *Lords and Commoners*, p. 113.

<sup>65</sup> Jackson, *Ulster Party*, p. 98.

<sup>66</sup> Bodkin, *Recollections*, p. 205.

<sup>67</sup> *FJ*, 1.2.12., 9.

<sup>68</sup> Lavelle, *O'Mara*, p. 37.

Parnell.<sup>69</sup> In 1914, David Sheehy was numbered among 'a distinguished little band which forgathers in one of the smoking rooms to play chess.'<sup>70</sup>

Sportsmen in the House of Commons also organized a cricket team, which played against sides from English public schools. Several Irish Members followed or enjoyed cricket; indeed, J.P. Boland had captained the Christ Church XI when at Oxford and had been invited to play for the University. However, he did not play for Parliament; not apparently from any principled objection, but because as a whip there was 'always the risk of vital divisions before 6.30 p.m. when the match, if played on a parliamentary day, might be expected to end'.<sup>71</sup> The same reason (time) may also account for why so few Nationalist MPs participated in the Annual Parliamentary Golf Tournament. Usually held in May and June each year, it often coincided with the Whitsuntide recess, which may explain why only one Nationalist MP, the old Clongownian Vincent Kennedy, competed between 1905 and 1914.<sup>72</sup>

Along with such pastimes, Irish Members (particularly after 1906) also participated in a number of other corporate activities. In May 1911, for example, the Parliamentary Aerial Defence Committee organized a flying demonstration at Hendon. John Redmond, accompanied by his wife and Pat O'Brien, motored down to see the flying display, as did John O'Connor. Members were given the opportunity of flying in the aircraft, and among those who did, were the Irish MPs Edward Kelly and Vincent Kennedy.<sup>73</sup>

Anecdotal as this evidence largely is, it nonetheless suggests that the old Party refrain 'in Parliament, but not of it',<sup>74</sup> was by 1914 to a considerable extent no longer true (if, indeed, it had ever been quite so absolute). Although, formally, the Party continued to exempt itself from symbolic occasions such as the opening of Parliament,<sup>75</sup> many Members of the Edwardian Party do not appear to have remained aloof from the domestic life of the House

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<sup>69</sup> *II*, 28.11.10; Atherley-Jones, *Looking Back*, p. 50.

<sup>70</sup> *London Opinion*, 7.3.14., 419.

<sup>71</sup> Boland, *Irishman's Day*, p. 24.

<sup>72</sup> For instance, in 1906 games were played between May 23 and June 28. The House of Commons adjourned on May 31 and reassembled on June 7 1906. For Kennedy, see *The Times*, 7.4.09., 16. Numerous Ulster Unionists played, as did the Cavan born Thomas Lough, MP for West Islington, in 1906. J.M. Tuohy, the London correspondent of the *Freeman's Journal* also played, in 1905 and 1910.

<sup>73</sup> *II*, 13.5.11., 4.

<sup>74</sup> McCarthy, *Irish Revolution*, p. 460.

<sup>75</sup> *FJ*, 15.2.12., 7.

of Commons and whatever their rhetoric, working in an alien assembly was not as inhospitable as sometimes claimed.<sup>76</sup>

During the 1880s, one of the 'self-denying ordinances' adopted by the Party was that Irish Members should avoid the hospitality of British politicians and 'behave as if they were quite literally in an enemy's country'.<sup>77</sup> Instead, Irish Members of the early 1880s relied on one another for society. How successful this was is unclear. William O'Brien recalled how he and some of his senior colleagues sometimes bought 'half-price back seats in the pit of a theatre', or dined at 'a frugal chop-house off the Strand' where they 'lingered over...[their] tankards of lager beer until the closing hour, as merry as campaigners in their mess tent'.<sup>78</sup> In contrast, T.P. O'Connor, had rather unhappy memories of evenings spent in the 'Cafe Royal of the period' with Irish colleagues, who had nothing else to talk about than politics.<sup>79</sup> J.F.X. O'Brien (who was elected in 1885) claimed in the late 1890s that of 'good fellowship and camaraderie...there was nothing of this among the Members of the Irish Party'.<sup>80</sup> Indeed, O'Brien claimed that while an effort had been made 'to bring the men together in social intercourse', it was unsuccessful because Parnell did not approve, so that 'while a few are accustomed to forgather in the smokeroom over a glass and a pipe or cigar, the most of us have been practically strangers to each other all those years'.<sup>81</sup>

After 1900, a better feeling seems to have existed within the Party. J.P. Boland wrote of the 'good team-spirit' which prevailed,<sup>82</sup> while the *Freeman's* wrote of the 'bonds' of 'most kindly comradeship' which existed between Redmond and the rank and file 'of which little is [publicly] known'.<sup>83</sup> Boland's perspective may have been coloured by the fact that he was one of Redmond's protégés; he always dined with Redmond and greatly enjoyed his dinner conversation.<sup>84</sup> Another MP close to Redmond, Stephen Gwynn also had pleasant memories of dining with the chairman and the discussions which passed (though he later acknowledged Redmond's 'aloofness' towards much of his party).<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> This though had limits. For instance, in July 1912 many British Members attended a garden party hosted by the King at Windsor, for which the Commons allowed itself a half-holiday. None of the Irish Party reportedly attended. *FJ*, 19.7.12., 6.

<sup>77</sup> Gwynn, *Last Years*, p. 13. Alderman Joyce claimed in 1914 that there had been a time when Irish MPs in London had felt like 'social Ishmaelites'. *FJ*, 16.2.14., 9.

<sup>78</sup> O'Brien, 'London Revisited', p.810.

<sup>79</sup> O'Connor, *Memoirs*, p. 65.

<sup>80</sup> Unpublished autobiography J.F.X. O'Brien, NLI, OBP.

<sup>81</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> Boland, *Irishman's Day*, p. 20.

<sup>83</sup> *FJ*, 8.8.13., 6.

<sup>84</sup> Boland, *Irishman's Day*, p. 20.

<sup>85</sup> Gwynn, 'Long John', p. 82.

Notwithstanding this, the evidence suggests that cordial relations existed between most Members. Party functions, such as the one held in May 1912 in order to present two recently married MPs with wedding gifts from the Party, were not unusual.<sup>86</sup> There also seem to have been more social opportunities by 1914. In 1912 and 1913, for example, a river excursion under the auspices of the London AOH was put on, attended by numerous Irish MPs.<sup>87</sup> At another event in late 1911, the London divisions of the AOH put on Johanna Redmond's play, 'The Best of a Bad Bargain' in South Kensington. Redmond, his wife and several MPs attended, and Matt Keating (president of the London AOH) played one of the characters.<sup>88</sup>

The participation of Irish Members in the social events of the London AOH is but one example of the interaction between individual MPs and the wider London-Irish community. Like the AOH, the UIL also had branches in the capital.<sup>89</sup> John O'Connor was president of the Irish Parliamentary Branch of the London UIL. This branch regularly hosted guest lecturers, among them, numerous Irish MPs.<sup>90</sup> But the world of London-Irish societies and clubs was not only limited to those with avowedly political aims. As Jonathan Schneer has enumerated, in c.1900 there existed an enormous range of professional, cultural and sporting organisation specifically connected with the London-Irish community.<sup>91</sup> For example, one organisation with which Parnellite MPs were associated with was the Irish Literary Club. Along with men such as Yeats, R. Barry O'Brien, D.P. Moran and John O'Leary, were involved A.M. and T.D. Sullivan, John Redmond and Justin McCarthy.<sup>92</sup> Similarly, Larry Ginnell was a founding member of the Irish Literary Society (along with Yeats and Douglas Hyde). Stephen Gwynn was also a member. Hugh Law and J.P. Boland both gave papers to the ILS during 1910. Boland was also heavily involved with the Irish industrial movement in London, and in particular with the annual Irish Aonach.<sup>93</sup> Gaelic sport in London also attracted Irish MPs. The GAA was formed in London in 1895 and the following year saw the 'invasion' of London by the Munster and

<sup>86</sup> *FJ*, 9.5.12., 7. Also see, *FJ*, 29.3.13., 6.

<sup>87</sup> *FJ*, 15.7.12., 4; 14.7.13., 6; 14.7.14., 6.

<sup>88</sup> *FJ*, 27.11.11., 8. Though he began life as a miner in a Welsh pit, Matt Keating always wanted to be an actor and at the age of 14 ran away from home and joined a travelling theatrical company. Keating, *My Struggle*, p. 106, 119.

<sup>89</sup> In June 1900 there were 30 branches of the UILGB in London. See, Jonathan Schneer, *London 1900: The Imperial Metropolis* (New Haven and London, 1999), p. 177.

<sup>90</sup> *FJ*, 11.4.10., 9; 11.6.10., 7; 29.10.10., 7; 26.11.10., 7. Other London branches also gave lectures. The Kensington branch, for instance, heard a one hour paper from the Limerick MP, Michael Joyce in July 1910 on the battle of Sarsfield. *FJ*, 26.7.10., 7.

<sup>91</sup> Schneer, *London*, p. 172.

<sup>92</sup> Ryan, *Memories*, pp. 157-8.

<sup>93</sup> Boland, *Irishman's Day*, p. 44; *FJ*, 19.10.10., 8.

Leinster hurling teams, who played a match at which Arthur Lynch (who was yet to be elected), Pat O'Brien, William O'Malley, Joseph Nolan and the ex-MP, John O'Connor, attended as spectators.<sup>94</sup> In 1914, 12 Irish Members played in a tournament against the London Irish Golfing Society.<sup>95</sup> Members also attended ceremonial events. In 1910, P.J. Brady attended the annual dinner of the Irish Medical Schools and Graduates Association in London.<sup>96</sup> 17 Irish MPs were members of the Irish Club in London; Tom Condon said of it in 1913 'The institution, to those of them who were merely birds of passage in London, was more than a club- it was a home.'<sup>97</sup>

Irish MPs continued to be involved, at various levels with the Irish community in London up to 1914. However, in later years 'the rigour of [the Parnellite] attitude was modified.'<sup>98</sup> Irish MPs joined London clubs and accepted the hospitality of politically sympathetic hosts. Stephen Gwynn claimed that Redmond and perhaps others who had experienced the social isolation of the 1880s, never fully embraced London society.<sup>99</sup> In London, he 'went to no houses but those of sympathizers',<sup>100</sup> and even then seems to have preferred the company of his family and the entertainment of the theatre (though among his friends he was known for his house parties in Ireland).<sup>101</sup>

Other senior Members seem not to have shared Redmond's reservations. In the case of T.P. O'Connor, his wife was instrumental in his becoming a member of London society. 'As an Irish Member of Parliament', Hamilton Fyfe wrote, 'he was known to very few...[but as the husband of Bessie O'Connor] he became a figure in the social life of the time.'<sup>102</sup> Interestingly, according to Justin McCarthy (himself a man with a very wide circle of friends), during the 1890s John Dillon enjoyed London society and dined out a great deal.<sup>103</sup> During the Liberal administration of 1892-5, Alfred Webb enjoyed the 'grand entertainments' to which Irish MPs were invited.<sup>104</sup> One such was an open air play, *The Tempest*, at Pope's Villa at Twickenham hosted by Henry Labouchere in 1893, at which

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<sup>94</sup> Ryan, *Memories*, p. 169.

