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Title	The legacy of the Irish Parliamentary Party in Independent Ireland, 1922-49
Author(s)	O'Donoghue, Thomas Patrick Martin
Publication Date	2016
Item record	http://hdl.handle.net/10379/6251

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The Legacy of the Irish Parliamentary Party in Independent Ireland, 1922-49

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Thomas Patrick Martin O'Donoghue B.A. (Hons) M.A.

Supervisor: Dr Mary N. Harris

History, School of Humanities
National University of Ireland, Galway

December 2016

ABSTRACT

This study provides the first detailed analysis of the influence and persistence of Irish Party individuals, organisations and political culture in independent Ireland (1922-49). While many former followers remained disillusioned, others re-entered politics and won election to Dáil Éireann; the number of TDs with Irish Party heritage in the early Dáils is highlighted here for the first time. Previous scholarship has focussed on the enduring primacy of the Civil War divide; this thesis highlights the persistence of home rule loyalty in the Free State and the effects this had on the development of party politics. This includes special focus on the neo-Redmondite National League party; the Home Rule-tinged leadership of the Centre Party, the invocation of the Land League legacy, and the reasons why those from Home Rule backgrounds made the often difficult transition into the Treatyite fold.

Many have noted the effects of proportional representation and multi-seat constituencies on the nature of Irish politics; yet, constituency brokerage served a key function of the IPP. This thesis suggests that the persistence of the IPP's roles and methods was not confined merely to those from party backgrounds; it informed the political culture of independent Ireland, highlighting continuities between pre- and post-independence Ireland.

The late Irish Party led by John Redmond clearly saw itself as the successor of Parnell; however, this inheritance was not seen in such simple terms in the memory of post-Rising Ireland. John Redmond was not completely forgotten in the years after this death as the depth of Irish Party loyalty in the Free State demonstrated. However, this study illustrates how the cleavages of contemporary politics and the commemorative priorities of an Irish state established on the sacrifice of 1916 saw Parnell and the agrarian radicalism of the early Irish Party privileged over the Redmondite party in the state's public memory.

CONTENTS

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	iv
Tables	vi
Abbreviations	viii
Terminology	x
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: The Irish Party and the struggle for Independence, 1912-22	28
Chapter 2: The Legacy of the Irish Party in Free State Politics, 1922-5	66
Chapter 3: The Place of Home Rulers in the Early Free State: Memoir, Commemoration and Public Discourse, 1922-25	105
Chapter 4: ‘Seeking inspiration in the great traditions of past Nationalist successes’: the National League, 1926-7	139
Chapter 5: The Aftermath of the National League: Ex-Home Rulers and the position of constitutionalist politics, 1928-33	184
Chapter 6: From Free State to Republic: The place of old Home Rulers in a new Ireland, 1933-49	236
Conclusion	295

Acknowledgements

The completion of a thesis such as this one would not be possible without the help of many individuals who have provided assistance, advice and support throughout the process. My first and greatest debt is to my supervisor Dr Mary Harris whose wisdom, guidance and regular encouragement throughout my academic career has been pivotal.

I am grateful to the staff at a number of institutions. The archivists and staff at the National Library were unfailingly helpful during my visits. I would also like to thank the staff in the National Archives, in particular, Brian Donnelly who cooperated with my numerous requests. Thanks are also due to the staff in Special Collections, NUI Galway, the Manuscripts Department, Trinity College Dublin, UCD Archives, UCC Archives, the Oireachtas Library and Archive, Cork City and County Archive, Dublin Diocesan Archives, the Royal Irish Academy, Meath Diocesan Archive, Mullingar, Lorraine Buchanan of the Louth County Archive, Theresa Loftus of the Monaghan County Museum and the staff at the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland. I am thankful too to Trevor White of the Little Museum of Dublin for allowing me access to the Alfie Byrne collection, and to Chantal Brown who assisted me with my enquiries while there. I am grateful to both the Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael parties for granting me permission to access their archives deposited at UCD. Finally, I would like to acknowledge Mr. Jimbo Crossan, President of the AOH Board of Erin for kindly granting me permission to view the Board of Erin minutes of meetings for the period under study in this thesis.

Relatives of former Irish Party members and supporters also assisted with queries and conversation. I am grateful to Paddy Byrne, John Blake Dillon, John and Brendan McGahon, and Rosaleen Linehan for sharing memories through correspondence or in person. I am especially grateful to Prof John Horgan for providing copies of his grandfather's articles in *The Round Table* on CD-ROM.

I am thankful too to others who have given their time to provide insights and guidance on the thesis and related topics. Pat McCarthy provided me with an advance copy of his book on Waterford while Mark Phelan, Gerard Madden, Steven O'Connor, and Ciarán Wallace responded helpfully to queries. I have also benefitted from discussing my topic with a number of scholars, in particular, Conor Mulvagh, Maurice Manning, Felix Larkin, James McConnel, Conor McNamara, Caitríona Clear, Patrick Maume, Tony Varley, John Cunningham, Mel Farrell, Cormac Ó Comhraí, David MacEllin, Colin Reid, Dermot Meleady, Úna Newell, Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, John O'Donovan, Brian Casey, Darragh Gannon, Dara Folan, Gearóid Barry, Laurence Marley and Jackie Uí Chionna.

I would also like to acknowledge the College of Arts Doctoral Scholarship scheme at NUI Galway, and subsequently the Irish Research Council for generously supporting this research. Without such backing, research such as this would not be possible.

A study like is made a far less onerous task by the friendship and support of many individuals both within academia and elsewhere. Those who I was fortunate enough to call friends during the last four years in Galway include Conor McNamara, Meredith Meagher, Tomás Finn, Sarah-Anne Buckley, Dara Folan, Eamonn Gardiner, Dónal Ó Catháin, Jackie Uí Chionna, Cathal Smith, James O'Donnell, Kieran Hoare, Gerard Madden, Joe Regan, and Christina Folsom as well as my friends and colleagues in the Old Tuam Society.

Outside the world of history, many thanks are gladly offered to friends who provided good company, friendship and hospitality without need to discuss the thesis. Thanks are due to Enda Howley, Kevin Langan, Chris St John, Paul McHugh, Ronan Boyce, Eric Loughlin, and especially, Patrick and Noel Lawless who kindly facilitated lengthy archival stays in Dublin during the earlier stages of my research.

Lastly, I acknowledge the enormous support and encouragement of my parents Aidan and Joan, who have aided my progression through academia immensely. This thesis is dedicated to them.

Tables

Table 2.1 - Independents from Home Rule backgrounds 1922-7

Table 2.2 - Individuals from Home Rule backgrounds in the Seanad 1922-5

Table 2.3 - Individuals from Home Rule backgrounds in the Farmers' Party 1922-7

Table 2.4 - Individuals from Home Rule backgrounds in Pro-Treaty Sinn Féin/Cumann na nGaedheal 1922-7

Table 2.5 - Individuals from Home Rule backgrounds in Anti-Treaty Sinn Féin 1922-6

Table 2.6 - Persistence of pre-1920 councillors after independence

Table 3.1 - Membership of the AOH in the Free State to 31 March 1925

Table 4.1 - Individuals from Home Rule backgrounds in Fifth Dáil

Table 4.2 - IPP backgrounds of National League candidates June 1927

Table 4.3 - National League first preference vote by constituency June 1927

Table 4.4 - Individuals from Home Rule backgrounds elected at September 1927 election

Table 5.1 - Seanad Triennial Elections 1928-31

Table 5.2 - Individuals from Home Rule backgrounds in Cumann na nGaedheal 1932

Table 5.3 - Individuals from Home Rule backgrounds in Fianna Fáil 1932

Table 5.4 - Individuals from Home Rule backgrounds in other groupings in the Seventh Dáil

Table 5.5 - Individuals from Home Rule backgrounds in the Eighth Dáil

Table 6.1 - Individuals from Home Rule backgrounds in the UIP/Fine Gael at foundation