<sup>95</sup> *II*, 6.5.14., 4.

<sup>96</sup> *CA*, 24.11.10., 9.

<sup>97</sup> *FJ*, 18.3.13., 6.

<sup>98</sup> Gwynn, *Last Years*, p. 13.

<sup>99</sup> *ibid.* For Redmond's private life, see Redmond-Howard, *Redmond*, pp. 250-1.

<sup>100</sup> *DNB*, 1912-1921 (London, 1927), p. 448.

<sup>101</sup> Spender, *Fire*, p. 176; Katherine Tynan, *Memories* (London 1924), p. 61; Katherine Tynan, *Twenty-five Years Reminiscences* (London, 1913), p.123. For Redmond as a host, see Leamy, *Faithful Few*, p. 173.

<sup>102</sup> Fyfe, *O'Connor*, p.135.

<sup>103</sup> McCarthy, *Reminiscences*, vol. ii, p. 377.

<sup>104</sup> Webb, *Autobiography*, p. 56.



among the guests were Sir William Harcourt (then Chancellor of the Exchequer) and Redmond, Dr Kenny and Dillon.<sup>105</sup> Another occasion, the same year, was a garden party in Kew Gardens hosted by George Lefevre (at that time Commissioner of the Board of Works), at which, among others, were present Justin McCarthy and T.P. O'Connor, with their respective wives.<sup>106</sup> John Pinkerton received invitations during the 1890s to 'at homes' from James Bryce, Lady Tweedmouth, Lady Brassey and Queen Victoria.<sup>107</sup> Pat O'Brien attended an 'At Home' hosted by the Association of Foreign Journalists in London in 1899.<sup>108</sup> Edwardian Irish Members continued to be invited to social gatherings from both sides of the House.<sup>109</sup>

Gentlemen's clubs were another environment wherein Irish MPs mixed with their British parliamentary colleagues, among whom club membership was widespread.<sup>110</sup> With a handful of exceptions, the great majority of Irish MPs who joined a club did so after 1886 and were members of the National Liberal Club; 36 in the late 1880s (following the Liberal alliance) and approximately 30 in 1914 (during the Home Rule crisis).<sup>111</sup> As at Westminster, Irish MP were remembers with affection by English clubmen. The former political secretary of the National Liberal Club, Robert Steven, for instance, recalled John O'Connor with fondness, remembering that 'He could well be described in terms often applied to his namesake "T.P.", as an Irish Nationalist with English sympathies. John O'Connor could always tell a good story and delight the social circle with a happy and graceful speech.'<sup>112</sup>

Although the majority of Nationalists were not members of a gentleman's club, still, for the Party, this was a source of criticism from some nationalists at home, abroad, and even

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<sup>105</sup> Blunt, *Diaries*, vol. i, p. 137.

<sup>106</sup> *ibid.*, p. 136. John Dillon and Justin McCarthy also accepted the hospitality of Countess Russell. See Farquharson, *House of Commons*, p. 80.

<sup>107</sup> Various invitations, PRONI, PP, D/1078/P/67, 68.

<sup>108</sup> *CE*, 17.7.99., 4.

<sup>109</sup> Gaughan, *Odyssey*, p. 32. John O'Connor, for instance, often went to stay at Walmer, the residence of Robert Reid. *Daily Telegraph*, 29.10.28., 15.

<sup>110</sup> Anton Taddei, *London Clubs in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 1999), p. 15.

<sup>111</sup> O'Brien, Parnell and his Party, p. 331; *II*, 19.1.14., 4.

<sup>112</sup> Robert Steven, *The National Liberal Club* (London, 1925), P. 112. O'Connor took many of his meals in the National Liberal. He was also a member of the 'Exiles', a small private 'Bohemian' club, which met at Simpson's Restaurant on the Strand. Stephen Gwynn also remembered that O'Connor had been a member of the Johnson club. In 1913, O'Connor was 'prior' or chair of the club. J.C.R. Lardner was also a member. Sir Thomas Esmonde was a member of the London Pontifical Club (all the members had to hold a position connected with the papal court; Esmonde was Grand Officer of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre). *Daily Telegraph*, 29.10.28, 15; Pease, *Elections*, pp. 35-6; Gwynn, 'Long John', p. 37; *FJ*, 17.12.12., 6; 12.4.13., 6; 16.3.11., 7.

from within its own ranks.<sup>113</sup> J.F.X. O'Brien, for example, expressed astonishment that Joseph Biggar should have joined the National Liberal Club and was 'surprised' that both he and Parnell did not disapprove of other Irish Members doing likewise.<sup>114</sup> Indeed, any socialising was seen by some nationalists as fraternisation with the 'enemy'. One former Parnellite, Tim Healy, claimed that '[w]hatever else his opponents might say against him, could they accuse him of being seen at Buckingham Palace or attending balls and parties of the great? His life in London was devoted to his parliamentary work, which was the work of the people (cheers).'<sup>115</sup> Many members of the Party clearly resented such insinuations. E.H. Burke, for instance, told one audience,

They heard people often talking as if the Irish Party were living on large incomes, having a rollicking good time of it in London, doing no work for the Irish people, and enjoying themselves at their expense. He could show them that this was not the case, and...[that all the men] had born the most unremitting strain, and given almost superhuman attendance in Parliament...<sup>116</sup>

In fact, Burke did not enlighten his audience on the practical 'strains' of living in London, and in this, was typical of many Irish MPs, who though frequently prepared to elude to hardships, rarely advanced beyond generalities. And yet, practical strains there undoubtedly were. Members had to feed, clothe and house themselves while living in London, provide the same for their wives and families if they were married, run businesses *in absentia*, and commute between the two islands.

Very little is known about how MPs regarded their adopted city. Stephen Gwynn, for instance, described himself as 'willingly a Londoner; I am as much at home in these streets where I never even think of meeting an acquaintance, as in Dublin where one constantly stops or is stopped by the way for a little conversation'.<sup>117</sup> Some were appalled by the poverty of the metropolis,<sup>118</sup> while others found the incessant rain and the air pollution intolerable.<sup>119</sup> Moreover, for many Irish Members, accustomed to the small, modestly

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<sup>113</sup> For instance, during the Irish Council Bill crisis, MPs were called upon to resign their membership of the National Liberal club as a demonstration of their opposition to the measure. *FJ*, 11.1.10., 9. The *Gaelic-American* frequently criticized MPs for their membership of the NLC. *Gaelic-American*, 15.1.10., 3.

<sup>114</sup> Unpublished O'Brien Autobiography.

<sup>115</sup> *II*, 10.1.10., 5.

<sup>116</sup> *FJ*, 8.12.09., 8.

<sup>117</sup> Gwynn, *Literary Man*, p. 11.

<sup>118</sup> James Hogan, *Australian in London*, pp. 224-5; *Hansard, HC* (series 5) vol. xli, col. 139(15.7.12.); *CT*, 11.12.09., 5.

<sup>119</sup> *Longford Leader*, 23.11.12., 4.

populated towns of provincial Ireland, London must have seemed a 'strange landscape'.<sup>120</sup> George Moore wrote of how, when his fictional MP, James Daly, walked out of Euston station, he was 'dazzled, bewildered, and a little cowed'.<sup>121</sup> For some, awe was tempered by feelings of ambivalence or even antipathy. J.F.X. O'Brien, who lived in London for many years and brought his children up there, apparently 'hate[d] living in the enemies country and long[ed] to return to Ireland'.<sup>122</sup> And William O'Brien recalled how 'to me the most delightful prospect in all great London was the Euston railway platform, because it was the way out of it.' Yet, despite this, he also had a sneaking regard for the imperial capital. As he wrote in 1896 'I never saw London in such monstrous health....No suggestion of a *fin de siecle* here'.<sup>123</sup>

The finding of suitable accommodation for Irish Members was one of the most important requirements for an Irish MP in London. But while house-hunting was possible for some British Members,<sup>124</sup> many Irish MPs would have been unfamiliar with London and its housing market, and would, therefore, have been dependent either on house agents or colleagues.<sup>125</sup> Michael Meagher wrote to James O'Mara, shortly after he had been elected for Kilkenny, 'at your convenience look up suitable quarters for me in a quiet corner of the suburbs of the city and in direct communication by train with the House of Commons. You know I am a green man being never in London.'<sup>126</sup>

Because most Irish MPs were either single or did not bring their families with them for the six months or so of the year during which they lived in London, many would, like J.J. O'Kelly in the 1890s, have had 'no permanent place of abode'.<sup>127</sup> Some Members lived

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<sup>120</sup> Jerry MacVeagh told an audience in November 1913 that 'In the main it was a party of poor men who were called from the desk and the plough in order to take their place in the fighting line. They were thus thrown into the world of politics in London of which many of them knew nothing. *FJ*, 6.11.13., 8.

<sup>121</sup> Moore, *Parnell*, p. 141.

<sup>122</sup> J.F.X. O'Brien to Thomas Sexton, undated, NLI, OBP, ms 13, 429.

<sup>123</sup> O'Brien, 'London Revisited', pp. 808-9, 812.

<sup>124</sup> For instance, see A.T. Bassett, *The Life of the Rt. Hon John Edward Ellis, MP* (London, 1914), p. 61.

<sup>125</sup> Lord Rathcreedan, *Memories of a Long Life* (London, 1931), p. 137.

<sup>126</sup> Meagher seems to have settled in Brixton, since it was there he was taken when he was hit by a pair-horse van as he was about to board a tram in south London. Other Irish Members chose alternative forms of transport: T.P. O'Connor drove to the House of Commons, Michael Bodkin was one of the first MPs to ride a bicycle to work and Arthur Lynch used the London underground. Michael Meagher to James O'Mara, 17.2.06., NLI, OBP, ms 21,545; *II*, 26.4.11., 4; Bessie O'Connor, *I Myself* (London, 1914), p.182; Bodkin, *Recollections*, p.212; Lynch, *Life Story*, p. 253. Tom Condon also suffered injury at the hands of London transport. *FJ*, 30.6.14., 6.

<sup>127</sup> Stephen Bonsal, *Heyday in a Vanished World* (London, 1938), p. 30.



Key: ❶ Pre-1900, ❷ Post 1900.



in hotels.<sup>128</sup> T.P. O'Connor's brother-in-law, William O'Malley, used to stay for many years at the St. Ermin's Hotel in St. James' (just west of the House of Commons) during the week, returning to Brighton at the weekend to be with his family.<sup>129</sup> Some gentlemen's clubs also offered rooms. Tom O'Donnell slept at the Irish Club, and it is possible that membership of London clubs was for some Nationalist MPs as much about accommodation as 'clubbability'.<sup>130</sup> However, most Irish Members seem to have rented rooms privately. Jeremiah Jordan lived in a boarding house with other Irish MPs.<sup>131</sup> P.J. Power lived in Earl's Court for some years in a hotel-cum-guesthouse. Similarly, Richard Hazleton 'occupied furnished lodgings...[which he took] by the week, and left them at the termination of the parliamentary session'.<sup>132</sup> In 1908, D.D. Sheehan's landlady wrote to John Redmond seeking his whereabouts, because as she explained 'he having left here in my debt for apartment and board'.<sup>133</sup>

Although Michael Bodkin held that 'comfortable lodgings can be had at a reasonable cost within measurable distance of the House',<sup>134</sup> the weight of anecdotal evidence would seem to contradict this statement. T.P. O'Connor, for example, referred to backbench Members as having lived in pairs in cramped lodgings in the 'cheap district of Pimlico'. C.J. O'Donnell, himself an MP between 1906 and 1910, remembered that '[m]ost of them lived in squalor across the river in Lambeth'.<sup>135</sup> George Moore also depicted his fictional Irish Member living in Lambeth,<sup>136</sup> while in his fictionalized account of the life of an Irish MP, *O'Rourke the Great*, Arthur Lynch wrote of O'Rourke's Southwark 'digs' as consisting of 'one bedroom, second floor back, in a dingy lodging-house, of which, however, the grimy entrance was cleaner than his little den'.<sup>137</sup>

Each of these authors may have had an interest in depicting Irish Members as poor and miserably domiciled. That said, the modest budgets and seasonal nature of their work, meant that many MPs could well have found lodgings in Lambeth, located south of the river, but close to Westminster, or in Southwark, with its 'maze of small streets and courts

<sup>128</sup> For instance, see Pease, *Elections*, p. 226; Fyfe, *O'Connor*, p. 110; Lyons, *Dillon*, p. 260; *FJ*, 26.10.12., 6; *FJ*, 25.11.12., 9; Horgan, *Parnell*, p. 182.

<sup>129</sup> William O'Malley, *Glancing Back*, p. 157, 187.

<sup>130</sup> Gaughan, *Odyssey*, p. 32.

<sup>131</sup> Jeremiah Jordan to John Pinkerton, 23.4.01., PRONI, PP, D/1078/P/70.

<sup>132</sup> *FJ*, 9.1.13., 7; 11.7.14., 7.

<sup>133</sup> F. Coleman to John Redmond, 24.6.08., DP, TCD, ms 6748/362.

<sup>134</sup> Bodkin, *Recollections*, p. 188.

<sup>135</sup> C.J. O'Donnell, *Outraged Ulster* (London, 1932), p.26.

<sup>136</sup> Moore, *Parnell*, p. 142.

<sup>137</sup> Lynch, *O'Rourke*, p. 95.

crowded in parts with a low living population',<sup>138</sup> of whom Irish immigrants made up a considerable proportion.<sup>139</sup>

More information about the geographical distribution of Members' residential patterns over the period c.1880-1914 is given in figure 1. Although based on incomplete evidence, it suggests that over the period as a whole, the majority of MPs lived north of the river. Whereas those Members who sat before 1900, tended to live in close proximity to Westminster, after 1900, Irish MPs were much more scattered. Still, there are several definite clusters. Of the four Members who lived in Hampstead, three (Lynch, John O'Connor and Ginnell) had literary connections. Four Edwardian MPs lived in Pimlico; three of them were Party whips, which suggests that accessibility to Westminster was a consideration in their choice of accommodation. A group of senior 'upper middle class' MPs (including the Redmond brothers and Edward Blake) lived in Kensington. The largest group of closely domiciled Members (after 1900) lived in Clapham. This group shared no obvious characteristics. However, they may have been drawn to the district because it was a recently developed middle class residential area.<sup>140</sup>

Parliamentary service could and did have much wider human consequences than simply for the MPs elected. The lives of the women married to MPs were profoundly altered by their husbands' political careers, as were their children's lives.<sup>141</sup> In truth, however, marriage itself was not the norm within the Party. As John Redmond told his colleagues in 1912 'One of the reproaches that still attaches, I am sorry to say, to our Party, is that the number of bachelors amongst us is too great'.<sup>142</sup> The reasons for this were several. For those elected in the 1880s, their involvement in agrarian radicalism often meant that they led disrupted personal lives. For instance, William O'Brien's 'myriad public activities...his incessant speechmaking, his dodging of the police, his frequent jail terms, all coupled with his duties as editor and Member of Parliament- were not conducive to regulated living',<sup>143</sup>

<sup>138</sup> Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People of London* (London, 1902), 3rd series, vol. iv, p. 7.

<sup>139</sup> The Irish born population residing in London in 1901 has been estimated at 60,000 people, with the total population of Irish descent at 435,000. Most worked in casual or unskilled jobs, often in the dockland areas. They lived in the city's poorer districts, lying north of the river along the Thames. See, Schneer, *Imperial Metropolis*, p. 171; L.H. Lees, *Exiles of Erin* (Manchester, 1979), pp. 55-87.

<sup>140</sup> Booth, *Life and Labour* vol. v, pp. 176-7.

<sup>141</sup> There is not the space to discuss this point further. On MPs' wives, see Webb, *Autobiography*; Sophie O'Brien, *Golden Memories* (Dublin, 1930); O'Connor, *Myself*; Boland, *Mother's Knee*. On MPs' children, see Law, *Man At Arms*; Boland, *Mother's Knee*; Lavelle, O'Mara; Manning, *Dillon*; Levenson and Natterstad, *Sheehy-Skeffington*.

<sup>142</sup> *FJ*, 9.5.12., 7.

<sup>143</sup> O'Brien, *William O'Brien*, p. ix.

nor meeting potential partners (though this lifestyle seems not so much to have prevented marriage, as delayed it).

Although in later decades imprisonment and evading the police were no longer so commonplace, marriage for those MPs who entered Parliament as bachelors may still have remained difficult because their dual lives at Westminster and in Ireland, their relative poverty and the anti-social hours they worked may not have made them particularly eligible as husbands. Nonetheless, there was a certain social cachet attached to being an MP,<sup>144</sup> and some Irish Members did successfully court their future wives on the terrace of, or at dinner in, the House.<sup>145</sup> However, such opportunities were not confined to single men. Even for those who were married, this social *milieu* (combined with extended separation from their wives), could lead to what T.P. O'Connor described as 'temporary scrapes'.<sup>146</sup> Ironically, O'Connor himself may have had several such 'scrapes'.<sup>147</sup> His wife, a socially ambitious American divorcee, did not provide the domestic security O'Connor craved, though in fairness O'Connor was not an attentive husband and she suffered considerable loneliness as a result of his long absences.<sup>148</sup> By 1907, she was threatening to divorce O'Connor unless he continued to support her financially. The consequent scandal would, as the leadership knew, have been disastrous and so she was paid for her silence.<sup>149</sup> This was not the first such scandal to be handled by the Party. In 1905, Redmond had had to deal with the problems resulting from John O'Connor's failed marriage.<sup>150</sup> Nine years earlier, scandal had enveloped the by-election for East Kerry, after it was alleged by the *Independent* that the anti-Parnellite candidate was a divorcee.<sup>151</sup>

In the case of the East Kerry scandal, the *Freeman's* pointedly asked 'Does the *Independent* consider adultery, followed by divorce, a disqualification to an Irish representative?'. But beyond such editorial point-scoring, the answer was that divorce clearly was a disqualification for an Irish representative, because of prevailing social morality, Catholic doctrine and the memory of the Parnell scandal. However, dubious behaviour in other areas was more difficult to manage. In the East Kerry case, the candidate, James Roche (second son of Lord Fermoy) was elected, but John Dillon

<sup>144</sup> Bodkin, *Recollections*, p.214.

<sup>145</sup> Webb, *Autobiography*, p. 56; Lyons, *Dillon*, p. 253; O'Connor, *I Myself*, p. 142; O'Brien, *Memories*, p. 23; Boland, *Mother's Knee*, p. 136.

<sup>146</sup> O'Connor, *Memoirs*, p. 65.

<sup>147</sup> Brady, *O'Connor*, pp. 157-8.

<sup>148</sup> O'Connor, *I Myself*, p.167.

<sup>149</sup> John Redmond to John Dillon, 8.11.07., TCD, DP, ms 6747/229.

<sup>150</sup> Redmond memorandum, 3.3.05., NLI, RP, ms 15,214 [3]; Redmond memorandum, 10.4.05., NLI, RP, ms 15,214 [3].

<sup>151</sup> Colonel Jameson to Dillon, 27.3.96., TCD, DP, ms 6755/722; *FJ*, 27.3.96., 5.

subsequently received information that Roche had been involved in a 'very questionable piece of company promoting...of which ask shareholders'.<sup>152</sup> The same informant later urged Dillon not to accept personal recommendations in the consideration of potential parliamentary candidates.<sup>153</sup> This was particularly difficult during the 1890s; the party's funds were low and so the need to find candidates who could support themselves was at a premium.

The acceptance by often impecunious Irish Members of non-executive directorships, offered by companies wishing to exploit the status or contacts of an MP,<sup>154</sup> occasionally caused problems. Some Members publicly disdained such offers,<sup>155</sup> while others decided on balance to put their reputations first. Justin McCarthy, for example, was offered £500 a year to join the board of a company dealing in Irish cattle; he refused because 'everybody here and in Ireland would know- must know- that I had merely sold my name for the money'.<sup>156</sup> Other Members consulted the leadership before proceeding. William Abraham (who was a 'city manager of an insurance company') wrote to John Dillon in 1897 asking if his involvement with a Brixton music hall company (for which he was to be paid £250) was compatible with his membership of the Party.<sup>157</sup> Inevitably, because of the uncertainty of such ventures, some MPs were caught out. Dr Robert Ambrose and William O'Malley were two Irish MPs connected with firms that collapsed.<sup>158</sup>

That said, many Members held company directorships quite openly and legitimately. According to the *Directory of Directors*, the number of director MPs in 1906 was 180, in 1909 252, and in 1910 225. In 1910 nine Irish MPs were recorded as holding 18 directorships between them, ranging from the Irish Industrial Printing and Publishing Company to Pure Jamaica Ltd.<sup>159</sup> Additionally, Timothy Harrington was a director of a water company, Sir Thomas Esmonde was for a time on the board of directors of the *Enniscorthy Echo*, Thomas Condon was a director of the *Clonmel Nationalist*, William O'Malley and William Duffy were directors of the *Connacht Tribune*, P.J. Brady was a

<sup>152</sup> Jerry MacVeagh to John Dillon, 31.3.96., TCD, DP, ms 6757/1170.