Table 6.2 - TDs from Home Rule backgrounds in Fine Gael 1937-44

Table 6.3 - Individuals from Home Rule backgrounds in Fianna Fáil 1934-44

Table 6.4 - Individuals from Home Rule backgrounds in the Labour party 1934-44

Table 6.5 - Independent TDs from Home Rule backgrounds 1934-44

Table 6.6 - Seanad Triennial Election 1934

Table 6.7 - Senators in reconstituted Seanad 1938-49

Table 6.8 - Individuals from Home Rule backgrounds in the Dáil 1948

Note on Tables: Information on pre-1918 careers of TDs and senators has been collated using extant biographical information, including newspaper obituaries, and cross-checking with the 1911 Census; *Thom's Directory*; William J. Flynn, *Irish Parliamentary Handbook 1939, Free State Parliamentary Companion 1932, Oireachtas Companion and Saorstát Guide for 1928*; Cadogan and Falvey, *Biographical Dictionary of Cork*; *Dictionary of Irish Biography* and local histories listed in the bibliography. 'Home Rule councillors' is taken broadly to include all Nationalist politicians in the pre-1918 period as well as strictly UIL-affiliated individuals.

Abbreviations

AFIL - All for Ireland League

AOH - Ancient Order of Hibernians

BOE - Board of Erin

CBS - Columbia Broadcasting Service

CCCA - Cork City and County Archive

DDA - Dublin Diocesan Archive

DFA - Department of Foreign Affairs

DIB - *Dictionary of Irish Biography*

GAA - Gaelic Athletic Association

GPO - General Post Office

IDL - Irish Dominion League

IFU - Irish Farmers' Union

ILLA - Irish Land and Labour Association

INF - Irish National Foresters

IPP - Irish Parliamentary Party

IRA - Irish Republican Army

IRB - Irish Republican Brotherhood

ITGWU - Irish Transport and General Workers' Union

MP - Member of Parliament

NAI - National Archives of Ireland

NFRL - National Farmers' and Rate-Payers' League

NLI - National Library of Ireland

ODNB - *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*

OPW - Office of Public Works

PRONI - Public Record Office of Northern Ireland

PR-STV - Proportional Representation by Single Transferable Vote

RDC - Rural District Council
RTÉ - Raidió Teilifís Éireann
TCD - Trinity College Dublin
TD - Teachta Dála
UCC - University College Cork
UCDA - University College Dublin Archives
UDC - Urban District Council
UFPA - United Farmers Protection Association
UIL - United Irish League
UIP - United Ireland Party
UK - United Kingdom
UVF - Ulster Volunteer Force

Note on terminology

The terms Irish Parliamentary Party, Irish Party and IPP are used throughout this thesis. ‘Irish Party’ has been used to refer to the parliamentary party and its wider movement in Ireland with ‘IPP’ used to break monotony. ‘Irish Parliamentary Party’ is generally only used to refer to the pledge-bound party at Westminster.¹ However, ‘Irish Parliamentary Party’ has been used in the title as it remains its most recognisable appellation in studies of the party and provides the clearest distinction between it and subsequent Irish political parties.

Home Ruler is used (with capitals) to denote a follower of the Irish Party. ‘Home Rule’ is also capitalised when used as an adjective to refer to the Irish Party or the wider movement in pre-1918 Ireland e.g. a TD with a Home Rule background. ‘Home Rule’ is also used when referring to specific legislation or the names of organisations. Lowercase is used when referring to home rule as a concept.

‘Nationalist’ and ‘Unionist’ when capitalised refer to political parties or politicians from such parties; in lowercase, both terms simply refer to communities or individuals more generally. The term ‘old Nationalist’ is used, as it was in the 1920s, to denote former followers of the Home Rule movement in the Free State.

Although ‘Redmondite’ has sometimes been used generically to denote an Irish Party follower, the term will be used more judiciously in this thesis. It is used here to refer either specifically to the party led by John Redmond, those close to Redmond and what has been described as the ‘socially conservative, conciliatory and imperialist’ elements of his politics, or to persistently loyal followers in Waterford and Wexford who retained devotion to the Redmond family.²

‘Treatyite’ is used to refer to a supporter of the Anglo-Irish Treaty settlement and is used interchangeably with the names of the successor parties of pro-Treaty Sinn Féin to break monotony.