<sup>153</sup> Jerry MacVeagh to John Dillon, 4.4.96., TCD, DP, ms 6757/1171.

<sup>154</sup> MacDonagh, *Parliament*, p. 59; *Times*, 25.5.98., 3.

<sup>155</sup> For instance, see *Kerry People*, 8.1.10., 7.

<sup>156</sup> Justin McCarthy, *Our Book of Memories. Letters of Justin McCarthy to Mrs Campbell Praed* (London, 1912), p. 215.

<sup>157</sup> *Limerick Leader*, 4.8.15., 4; William Abraham to John Dillon, 7.10.97., TCD, DP, ms 6752/4. Abraham was sometime director of Calais Tramways. Lavelle, *O'Mara*, p. 37.

<sup>158</sup> Maume, *Gestation*, p.34; *Times*: 30.4.14., 4. In later years, such directorships were held against the Party. See, *Mayo News*, 20.10.17., 2.

<sup>159</sup> *The Directory of Directors*, vol. xxxi (1910).



director of the Midland Railway Company, Sir Walter Nugent and John Muldoon were directors of the *Freeman's*, and Hugh Law was on the board of the Anglo-Serbian Trading Company.

According to Bridget Boland, 'having to be in England during the session and in Ireland during the recess, no trade or profession such as was possible to English Members could be carried on by [Irish MPs]'.<sup>160</sup> Certainly, Members' careers were disrupted by attendance at Westminster,<sup>161</sup> and some had to make professional sacrifices. But the reality was more complicated than Boland appreciated. Some Irish Members were able to work in London and sit at Westminster. Arthur Lynch, for example, had a medical practice in North London. According to the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1910, John O'Connor was a 'familiar figure in the courts during the last Parliament'.<sup>162</sup> When Tom Scanlan was called to the English bar in January 1912, it was reported (with approval) that he intended practising in London and on the northern circuit.<sup>163</sup> The journalist and editor T.P. O'Connor wrote to his wife on one occasion 'Dined at my club. Came home early, woke up with my cold worse...But I worked it off. Stuck to business hard all day...I then drove down to the House.'<sup>164</sup> Because the most important business of the parliamentary sitting was usually conducted after 5.00 pm, many MPs (including some from Ireland) found it possible to work an almost full day before attending the House of Commons.<sup>165</sup> Other Irish MPs, who made their living from journalism, wrote whenever they had a spare moment during the sitting. Michael Bodkin recalled 'stealing off...from the smokingroom to the quieter galleries of the House, where [I]...could make copy in peace'.<sup>166</sup>

Moreover, it was not only London residents who continued to work while Parliament was in session. All through the session of 1912, J.G.S. MacNeill would cross to Dublin on Fridays, lecture at the National University on Saturday and return to London on Sunday night. Similarly, 'for years', the Blackrock butcher, William Field 'left [Parliament] on Wednesday, attended the market on Thursday, [and] returned on Sunday or Monday'.<sup>167</sup> One of J.P. Hayden's colleagues judged it a 'mystery' how 'he contrives to give such constant attendance as one of the Members for Roscommon County...[when] he

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<sup>160</sup> Boland, *Mother's Knee*, p. 42.

<sup>161</sup> Bodkin, *Recollections*, p. 243.

<sup>162</sup> *PMG 'Extra'*, 1910, p. 94.

<sup>163</sup> *FJ*, 27.1.12., 7; 21.5.13., 8; *Sligo Champion*, 3.2.12., 6.

<sup>164</sup> O'Connor, *I Myself*, p. 182.

<sup>165</sup> Temple, *House of Commons*, pp.68-70.

<sup>166</sup> Bodkin, *Recollections*, p. 241.

<sup>167</sup> *FJ*, 7.12.12., 6; 'M.A.' and Reid, *Field*, p. 30.

runs a weekly paper in Mullingar, the *Westmeath Examiner*, that must keep his pen very busy'.<sup>168</sup> T.F. Smyth was criticized by his constituents for attending too much to his auction business to the neglect of his parliamentary duties.<sup>169</sup>

In fact, such a heavy work-load did take its toll on Irish MPs. Stephen Gwynn had thought that 'it would not be difficult to combine my writing work with attendance at the House of Commons. Other people had done it- "T.P." and Justin McCarthy most notably.' But he later realized that '[n]o outsider can guess the strain involved by this double role.'<sup>170</sup> T.P. O'Connor himself remembered the difficulty of having to write a leading article to a dead-line of nine o'clock in the morning when 'it was a common if not a usual thing for me to be in the House of Commons till two or three o'clock in the morning.'<sup>171</sup> Justin McCarthy had similar 'grumbles'.<sup>172</sup> Not all Irish MPs found such a regime possible. Tom Kettle eventually found the 'two spheres of duty', as MP and academic, ultimately incompatible,<sup>173</sup> as did Kevin O'Doherty in the case of medicine.<sup>174</sup> Similarly, James O'Mara, who was already the London agent for his father's Limerick bacon curing business when he was elected as the Member for South Kilkenny in 1900, found that his health suffered as a result of his parliamentary activities. As he wrote to Father Brennan in July 1904 'The doctor is not at all sure that I can stand the strain of a double career, but time will tell.'<sup>175</sup>

For those whose occupations were based in Ireland or whose jobs did not involve a high level of what political scientists term 'role dispensability', parliamentary careers were often either extremely difficult or precluded altogether.<sup>176</sup> Not all MPs had wives or children able to manage affairs in their absence.<sup>177</sup> Others, despite similar misgivings, persevered, only to later regret their decisions. James Gibney, for instance, wrote to Dillon in 1896 apologising for his absence from Parliament, but explaining that 'I cannot afford the expense incidental to living in London and... neglecting my business, a fact which I made plain to the Members of our Party...who were present when I was first induced to contest

<sup>168</sup> Boland, *Irishman's Day*, p. 100.

<sup>169</sup> *Roscommon Herald*, 23.11.12., 1.

<sup>170</sup> Gwynn, *Literary Man*, p. 251.

<sup>171</sup> O'Connor, *Memoirs*, p. 258.

<sup>172</sup> Justin McCarthy, *The Story of an Irishman* (London, 1904) pp. 220-1.

<sup>173</sup> For Kettle, see. II, 20.12.09.; *Sinn Fein.*, 1.1.09., 1; Lyons, *Enigma*, pp. 171-4,

<sup>174</sup> M.F. Ryan recalled that while in Parliament O'Doherty tried to set himself up as a doctor in London, but complained that he received very few patients. Ryan, *Memories*, p. 173.

<sup>175</sup> Lavelle, *O'Mara*, p. 59.

<sup>176</sup> Tom Garvin, 'Continuity and Change in Irish Electoral Politics', *Economic and Social Review*, vol. iii, no. 3 (1972), p. 360.

<sup>177</sup> For instance, see M. Delany to John Dillon, 17.8.95., TCD, DP, ms 5771/111.

North Meath'.<sup>178</sup> Another Irish MP, the Belfast solicitor, Michael McCartan, told Dillon in 1897 that he had decided to resign his seat some time before because 'ruin [is] staring me in the face', but had delayed because he did not want to add to the Party's troubles. He added, '[s]ince I entered Parliament it took every penny of my fees remaining and my parliamentary allowance to make ends barely meet and it blasted a bright professional prospect.'<sup>179</sup> Moreover, as he told Dillon the following year, his legal colleagues in Ireland were not above using his membership of Parliament to damage his professional reputation: 'I deeply regret that I was not able to get over this week but in my land cases I had to undertake personally to appear, as other solicitors...[have] spread the rumour that there was no use in going to McCartan...as he would be in London at time of hearing.'<sup>180</sup> Perhaps in the knowledge of such difficulties, some prospective candidates sought to protect their livelihoods before they entered Parliament.<sup>181</sup>

McCartan's financial difficulties stemmed from a combination of his long absences from his legal practice and the opportunism of his professional colleagues. But a further contributing factor, as he admitted to Dillon, was that '[s]ince the allowance fell off, I regret, I have been obliged to fall into debt.' The 'allowance' referred to was the parliamentary salary paid by the Party to those of its members unable to support themselves at Westminster without financial assistance.<sup>182</sup> The previous year, in 1895, 35 Irish MPs had received a stipend, 26 at the rate of £200 and the remainder between £208 and £500. But by early 1897 only 21 MPs were in receipt of the allowance and at the reduced rate of £120. Of course, as F.S.L. Lyons has shown, the period 1895-1900 represented a low-point in the Party's fortunes and finances. After 1900, reunification set the Party's coffers on a healthier standing. But it also saw the growth in the number of Members recruited from provincial lower-middle class backgrounds who did not have the means to support themselves in London.<sup>183</sup> However, since approximately 50 per cent. of the Party between 1906 and 1910 were apparently receiving an average of £120 a year each, clearly not all those MPs receiving assistance were lower middle-class.<sup>184</sup>

<sup>178</sup> James Gibney to John Dillon, 11.4.96., TCD, DP, ms 6754/507.

<sup>179</sup> Michael McCartan to John Dillon, 21.11.96., TCD., DP, ms 6756/974.

<sup>180</sup> Michael McCartan to John Dillon, 12.3.97., TCD, DP, ms 6756/977.

<sup>181</sup> J.J. O'Shee to Pierce Mahony, 31.8.95., TCD, DP, ms 660/1622.

<sup>182</sup> For the history of the allowance see, O'Brien, *Parnell*, pp. 265-72; O'Day, *English Face*, pp. 43-46; Lyons, *Party*, pp. 201-17. For a survey of Irish parliamentary finance in the nineteenth century, see Gwynn, *Cost of Politics*, pp. 129-46.

<sup>183</sup> Lyons, *Party*, pp. 210-11. For instance, see T.F. Smyth to John Redmond, 15.2.06., TCD, DP, ms 6747/167.

<sup>184</sup> For example, see James Lardner to John Redmond 1.7.07., TCD, DP, ms 6747/226.

Lyons judged the Party's payment of its poorer members as 'one of the most considerable feats of management and endurance.' Undoubtedly it was. However, for those members who had to pay 'weekly rent and other minor bills' it was often found to be inadequate. Redmond was approached in mid 1903 by John Roche, Tom Condon 'and two or three other Members' regarding an increase in the monthly payment made to MPs. Redmond replied that 'just at the present moment the amount of the Parliamentary Fund makes it impossible for me to recommend the party to increase the amount.' Redmond explained that the Fund (£3,000 compared to £6,000 at the same point the previous year) was £1,100 in credit or enough to pay the June instalment of the allowance.<sup>185</sup> Three years later, Redmond was approached by Larry Ginnell, who complained that the allowance was 'terribly meagre'.<sup>186</sup>

Part of the reason why the stipend was so inadequate was that after 1900 not only was there an increase in lower middle class MPs, but (according to Lyons) 'all who were able to prove a reasonable case were admitted to the benefits of the indemnity fund'. Furthermore, although its finances improved,<sup>187</sup> subscriptions continued to fluctuate from year to year,<sup>188</sup> while the Party had to meet not only the costs resulting from its operation at Westminster, but also those incurred by the movement in Ireland. Redmond wrote to Dillon in 1906, for example, that the Party fund had been exhausted by election and organisational costs and '[i]n view of the Autumn session we will want to be very careful. We now have only £2,000 in the reserve. I calculate that the autumn session will cost £3,500 if we continue paying at the same rate and all on the list- which has become very large.'<sup>189</sup>

Both the list and stipend may have been reduced as a result,<sup>190</sup> but even in 1909-10 there were accusations that some Members who were wealthy enough to support themselves were claiming the stipend,<sup>191</sup> which prompted some of the better-off Members to publicly state that they were self-supporting.<sup>192</sup>

<sup>185</sup> John Redmond to Eugene Crean, 10.5.03., TCD, DP, ms 6747/39.

<sup>186</sup> Larry Ginnell to John Redmond, 10.9.06., NLI, RP, ms 15,191 [3].

<sup>187</sup> Lyons, *Party*, p. 210.

<sup>188</sup> O'Brien, *William O'Brien*, p. 191.

<sup>189</sup> John Redmond to John Dillon, late August 1906, TCD, DP, ms 6747/185.

<sup>190</sup> In 1911, Matthew Keating estimated the average stipend at 'a little over £100 a year'. *II*, 9.2.11., 7.

<sup>191</sup> S. Geddes to John Roche, 15.10.09., TCD, DP, ms 6750/94; *Mayo News* 25.12.09., 5.

<sup>192</sup> For instance, the Cavan MPs, V.P. Kennedy and Sam Young, separately indicated that they did not receive payment from the Party. *FJ* 19.8.10., 8.; *A-C.*, 16.4.10., 3.

In the light of this information, it might be thought that the Irish Party would have welcomed the government's decision in 1911 to introduce the payment of MPs by the state. But, although the Party endorsed the principle, it did not support its application to Ireland before Home Rule. In taking this position little apparent regard was had for the individual financial circumstances of rank and file Members. Nor, as in Britain, was it prompted by concern about the 'professionalisation' of politics. Rather, it was a question of whether by accepting state assistance the Party would be breaking with its tradition of accepting neither position or patronage from the British government.

For several months the Party seems to have temporized, and it was not until February 1911 that it resolved that Irish MPs should be excluded from any government scheme.<sup>193</sup> Yet, as the *Independent* revealed, at the three hour meeting in the House of Commons when this resolution was passed, 'an equally strong attitude' in favour of accepting payment had been expressed by a number, albeit a minority, of Members.<sup>194</sup> However, of those who were in favour, only one, Michael Meagher, came out openly in support of payment, arguing at a meeting of the North Kilkenny UIL executive that there was no shame in receiving money 'from the British House of Commons' when it came from Irish taxes.<sup>195</sup> The only major Irish voice to advocate payment on the grounds that it would alleviate the impecuniosity of backbench Irish MPs, was the *Independent*.

In August 1911 the leadership of the Irish Party discretely capitulated in the face of Lloyd George's insistence that no individuals or parties would be exempted from the plan to pay MPs £400 a year.<sup>196</sup> Even so, it seems that the parliamentary salary did not solve all the problems traditionally associated with Irish parliamentary service. Speaking in (the admittedly hostile circumstances of) 1918, J.J. Clancy, insisted that '[t]he money only paid their bare expenses and he was beginning to be sorry now he did not spend some of it on himself.'<sup>197</sup> Michael Bodkin had claimed in the 1890s that 'A Member of Parliament of simple tastes, who makes up his mind, as I did, to dispense with all luxuries, including alcohol and tobacco, and take all his meals except breakfast within the precincts of the House of Commons, can be fairly comfortable on £150 a year.'<sup>198</sup> In 1910, Ramsay MacDonald was quoted as saying that he had 'done it on £70 a year', though he estimated

<sup>193</sup> *FJ*, 7.2.11., 6.

<sup>194</sup> *II*, 10.2.11., 2.

<sup>195</sup> *Kilkenny Journal*, 31.5.11., 2. At the North Monaghan executive in April, James Lardner made a 'personal statement' as to his views on the payment of Members. It was not recorded by any of the journalists present, and this may have been because Lardner was dissenting from the formal position of the Party. *A-C.*, 1.4.11., 1

<sup>196</sup> *FJ*, 10.8.11., 7.

<sup>197</sup> *II*, 29.11.18., 3

<sup>198</sup> Bodkin, *Recollections*, p.188.

that a more realistic figure was approximately £250 a year.<sup>199</sup> Of course, by 1917 inflation had devalued the purchasing-power of £400, but Clancy's comments should also be seen in the light of evidence which suggests that MPs did not (as some Irish newspapers had initially urged),<sup>200</sup> receive their full entitlement. For as the Conservative MP, Sir Herbert Nield, giving evidence before the Select Committee on Members' expenses in 1920 explained 'the great Labour organisations are, as I understand, very much like the Irish Party...There the whole £400 was pooled; they gave their money up and took their subsistence allowance.'<sup>201</sup> Neither the Irish press or individual MPs ever referred to such a system, though the *Freeman's* did refer to a 'direct-debit' arrangement whereby £50 of each Member's salary was annually donated to the IPF.<sup>202</sup> Whatever the truth, if payment of MPs placed the Party's finances on a more stable keel, and ensured that payment was regular and constant, it may not after all have improved the average Irish MPs' standard of living as much as was claimed by critics.

In 1911, the government, while providing for the state payment of MPs, did not directly seek to defray the costs many Members' incurred in travelling to and from Parliament to their homes and constituencies.<sup>203</sup> For many Irish MPs the cost, both fiscal and physical, of commuting between England and Ireland was a considerable one. As one Irish historian has observed

Since the Act of Union general good health and a strong constitution had been essentials for any Irish politician who took his job seriously, for he had to travel frequently between Westminster and his constituency, an arduous journey which entailed taking the boat train from Euston station to Holyhead in Anglesey, followed by the frequently stormy sea journey from Holyhead to Kingstown (Dun Laoghaire), another train to whichever part of Ireland he was visiting and then the return trip.<sup>204</sup>

Indeed, so much was sessional migration a part of the lives of most Irish Members that it became part of their collective persona at Westminster. Harry Furniss, the parliamentary illustrator for numerous London newspapers and magazines, recalled the introduction of the 1886 Home Rule Bill, when

Some of the Irish MPs, so as to secure their seats, wrapped themselves up in their railway rugs and slept on the benches in the House, placing their cards in

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<sup>199</sup> *A-C*, 10.12.10., 4.

<sup>200</sup> For instance, see *Kilkenny Journal*, 8.2.11., 2.

<sup>201</sup> *HC Select Committee on Members Expenses Report* (HC (1920) vii), p.650.

<sup>202</sup> *FJ*, 6.8.13., 7.

<sup>203</sup> In fact, transport was an item of expense for which a deduction of £100 was allowed to MPs for the purposes of income tax with the regard to the payment of the £400 salaries. *FJ*, 10.10.12., 10.

<sup>204</sup> Mallow, *Uncrowned Queen*, p. 65; Kee, *Laurel and the Ivy*, p.80.

their places when they awoke the following morning....a certain Tory wag entered the House when the Irish MPs were asleep- as they frequently are on the train journey backwards and forwards to Holyhead- and awoke them all by calling out: "Ticket's please! All change here for College Green", and that a certain Member for Ireland, whose imagination had carried him into mid-Channel, was heard to murmur faintly, "Steward!"<sup>205</sup>

That said, because government officials and Members of Parliament 'had to make frequent journeys between the two capitals...[they] gained first hand experience of the troubles and inconveniences of nineteenth century travel which they passed onto those in "high places".'<sup>206</sup> William Field, for instance, campaigned relentlessly, and ultimately successfully, for the introduction of third-class carriages on the London-Holyhead route.<sup>207</sup> This high-level pressure undoubtedly contributed to making cross-Channel travel a 'top class service'; by 1914 the journey from London to Dublin took only 9 hours.<sup>208</sup> Hence, though it imposed considerable strain, many Irish Members could in normal circumstances leave London on Friday or Saturday, spend Sunday in Ireland and return on Monday to be back at Westminster for Monday evening.<sup>209</sup>

However, while this may have suited some Members, (the Dublin MP, William Field, for example, claimed to 'have crossed oftener than any other MP'), for many others visiting home or their constituencies during a busy session remained impractical. Sam Young, aged 88 in 1910, was too old to make weekend visits home, while J.P. Boland's Kerry constituency was simply too far away.<sup>210</sup> In Boland's case, though representing a remote southern Munster constituency, the frequency of his journey's to Ireland were substantially reduced by his residing permanently in London. Other MPs who continued to live in Ireland, such as the member for South Meath, David Sheehy, were able to reduce travelling time and costs by relocating to Dublin.<sup>211</sup> Similarly, with his election for the Scotland division of Liverpool in 1885, T.P. O'Connor no longer had to make the 18 hour journey to Galway in order to visit his constituency.<sup>212</sup>

<sup>205</sup> Furniss, *Victorian Men*, p.111.

<sup>206</sup> D.B. McNeill, *Irish Passenger Steamship Services* (Newton Abbott, 1971), vol. i, p. 14.

<sup>207</sup> 'M.A.' and Reid, *Field*, p. 31.

<sup>208</sup> McNeill, *Steamship Services*, vol. i, pp. 13-14, 24-26.

<sup>209</sup> *FJ*, 2.7.12., 6.

<sup>210</sup> *FJ*, 1.7.12., 7; Boland, *Irishman's Day*, p. 153. One Irish MP who could return home more frequently was Dr Charles O'Neill, who left London on Fridays for his home in Coatbridge, near Glasgow, returning by the night mail train on Sundays. *FJ*, 7.12.12., 6. Alderman Daniel Boyle spent his weekends in his adopted city of Manchester. *Connaught Telegraph*, 23.11.12., 5.

<sup>211</sup> Ward, *Sheehy-Skeffington*, p. 5. Provincial MPs going to and from London would often break their journey over-night by staying with the Sheehys. Levenson and Natterstad, *Sheehy-Skeffington*, p.8.

<sup>212</sup> Fyfe, *O'Connor*, p. 108.