¹ For clarity in his study of the grassroots movement, Wheatley created a distinction between ‘Irish Party’ for the party at local level and ‘Irish Parliamentary Party’ for the party at Westminster. However, he admits that the body of MPs were often referred to as simply the ‘Irish Party’ too. Wheatley, *Nationalism and the Irish Party: Provincial Ireland 1910-1916* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 9-10; cf. Conor Mulvagh, “‘Sit, Act, and Vote’: The Political Evolution of the Irish Parliamentary Party at Westminster, 1900-1918”, unpublished PhD thesis, University College Dublin, 2012, pp. ix-x.

² Wheatley, *Nationalism and the Irish Party*, pp. 9-10.

INTRODUCTION

Our days are numbered. When we are gone, I do not think that the future freemen of Ireland will erase all recollection of us. We took the tradition from our fathers, and have handed it to the younger generation. They will bequeath it to posterity

Tom Condon MP, 17 March 1914¹

Reading from a speech prepared by young party worker William Fallon at a St. Patrick's Day banquet in London in 1914, Irish Parliamentary Party MP Tom Condon spoke as though the party was sure to be not only remembered, but remembered fondly. Condon's speech received little coverage, certainly in comparison to the words of IPP leader John Redmond, who used the occasion to criticise proposals for partition. However, the remarks, written by a party activist for an MP outside the of the party's leadership circle, were redolent of how many Irish Party members would have viewed their place in history at that time. Notwithstanding the potential dangers present in 1914, after years of patient constitutional agitation at the British parliament in Westminster, the party appeared on the verge of its promised land: home rule or self-government for Ireland. However, in the aftermath of the First World War and the Easter Rising in 1916, the party suffered devastating defeat. Although the IPP retained the support of approximately 220,000 voters in December 1918, the nature of its defeat and the tumultuous events which followed meant the Irish Party's place in the public mind of the Irish Free State which emerged in 1922 was far more doubtful.² Tom Condon would spend his final years in poverty with little public acknowledgement for his career in the party; however, a demonstrable legacy remained and individuals from Home Rule backgrounds became prominent politicians.

This thesis seeks to examine this legacy, encompassing the memory of the party's leaders and its achievements, the survival of elements of IPP political culture (including continuities in political behaviour pre- and post-independence); the

¹ Notes for speech of Tom Condon, 17 March 1914, NLI Fallon Papers, Ms. 22,593. See also *Freeman's Journal*, 18 March 1914.

² The party was reduced to just six seats. Including candidates who stood as 'independent nationalists', but excluding the two university constituencies, Laffan put the IPP's vote count at 220,226, Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland: The Sinn Féin Party, 1916-1923* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 166.

persistence of its former politicians, organisations and followers, their reinvention in the new politics, and the party's place in public memory.

As indicated by R.F. Foster's famous description of a party of 'Trollopian fixers, political journalists, respectable ex-Fenians and closet imperialists', the Irish Party could be seen to represent many political trends within one broad movement while at other times, act as a single issue group campaigning for home rule.³ The decline of this party and the lingering influence it maintained in Irish politics for decades to come cannot be explained without recourse to the party's apogee. While the final years of the party from the third home rule crisis in 1912 will be discussed in more depth in Chapter One, reflection on the legacy of any major political party necessarily involves some consideration of the context from which it emerged and the elements of its composition.

Originally led by the moderate Dublin-based lawyer Isaac Butt, who formed the Home Rule League in 1873, the movement developed a more strident edge under Charles Stewart Parnell.⁴ Inheriting the constitutional nationalist tradition from Daniel O'Connell, Parnell transformed the party into a great national movement linking constitutional action with agrarian agitation as the Land War broke out in 1879. Becoming President of the newly formed Land League and forming an unlikely alliance with land agitators and Fenians of the physical force tradition, he brought to the Irish Party the support of the farmers who were still tenants on land belonging to landlords of Anglo-Irish ancestry. A Wicklowman of Anglo-Irish stock himself, Parnell was also an advocate of more vigorous parliamentarianism including obstructionism, and succeeded William Shaw as leader of the party in 1880. Under Parnell, the parliamentary movement for Irish self-government was consolidated and momentum gathered behind the Irish Party through support for agrarian agitation and reform. Although the rural economy in Ireland was divided among different classes

³ R.F. Foster, *Paddy and Mr Punch: Connections in Irish and English History* (London: Penguin, 1995), p. 271.