Inevitably, such frequent journeying over such long distances was demanding. As John Cullinan told a Tipperary audience in late 1909

A great many people thought it was a very happy thing to go over to Westminster to Parliament, but as a great Home Rule member of the Liberal Party recently remarked to him, that people did not seem to appreciate what was taken out of the Irish Members by their fourteen hours' journey from Ireland to London, and if the English Members had to cross to Dublin or Galway, there would be a very poor attendance, and he (Mr Cullinan) remarked that they had lost seven per cent of the Party, which was a great loss...<sup>213</sup>

Cullinan's point was not unique. Party supporters were in no doubt that the exceptional circumstances under which Irishmen attended Westminster took its toll on their health. The *Freeman's* declared at the time of Kendal O'Brien's death that he 'was in the truest sense a martyr to duty',<sup>214</sup> and when the veteran Parnellite Timothy Harrington finally died, his death was attributed to 'the burden of constant attendance in Parliament.' In fact, correctly or otherwise, Nationalists were disposed to regard all such deaths as 'work-related'. As the *Freeman's* London correspondent observed when James O'Connor died in March 1910, 'it can be said that in nearly all of [such instances]...the sad event [was] hastened by the strain of travelling to and attending at Westminster.'<sup>215</sup>

Of course not all such deaths or illnesses should be attributed to the exigencies of parliamentary life. Age (which by 1910 was on average 50) was also an important consideration. Lyons thought this age 'low' enough for the Party to be an active one, and certainly it was not high by parliamentary standards.<sup>216</sup> But in terms of health and general fitness, it was certainly old enough for many Members to have been suffering from the normal complaints associated with middle age.<sup>217</sup> Indeed, the surviving correspondence written by Irish Members to one another reveals a host of casual references to illness and ailments.<sup>218</sup> Absence through illness regularly removed MPs from Parliament every session, as evidenced by the division lists regularly published in the Party press.<sup>219</sup>

<sup>213</sup> *FJ*, 7.12.09., 9. Also see, *FJ*, 9.6.14., 6.

<sup>214</sup> *FJ*, 29.11.09., 7.

<sup>215</sup> *FJ*, 14.3.10. 7. Also see the obituaries of P.J. Power and P.A. Meehan.. *FJ*, 9.1.13., 7; 12.5.13., 6.

<sup>216</sup> The average age of the Members elected in 1906 and at the two 1910 general elections was 49. J.A. Thomas, *The House of Commons, 1906-1911* (Cardiff, 1958), p. 25.

<sup>217</sup> Lyons, *Party*, p.158. See, *Leinster Leader*, 17.5.13., 8.

<sup>218</sup> Dr Ambrose to John Dillon, 13.3.95., TCD, DP, ms 6752/14; Col. Jameson to John Dillon, 27.3.96., TCD, DP, ms 6755/722; Charles Tanner to John Dillon, 26.8.96., TCD, DP, ms 6760/1643; Alfred Webb to John Dillon, 24.4.05., TCD, DP, ms 6760/1739; Samuel Young to John Dillon, 10.12.00., TCD, DP, ms 6760/1781; J.G.S. MacNeill to John Redmond, undated, NLI, RP, ms 15205/1. John Phillips also had one of his eyes removed. *Longford Leader*, 11.3.11., 1.

<sup>219</sup> For instance, in April 1913, Joseph Nannetti, John Roche and P.A. Meehan were ill, John O'Dowd was suffering from 'an attack of haemorrhage', Willie Redmond had a 'severe cold', as



However, while age was undoubtedly an influence on the health and well-being of Irish Members, the life-style imposed on MPs by close attendance at Westminster may still have been an important factor.<sup>220</sup> The Palace of Westminster itself was considered by many of those who worked there to be unhealthy.<sup>221</sup> But while some Members may have been preoccupied with the 'poisonous dust, probably charged with influenza germs' which allegedly permeated the atmosphere of the Palace, a more serious threat to the health of the nation's political representatives was the anti-social working hours parliamentarians kept. Arthur Lynch recalled how frequent late-night sittings left Members 'physically tired and mentally spent'.<sup>222</sup> J.F.X. O'Brien told Thomas Sexton how 'Parliamentary life has always been distasteful to me and the late hours hard to bear.'<sup>223</sup> J.J. Clancy claimed in late 1912 that the 'strain of the work in which the Party are now engaged is the greatest I have known since the fight on the Coercion Bill of 1887'.<sup>224</sup>

The 'social freemasonry' of the House could also take its toll on MPs. The Palace provided not only accommodation for smoking, but it sold a wide range of high quality alcoholic drinks and tobaccos (at rates more cheaply than beyond its precincts).<sup>225</sup> In contrast to the images of *bonhomie* described by some memoirists, T.P. O'Connor wrote of how the atmosphere thus created could, on occasion, have deleterious effects on both individuals and parties.<sup>226</sup> Perhaps out of concern for this, Keir Hardie, during his leadership of the ILP 'laid down the rule that no MP should touch drink during parliamentary hours'.<sup>227</sup> According to O'Connor this was not the custom followed by the IPP. That this did not, however, have a 'deteriorating' effect on the Irish Party may owe something to its discipline and the number of temperance advocates among its members.<sup>228</sup> Ironically, the most notorious incident involving a drunken Irish Member concerned O'Connor himself.<sup>229</sup>

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did John Dillon, A.J.C. Donelan, Sir Thomas Esmonde and Sam Young. Joseph Nolan was convalescing from pleurisy. Hugh Law was absent for three weeks owing to an operation. *FJ*, 9.4.13, 6; 10.4.13., 6.

<sup>220</sup> This was not, however, the opinion of Robert Farquharson, a doctor and Member of Parliament for 26 years. Farquharson, *Parliament*, p. 290.

<sup>221</sup> Barnett Cocks, *Mid-Victorian Masterpiece* (London, 1977), p.110.

<sup>222</sup> Lynch, *Life Story*, p. 248.

<sup>223</sup> J.F.X. O'Brien to Thomas Sexton, undated, NLI, OBP, ms 13, 429.

<sup>224</sup> *FJ*, 7.12.12., 5.

<sup>225</sup> King, *Asquith Parliament*, pp. 86-7, 91.

<sup>226</sup> O'Connor, *Memoirs*, p. 63.

<sup>227</sup> Fenner Brockway, *Inside the Left: Thirty Years of Platform, Press, Prison and Parliament* (London, 1942), pp. 221-2.

<sup>228</sup> In 1910, at least 13 MPs were temperance advocates, though not all practised total abstinence.

<sup>229</sup> Fyfe, *O'Connor*, p.165. The Louth MP, Philip Callan earned Parnell's hostility in part because of his drunkenness in the House of Commons. Lyons, *Parnell*, p. 306. Tom Kettle's alcoholism was not caused by the stress of parliamentary work, but his biographer suggests that 'the dull

While the claims of Edwardian Nationalists that the lives of those Members who died in parliamentary harness had been hastened by their selfless service were exaggerated, it seems clear that the health of a not insubstantial number of MPs was impaired, if often only temporarily, either in or by the House of Commons. One of John Dillon's relations, for example, wrote to him in the summer of 1914 asking 'I hope you are not very exhausted with the heat in London. I hear in "the House" is not very refreshing and I hope you can get over to the sea air.'<sup>230</sup> Dillon's reply has not survived, but it might well have echoed John Redmond's admission to Dillon eight years earlier, when he wrote 'I am about played out with the heat and long sittings.'<sup>231</sup> In fact, Redmond seems to have found parliamentary life extremely tiring. In early spring 1905 he wrote to Dillon

I have had rather a hard week or ten days but I feel all right. I am thinking of trying to take a voyage to Naples and back...I would not like to go unless I c[oul]d arrange for someone to remain in charge as not a day passes without something turning up requiring immediate attention.<sup>232</sup>

Escape usually proved Redmond's salvation, as in August 1906 when he wrote to Dillon from Aughavanagh 'We have had variable weather here, but have been out shooting every day and I feel quite recovered from London- the last month which nearly knocked me over.'<sup>233</sup> In February 1913, Redmond left instructions that no letters were to be forwarded to him during his short holiday on the continent.<sup>234</sup>

Of course, Redmond was chairman of the Party, and thus subject to pressures beyond those normally experienced by most Irish MPs. But in finding his parliamentary duties tiring and stressful, Redmond was not unique. J.G.S. MacNeill found that with the 'abruptness of the change from my tranquil life in Dublin to the strenuousness of party warfare in the House of Commons, my health gave way', and, according to the biographer of Edward Blake 'There is no doubt that, from the material viewpoint, his Irish career was a losing battle, for his health was seriously impaired by overwork'.<sup>235</sup>

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hours lounging around the House of Commons' cannot have helped his addiction. Lyons, *Enigma*, p. 239. Philip O'Doherty was allegedly drunk when he made his maiden speech. John Muldoon to John Dillon, 26.3.06., NLI, RP, ms 15,182 [10].

<sup>230</sup> Dolly Dillon to John Dillon, 30.6.14., DP, TCD, ms 6859/139.

<sup>231</sup> John Redmond to John Dillon, 31.7.06., DP, TCD, ms 6747/180.

<sup>232</sup> John Redmond to John Dillon, 21.3.05., DP, TCD, ms 6747/133.

<sup>233</sup> John Redmond to John Dillon, 17.8.06., TCD, DP, ms 6747/183. For the hours Redmond worked in Parliament, see *FJ*, 2.12.12., 6. In February 1913 Redmond left England for a holiday on the continent, 'so that', as the *Freeman's* correspondent put it, 'he may have a complete rest, which would scarcely be possible in Ireland'. He also left instructions that no letters were to be forwarded to him. *FJ*, 15.2.13., 6.

<sup>234</sup> *FJ*, 15.2.13., 6.

<sup>235</sup> MacNeill, *Seen and Heard*, p. 259; Banks, *Edward Blake*, p. 343.

In late 1882, J.J. O'Kelly wrote to John Devoy that he was already considering resigning from Parliament, as he had no intention of 'playing the part of the impecunious Member.'<sup>236</sup> Thirty years later, O'Kelly was still in parliament, despite the fact that his finances had not improved.<sup>237</sup> O'Kelly, of course, was by 1910 an invalid. Even so, the evidence suggests that if the standard of living of Irish MPs after 1900 was better than their late Victorian predecessors, living in London and working at Westminster continued to pose significant financial problems for many Edwardian Members.<sup>238</sup> With respect to their lifestyles more generally, it seems clear that Irish Members were much more socially and culturally integrated within the House of Commons than in c.1880, while beyond Westminster, the substantial number of Irish MPs who were associated with the National Liberal Club illustrates the close political and social links between the Irish and Liberal parties. However, the image of these years which is most vivid, is not the MP using the House of Commons 'as a kind of step ladder for climbing into the drawing rooms of London',<sup>239</sup> but of the often bored backbencher in his lodging-house 'looking at the four walls' or 'wandering aimlessly around the House striving to kill time'.<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> J.J. O'Kelly to John Devoy, 15.12.82., in O'Brien and Ryan, *Devoy's Post Bag*, vol. ii, p. 175.

<sup>237</sup> In 1907 he wrote to John Redmond that 'I have been confined to the House since Parliament rose' and told him that 'I am in trouble financially owing to...the long adjournment from the House...[which] makes an awful gap.' J.J. O'Kelly to John Redmond, 2.12.07., TCD, DP, ms 6747/233.

<sup>238</sup> Jackson, *Ulster Party*, p. 92-3.

<sup>239</sup> *Parl. Debs.* (series 4) vol. cxvi, col. 688 (20.12.02.).

<sup>240</sup> *Longford Leader*, 23.11.12., 4.

### Conclusion

Senia Paseta has recently written of Ireland's 'lost' Home Rule generation of educated young men and women who in 1914 were 'poised to inherit and lead a self-governing Ireland.'<sup>1</sup> Certainly, Nationalists anticipated that (as one MP put it) 'Under Home Rule young men leaving college would have placed before them...the career of politics'.<sup>2</sup> However, it was also widely expected (not always enthusiastically) that there would be a considerable degree of continuity between the personnel of the Party and the first Irish House of Commons.<sup>3</sup> Of course, not all MPs intended to continue in harness, but many did, and some gave their constituents notice to this effect.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the minds of some Members probably also turned in these years towards the new political opportunities which self-government would open up.<sup>5</sup> Michael MacDonagh thought that J.P. Boland, Stephen Gwynn, Hugh Law and J.J. Mooney, might well have expected to be appointed to Ministerial positions under a Home Rule administration.<sup>6</sup> More recently, Conor Cruise O'Brien has suggested (unconvincingly) that his grandfather, David Sheehy, would have been in the first Irish cabinet, while Patrick Maume has described Tom O'Donnell in similar terms. Clearly, it was not just Ireland's nascent intelligentsia who were 'worsted in the game'.

Of course, some former MPs did remain politically active after 1922. Five ex-Irish Members stood as parliamentary candidates for various British parties in the 1920s.<sup>7</sup> Tom O'Donnell and Jerry MacVeagh were Irish National League candidates at the 1927 Dail election.<sup>8</sup> Alfie Byrne became a Dublin TD. W.A. Redmond sat in the Dail from 1921 to 1932; his wife Bridget succeeded him and sat until 1952. Hugh Law was a TD for Donegal from 1927 to 1932, while Sir Walter Nugent became a Free State senator in 1928. Sir Thomas Esmonde was also a senator (indeed, he was offered the chairmanship of the senate), and was reportedly favoured at one time as Governor-General of the Free State.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Paseta, 'Ireland's Last Home Rule Generation', p. 14, 29.

<sup>2</sup> *FJ*, 23.11.11., 10. However, see J.P. Farrell's critical comments concerning 'young men fresh from the university'. *FJ*, 10.1.11., 8.

<sup>3</sup> *FJ*, 8.11.11., 7; 9.5.14., 7; *II*, 7.1.15., 4. There was very little public enthusiasm for the core Redmondite theme of recruiting moderate landlords to the future Parliament. Only Hugh Law and P.J. Brady expressed such sentiments. *FJ*, 4.12.09., 2; 15.10.13., 6. Some MPs remained firmly wedded to unreconstructed agrarian, class, and sectarian shibboleths. For instance, see *Sligo Champion*, 27.1.12., 12.

<sup>4</sup> For instance, see *FJ*, 8.10.13., 9.

<sup>5</sup> This had certainly been the case in 1885-6. See, McCarthy, *Irish Revolution*, p. 459.

<sup>6</sup> *II*, 14.4.34., 8.

<sup>7</sup> Maume, *Gestation*, p. 219.

<sup>8</sup> Gaughan, *Odyssey*, p. 172.

<sup>9</sup> *CE*, 16.9.35., 6.

The Esmondes represented Wexford almost uninterrupted in the Dail from 1923 through to the late 1970s. Similarly, in Kerry, J.P. Boland's daughter, Honor, succeeded her husband (Fred Crowley, TD for Kerry 1927-45), so that (as Bridget Boland put it) South Kerry 'was a "rotten borough" in the family for nearly seventy [years].'<sup>10</sup>

This last example (that of the Bolands/Crowleys) is particularly significant because in many ways it seems to embody the changes which Irish parliamentary representation underwent in the first half of the twentieth century. Whereas J.P. Boland was an Oxford educated barrister, who lived in London and visited Kerry about twice a year, his son-in-law was typical of the generation which came to prominence between 1916 and 1923. He possessed what Tom Garvin has termed 'revolutionary charisma', having been a member of the Irish Volunteers and later the Kerry IRA.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, he was 'well-entrenched in the local social system': he lived in his constituency (as did 85 per cent of his 1927 Dail cohort) and sat on the Kerry County Council, was president of the Killarney GAA Club, chairman of the Kerry Board of Health, and president of the Killarney Trout Anglers' Association.<sup>12</sup>

Of course, Boland was not demographically typical of his Party colleagues; unlike the majority of Irish MPs he had neither residential nor family links with his constituency, he was independently wealthy and he had received a university education. Even so, his presence in the Irish Party is indicative of an important cultural and conceptual difference between the role of Edwardian MPs and their Free State successors. Whereas the typical parliamentary representative after 1922 was (apparently) 'more concerned with being an ambassador for his community to the central government than with the task of making national policy or law',<sup>13</sup> Edwardian Irish Members (both carpet-baggers and 'local' men) were elected ostensibly on a national(ist) Westminster-oriented ticket.

Yet, it is noteworthy that, alongside this elaborate and formalized partisan role, many Irish MPs were also highly attentive to the parochial interests of their constituents. This role was the product of a combination of factors. Historically, rural (Catholic) Ireland was culturally accustomed to the part played by agents (usually the clergy) as mediators between the individual and those in authority. The persistence of popular hostility towards an alien government meant that this need continued. Moreover, the ameliorative and progressive legislation of successive Victorian and Edwardian British governments had an idiosyncratic impact on Ireland, multiplying the points of contact between the individual

<sup>10</sup> Boland, *Mother's Knee*, pp. 50-1.

<sup>11</sup> Tom Garvin, 'Continuity and Change', p. 360.

<sup>12</sup> *II*, 7.5.45., 3; *CE*, 7.5.45., 3; *Irish Times*, 7.5.45., 3.

<sup>13</sup> Garvin, 'Continuity and Change', p. 361. On this, see Lee, *Ireland, 1912-1985*, pp. 80-2, 84.

and the state, and thus creating a niche for a much expanded mediation role. Doubtless also, the character of the 1884-5 electoral reforms reinforced this feature of Irish parliamentary representation: although the Irish electorate more than doubled in 1884, Irish constituencies were still half the size of an average English seat, thereby making it possible for a 'personal relationship' to exist between Members and their constituents.<sup>14</sup> Finally, in its development and elaboration, the constituency function can also be understood in terms of 'compensation'; in the 1880s it counterbalanced the decline in the individual MPs' sphere of action (as party discipline increased), and after 1906, it off-set some of the disadvantages of being allied to the Liberal government.

The performance of these two functions was possible because of the sharp role differentiation which developed between the MP as a member of the Party and in his capacity as a private Member. In Burkean terms, this in effect meant that Irish MPs were 'delegates' of the Party and 'representatives' of their constituencies. Of course, there was an underlying tension between the partisan and constituency roles performed by Irish MPs; Michael Meagher and David Sheehy, for example, were both forced to assert their individual autonomy in the face of aggressive constituency assertions to the contrary. Granted, both these cases represented more than a local power-struggle, but they do highlight the fact that in the years before the First World War, criticism of MPs from within mainstream nationalism often focussed not on questions of cultural assimilation, but on unsatisfactory attention to constituency interests. As much as their British counterparts, Edwardian Nationalist MPs found that relations between 'leaders' and 'led' were often not straightforward and required 'continuous...negotiation and renegotiation'.<sup>15</sup> That said, there is no suggestion that such difficulties directly contributed to the defeat of the Party in 1918. Neither in or before that year was a Member's attentiveness to his constituency *the* question alone on which his re-election turned.

Nor does recognition and appreciation of the fact that by c.1910, Nationalist Members devoted a considerable amount of their time and energy (both at Westminster and in Ireland) to the representation of their constituents, mean that historians of Edwardian politics should seek to demonstrate 'the importance of the unimportant'. James Vernon has rightly reminded modern scholars that 'In a world devoid of the 'stars' of mass entertainment and organized sport, they [politicians] occupied a (possibly the) central place

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<sup>14</sup> Pugh, *Electoral Reform*, p. 33; Hugh Berrington, 'Partisanship and Dissidence in the Nineteenth Century House of Commons', *PA*, vol. xxi, no. 4 (1968), p. 339.

<sup>15</sup> Lawrence, *Speaking for the People*, p. 180.

in popular culture, at once revered and reviled, loved and loathed.’<sup>16</sup> But this corrective, while certainly necessary, is overstated. Undoubtedly, possession of the ‘magic letters’ was important, but as Liam O’Flaherty observed ‘Unless there is an agitation of some sort, politicians tend to become second-rate persons’, and that while MPs were popular, the Irish people were never ‘as enthusiastic [about them] as they were about the local hurling champion, or the man who split the bailiff’s skull at C\_\_\_\_\_ with a silver crucifix.’<sup>17</sup> The constituency service performed by Irish MPs was constant, habitual and routinized; it seems often to have been regarded as an integral but unexceptional part of parliamentary service, and not one which necessarily merited particular attention or even praise. Although the vast majority of Irish men and women in Ireland would not have had personal dealings with their MP, there seems, nonetheless, to have been a fairly widespread awareness that the local Member of Parliament was prominent among a larger constellation of public men as one to whom ordinary people could communicate with concerning matters ranging from private grievances to public policy. As such, MPs acted as an important human link between the local community and Westminster.

In historical terms, the constituency service of Irish MPs is important. Firstly, it demonstrates that the work of backbench Members consisted of much more than the ‘sitting, acting, and voting’ to which they were formally pledged and on which historians have previously concentrated. Secondly, this constituency role does not (pending further research) seem to have possessed an equivalent status among British MPs; a fact which highlights the existence of important variations in the respective political cultures of Britain and Ireland under the Union. And thirdly, it suggests that in many respects, the post-1922 TD as ‘consumer representative’, ‘contact man’, and ‘hawker of local interests’ was the lineal descendant of the early twentieth century Nationalist MP. Indeed, as Bridget Boland recalled, when her father first met Fred Crowley

Fred was paralysed at first, but after a while mentioned a part of the constituency where he was trying to get a road built. My father who had been politely struggling to keep some sort of conversation going with this poor dear shy young man, sat up “Do you mean to tell me that they haven’t built that road yet?”  
 “They have not! Would you believe it!”  
 “And the bridge to Valencia Island?”  
 “Nor that!”  
 They were off. Roads and bridges and schools and local industries- it was the well-being of Kerry men that was really all either of them cared about.

<sup>16</sup> James Vernon, *Politics and the People, a study in English political culture, c.1815-1867* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 251.

<sup>17</sup> O’Flaherty, *Healy*, pp. 112-13.