⁴ Philip Bull, 'Butt, Isaac', in James McGuire and James Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish Biography*. (Cambridge, 2009). (<http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a1311>)

of tenants, Parnell and the Land League successfully mobilised farmers in one movement to overthrow the power of the landlords.⁵

When the election of 1885 resulted in the IPP holding the balance of power in the British parliament, Parnell turned his attention to self-government or 'home rule' itself. A home rule bill duly arrived in 1886 from the Liberal Prime Minister William Gladstone. However, it was defeated when many within Gladstone's own party voted against their leader. This was to be the first of a series of disappointments that would stymie the party's campaign for self-government. It also lost Parnell in 1890 after the scandal of his affair with Katherine O'Shea. The move, brought about by the Non-Conformist element of the Liberal Party marked saw the great majority of the party turned against their leader in favour of the alliance with the Liberals and the chance of another home rule bill. Consequently, the country and party split, leaving a small minority led by John Redmond forming the 'Parnellites', who favoured independence of action, while the majority 'Anti-Parnellites' pursued the 'Liberal alliance' led, first by Justin McCarthy, and later, by John Dillon.⁶ Although the Liberals introduced another home rule bill, which passed the Commons only to be defeated in the House of Lords, in 1893, it would take another almost a decade to reconcile the Parnellite and anti-Parnellite factions. However, as will be illustrated throughout this thesis, many of the issues raised by the Home Rule movement and many of the tactics it employed in the following years recurred after independence.

The land issue persisted into the 1920s and beyond.⁷ The land legislation introduced by the Liberals and the later the Conservative Party (as part of its 'killing home rule with kindness' strategy) failed to provide much succour for smaller landholders and

⁵ David S. Jones, 'The Cleavage between Graziers and Peasants in the Land Struggle, 1890-1910', in Samuel Clark and James S. Donnelly (eds), *Irish Peasants: Violence and Political Unrest, 1780-1914* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), pp. 374-419; Cormac Ó Gráda, *Ireland: A New Economic History, 1870-1939* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

⁶ For a more in-depth treatment of the Parnell split than is possible here, see Frank Callanan, *The Parnell Split 1890-91* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1992).

⁷ In the years after the famine, many tenant farmers had greatly extended their land holdings at the expense of the poorest farmers, who had been forced to emigrate or starve. As farming became more commercialised and dry stock replaced the more labour intensive tillage in many areas, inequality deepened with a decline in work for agricultural labourers, particularly in the west while many smaller tenants were driven from the land, Ó Gráda, *Ireland: A New Economic History*, pp. 255-273; Jones, 'The Cleavage between Graziers and Peasants in the Land Struggle', pp. 375-378.

labourers.⁸ In the late 1890s, William O'Brien, then estranged from both wings of the party, led a campaign for the poorer farmers of the west establishing the United Irish League [UIL]. The IPP's official adoption of the League not only rejuvenated the party's organisational structure (the previous incarnation the Irish National Federation had been in decay since the fall of Parnell), but also brought poorer farmers into the bosom of the party once more.⁹ The party was not ostensibly against the smaller farmers, of course, but they had been reluctant to overstep the mark in their backing of them for fear of alienating support among larger farmers.¹⁰ In adopting such tactics, the IPP set a precedent for later political movements in relation to the land question.