Thus, pace Garvin,<sup>18</sup> belying the change in personnel, there was a degree of continuity in the culture of Irish politics before and after independence which hitherto has not been afforded sufficient attention in modern analyses of the evolution of parliamentary representation in twentieth century Ireland.<sup>19</sup>

In the ten years before the First World War, Sinn Feiners and O'Brienites both (separately, but congruently) argued that the Edwardian Irish Party represented the bastard issue, not of Parnell, but of the 'marginal' Home Rule politicians of the mid-Victorian period. Many modern historians have (knowingly or not) echoed this and other criticisms levelled against the Party between 1900 and 1914.

There is certainly evidence to substantiate some of these claims (if not the same anger which gave them such contemporary force). By 1910, the Party did possess numerous veteran MPs who could be (and were) described as 'old parliamentary hands'. After 1906, obstruction disappeared and instead became the stuff of smokingroom reminiscences.<sup>20</sup> Culturally integrated at Westminster, a not inconsiderable number of these men possessed moderate royalist and imperialist loyalties. Given the close personal and political links of many Irish Members to the Liberal party, the policy of 'independent opposition' was largely a fiction, while the 'self-denying ordinance' relating to government patronage was negated by the (sometimes blatant) jobbing of Nationalist MPs. The Party's attitude towards the 1913 lock-out reflected not only the socio-religious conservatism of its many rural middle class members, but its intolerance of public debate. Irish Members were often conformist and sometimes spineless. Dissent was presented as disloyalty.

Yet, while there is clearly much in Roy Foster's description of the Party as 'a curious blend of Trollopian fixers, political journalists, respectable ex-fenians and closet imperialists',<sup>21</sup> this is still only half the picture. In the first place, the claim that the Party was 'out of touch' with Ireland needs to be handled carefully; though the Party did not apprehend (before 1914) the political 'threat' posed by Sinn Fein or sections of the Gaelic revival, its provincial connections with the Gaelic League and the GAA were wider than historians have appreciated, while it continued to espouse a brand of what Matthew Kelly has termed 'emotional fenianism' up until the First World War. Furthermore, though

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<sup>18</sup> Tom Garvin, *1922: the Birth of Irish democracy* (Dublin, 1996), pp. 9-10.

<sup>19</sup> A similar conclusion is reached by K.T. Hoppen. However, Hoppen does not explore the practical methods of constituency service. Hoppen, *Elections*, p. 484.

<sup>20</sup> Boland, *Irishman's Day*, p. 14.

<sup>21</sup> Foster, *Paddy and Mr Punch*, p. 271.



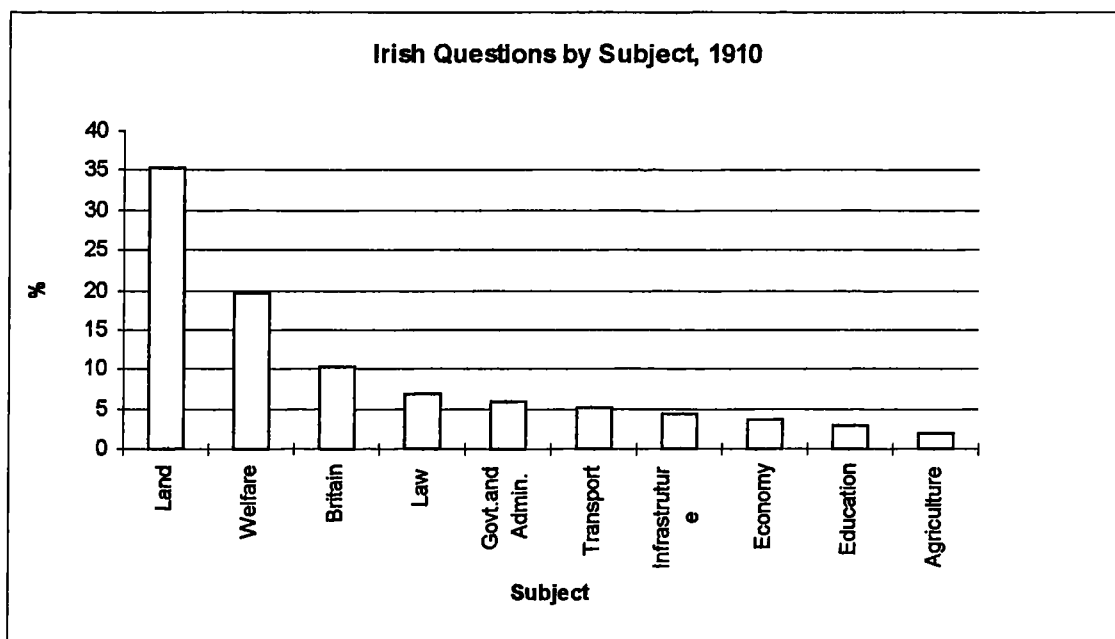
absent for long periods of time, many Members resided in the constituencies which they represented and were very much a part of the communities in which they lived.

Secondly, living in London and working at Westminster continued to be often difficult and demanding, hardships which should be acknowledged without immediately being juxtaposed against those of the men of 1916. With regard to the 'Liberalisation' of the Party, it is no coincidence that constitutional nationalism was most closely identified with the 'multi-British alliance against privilege and the old elites' during the House of Lords crisis. This is not to deny that several Irish Members (T.P. O'Connor, Swift MacNeill, and Tom Scanlan) had very close links with British Liberalism, nor that Irish MPs did not share some Liberal priorities (though on an issue like Free Trade the Party was divided). However, there were good pragmatic reasons for identifying with the coalition of progressive parties: Home Rule required a multi-party majority in the House of Commons, and so the Irish Party worked hard to persuade British voters of the moderation and broader benefits of Irish self-government.

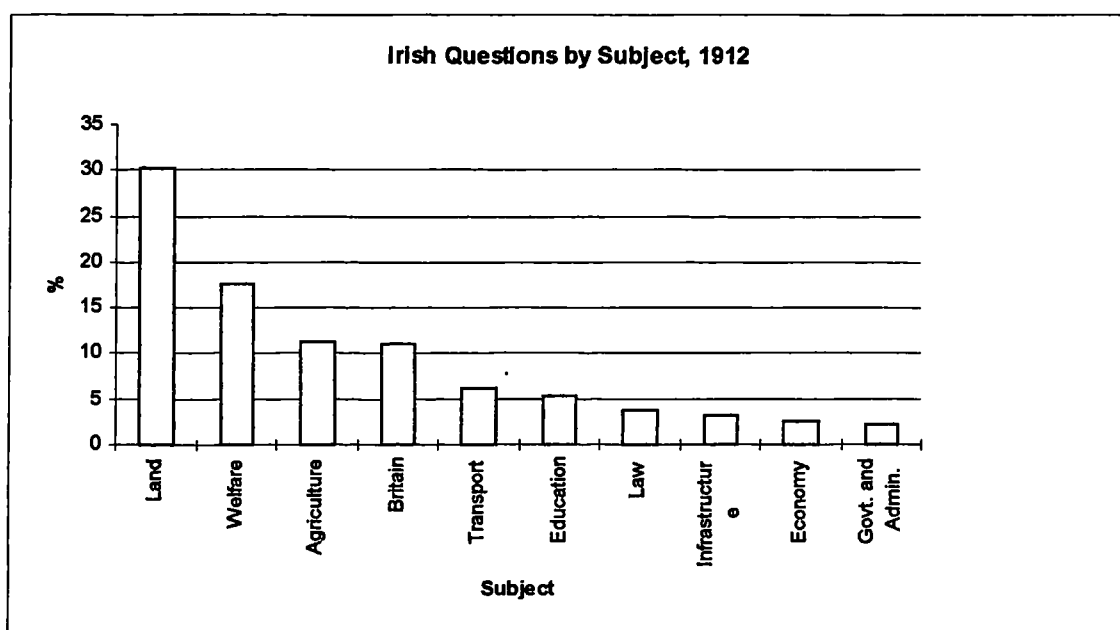
As to the Party's assimilation by the House of Commons, for all their so-called 'mellowing', Irish MPs in Parliament continued to demonstrate that they were not like other backbenchers. During the period 1910-14, they showed themselves both more amenable to party discipline and willing to surrender the 'privileges' of private Members than the MPs of other parties. However, Irish Members were not simply 'voting machines' or 'automatons'; on a number of issues (Unionist participation in post-Home Rule politics, Ireland's relationship with the British empire, and enlistment) the rank and file took a considerably more cautious line than John Redmond. Edwardian Irish Members were, then, (to borrow Alan O'Day's description of their Parnellite predecessors) 'intelligent, forceful men who loved politics' and who were aware of and very much involved in the world in which they lived.

## Appendix 1.

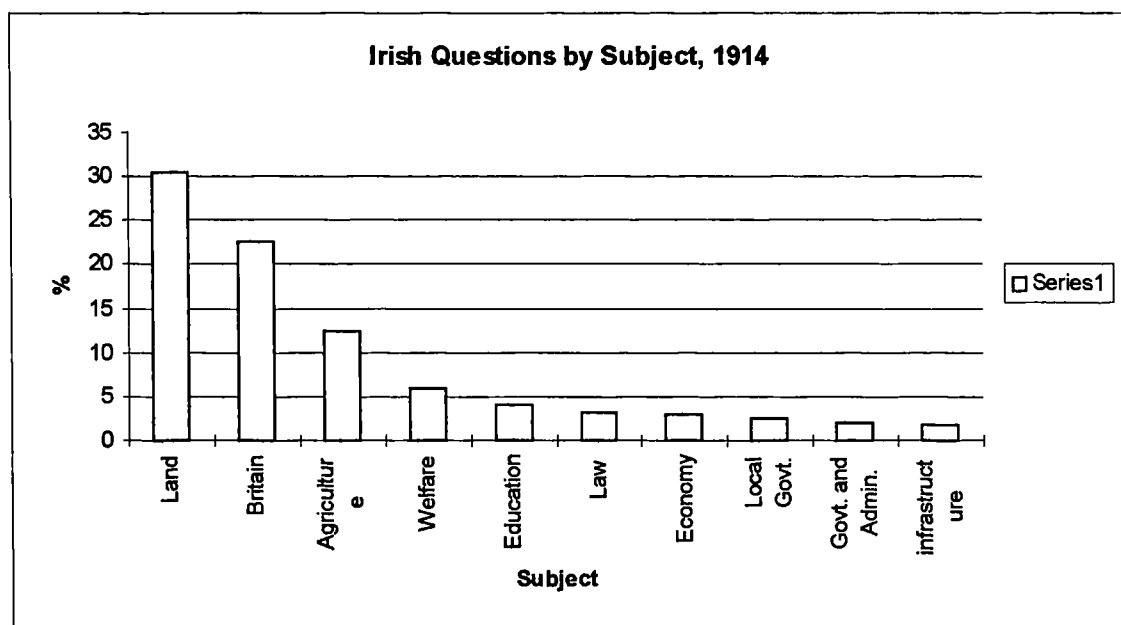
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