The strength of political organisation in pre-independence nationalist Ireland was a signal achievement of the Irish Party. Tim Healy, who had played a pivotal role in denouncing Parnell over the O'Shea affair, clashed with Dillon over the organisation of the party and selection of candidates at constituency level in the 1890s and the party never quite recaptured Parnell's unquestioned dominance in selecting candidates; however, it still sustained a formidable machine.¹¹ After O'Brien formed the UIL, moves to reconcile both sides of the Parnellite divide intensified and a reunited Parliamentary Party encompassing Dillon, Tim Healy, O'Brien and the Parnellites was constituted with Redmond made chairman as a gesture of goodwill and reconciliation.¹² The result was a party-controlled UIL which soon became a vital cog in the party machine, voting along with clergy and other bodies at consistency level each time a candidate for Westminster was to be selected. Depending on the area, other bodies could often include the nationalist fraternal bodies, the Irish National Foresters [INF] and the Ancient Order of Hibernians [AOH]. The latter, far more prominent than the Foresters, have been described as a 'political-religious pressure group' and emerged as a strongly Catholic nationalist movement at the turn of the twentieth century, revolving around MP Joe Devlin and

⁸ Jones, 'The Cleavage between Graziers and Peasants in the Land Struggle', pp. 381-93.

⁹ F.S.L. Lyons, *The Irish Parliamentary Party, 1890-1910* (London: Faber & Faber, 1951), p. 192 for the importance of the UIL in rejuvenating party organisation.

¹⁰ Paul Bew, Ellen Hazelkorn and Henry Patterson, *The Dynamics of Irish Politics* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1989), pp. 19-20.

¹¹ Dillon favoured retaining the rigid Party machine of the Parnell era whereas Healy sought a greater democratization of the party and its structures at local level where election candidates were selected, Lyons, *The Irish Parliamentary Party*, pp. 41-67.

¹² Lyons, *The Irish Parliamentary Party*, pp. 67-84.

his Belfast base.¹³ The AOH provided invaluable assistance to the Irish Party in Ulster, but the Order soon became a mass organisation and spread throughout the entire country after the 1911 National Insurance Act made it an ‘approved society’ offering health insurance to its members.¹⁴ Although, its membership declined after 1918, it retained vitality in Ulster and north Leinster in particular. Such groups were the building blocks of the party machine as it never had party branches in constituencies in the way post-independence Irish political parties had later.¹⁵

As a party, it faced little opposition outside of constituencies which were majority unionist and, as David Fitzpatrick has averred, the Irish Party was adept at ‘vampirising’ sectional interest groups and other movements to maintain its hegemony.¹⁶ Sinn Féin was founded by the journalist Arthur Griffith in 1905 and although it won defections from three IPP MPs in 1907, the Irish Party was soon able to face down the challenge and confine the new party to merely local government representation in Dublin. The only nationalist opposition in parliament came ironically from O’Brien. The Cork MP became increasingly disillusioned with the attitude of the party and of Dillon, in particular, to his policy of conciliation with landlords. O’Brien broke irrevocably with the party and the UIL he had founded after the infamous ‘Baton Convention’ of the League in 1909 where he and his followers were attacked by members of the AOH. In 1910, O’Brien’s breakaway All for Ireland League [AFIL] won eight seats, seven of which were garnered in O’Brien’s Munster powerbase; Tim Healy’s victory in Louth provided the AFIL with its only other success.

Where rural tenants were at the forefront of Irish nationalism, town tenants formed another element of the party support structure which persisted into the Free State.

¹³ Michael Foy, ‘The Ancient Order of Hibernians: An Irish Political-Religious Pressure Group 1884-1975’, unpublished MA thesis, Queen’s University, Belfast, 1976.

¹⁴ A.C. Hepburn, ‘Catholic Ulster and Irish Politics: The Ancient Order of Hibernians, 1905-14’, in Hepburn (ed.), *A Past Apart: Studies in the History of Catholic Belfast 1850-1950* (Belfast: Ulster Historical Foundation, 1996), pp. 158-170. Perhaps curiously, the AOH had a working-class appeal as it provided benefits to its members. For instance the ‘Labour Nationalist’ MP J.P. Nannetti was a member, Foy, ‘The Ancient Order of Hibernians’, p. 138.

¹⁵ The system was not always perfect. James McConnel described a ‘crisis’ in the convention system, see McConnel, ‘The View from the Backbench: Irish Nationalist MPs and their work, 1910-1914’, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Durham, 2002, pp. 114-136.

¹⁶ David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life, 1913-21: Provincial Experience of War and Revolution* (Aldershot: Gregg Revivals, 1977), p. 101.

Many rural ‘graziers’ (or larger land holders) had become urban traders or ‘shopkeeper-graziers’ and urban dwellers participated in the land struggle.¹⁷ However, as the success of the 1881 Land Act came and went, many townfolk were left waiting for similar reforms to arrive.¹⁸ House Leagues were formed in the 1880s, but the British Government was reluctant to change the law for Ireland lest it set a precedent for the rest of the United Kingdom.¹⁹ The House Leagues faded, but the All-Ireland Town Tenants’ League was then founded in 1904 and two years later, IPP MP William Field helped to promote legislation which extended the 3F’s to business holdings.²⁰ Although this had shortcomings, the town tenants organised by party members J.M. Coghlan Briscoe and Field acted as another wing to the Home Rule movement, even if its interests have been questioned.²¹ Field also formed part of the IPP’s ‘Labour-Nationalist’ segment along with others such as J.P. Nannetti (though it must be stated that Nannetti had perhaps a better claim to left-wing roots as he was a Labour councillor in Dublin before being co-opted onto an IPP ticket).²² The alliance with town tenants and ‘Labour-Nationalists’ generally, therefore, represented the desire of some in the party to help the less well off without embracing anything that may have seemed radical and certainly not modern trade unionism. It was such methods of representation which allowed Joe Devlin to claim

¹⁷ B.J. Graham and Susan Hood, ‘Social Protest in Late Nineteenth-Century Irish Towns – The House League Movement’, *Irish Geography*, vol. 29, no. 2 (1996), p. 1.

¹⁸ Gerard Moran ‘The Land War, Urban Destitution and Town Tenant Protests, 1879-1882’, *Saothar*, no. 20 (1995), pp. 17-30.

¹⁹ Graham and Hood, ‘Social Protest in Late Nineteenth-Century Irish Towns’, p. 7

²⁰ Graham and Hood, ‘Town Tenant Protest in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century Ireland’, *Irish Economic and Social History*, no. 21 (1994), pp. 44, 51. The Clancy Housing Act followed in 1908.

²¹ Murray Fraser, *John Bull’s Other Homes: State Housing and British Policy in Ireland, 1883-1922* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1996), p. 83. Pádraig Yeates agrees with Fraser on the importance of the League for Party propaganda, but also argues that it ‘represented small business tenants rather than the poor’ and states that, apart from Coghlan Briscoe, it was ‘relatively mute’ on many of Dublin’s labour issues, Yeates, *Lockout: Dublin 1913* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2000), p. 104. Conor McNamara argues that the urban poor were largely absent from Town Tenants’ League branches in the period up to the Great War and small businessmen were prominent instead, McNamara, ‘A Tenants’ League or a Shopkeepers’ League? Urban Protest and the Town Tenants’ Association in the West of Ireland, 1909-1918’, *Studia Hibernica*, no. 36 (2009-10), pp. 135-60.

²² Donal McGahon, “‘The Light of the Village’- William Field MP”, *Proceedings of the Blackrock Society*, no. 9 (2001), pp. 82-90; *Drogheda Independent*, 18 May, 1935; McConnel, ‘The View from the Backbench’, pp. 40-41; Ciarán Wallace, ‘Joseph P. Nannetti Lord Mayor 1906-08: A Rather Mild Sort of Rebel’ in Lisa-Marie and Ruth McManus, *Leaders of the City: Dublin’s First Citizens, 1500-1950* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2012).

that the party was essentially a labour party.²³ However, the lack of a vociferous labour voice within the party was obvious during the 1913 strike and lockout.²⁴

As James McConnel has demonstrated, Irish Parliamentary Party members were often subject to numerous requests from constituents and brokerage became a major element of the party's style of politics.²⁵ While McConnel has argued that IPP men were probably not corrupt in the sense that they did not take money for favours, some lobbying at least seems to have been successful.²⁶ As research has shown the persistence of Protestants at elite level in pre-independence Ireland, such petitioning had obvious appeal to some supporters; however, it would become a regular point of attack for the party's critics in the early twentieth century.²⁷ Nevertheless, the party's successors in independent Ireland soon faced accusations of very similar behaviour.

The party and the 'new' nationalism

While the party was damaged by the Parnell split, it became customary for a time to paint it in contradistinction to the flowering of cultural nationalism.²⁸ Although Redmond had been leader of the Parnellites that had maintained the Fenian connection of the former leader, as chairman of the reunited party, Redmond often became associated with imperialist tendencies.²⁹ By extension, elements of Gaelic culture so closely associated with the Irish Free State might be seen to owe little to the influence of the Irish Party. However, as has been shown by scholars, this did not mean the Irish Party was divorced from the language movement either and Stephen

²³ James McConnel, *The Irish Parliamentary Party and the Third Home Rule Crisis* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2013), p. 164. Murray Fraser has cited the importance of housing for rural labourers to the IPP too. Field was also President of the Irish Land and Labour Association in the pre-Independence era, Fraser, *John Bull's Other Homes*, p. 44.

²⁴ James McConnel, 'The Irish Parliamentary Party, Industrial Relations and the 1913 Dublin Lockout', *Saothar*, no. 28 (2003), pp. 25-36.

²⁵ McConnel, 'The View from the Backbench', pp. 137-67. See also David Fitzpatrick, 'The Geography of Irish Nationalism 1910-1921' *Past and Present*, no. 78 (Feb., 1978) p. 133-4.

²⁶ James McConnel, "'Jobbing with Tory and Liberal": Irish Nationalists and the Politics of Patronage 1880-1914' in *Past and Present*, no. 188 (August 2005), pp. 119-120, 124-131.

²⁷ McConnel, *The Irish Parliamentary Party and the Third Home Rule Crisis*, pp. 89-94.

²⁸ Recent scholarship by R.F. Foster has shed new light on a small, but vibrant 'revolutionary generation' which provided networks and inspiration for advanced nationalism through a variety of cultural outlets, R.F. Foster, *Vivid Faces: The Revolutionary Generation in Ireland, 1890-1923* (London: Allen Lane, 2014).

²⁹ Matthew Kelly, "'Parnell's Old Brigade": The Redmondite-Fenian Nexus in the 1890s', *Irish Historical Studies*, vol. 33, no. 130 (2002), pp. 209-232; James McConnel, 'John Redmond and Irish Catholic Loyalty', *English Historical Review*, vol. 125, no. 512 (Feb., 2010), pp. 83-111; Michael Wheatley, 'John Redmond and Federalism in 1910', *Irish Historical Studies*, vol. 32 (May 2001), pp. 343-364.

Gwynn served on the Gaelic League's Coiste Gnóithe.³⁰ The humble beginnings of the 'new' nationalist groupings such as the GAA and Gaelic League have also been emphasised recently along with the continued primacy of the Irish Party.³¹ Although a more radical element grew over time within the Gaelic League, with the possible exception of the League's insistence on compulsory Irish in the new National University, it did not become overtly political until Douglas Hyde's resignation in 1915.³²

The party's refusal to endorse the campaign for women's suffrage (despite the support of some MPs for female enfranchisement) for fear of splintering the Nationalist-Liberal home rule alliance certainly alienated some, but the IPP was not completely adrift from the thoughts and movements of the 'younger generation' either.³³ Senia Pašeta has illustrated the hopes and dreams of the *fin de siècle* Catholic middle class, many of whom were home rule supporters.³⁴ Thomas Kettle was committed to a liberal Home Rule agenda; his contemporary, Francis Sheehy-Skeffington was a pacifist and also a supporter of the Irish Party initially. His eventual disillusionment with the party owed as much to his humanist and feminist ideals as a commitment to a certain nationalist orthodoxy. This and other frustrations at the lack of opportunities for younger elements within the IPP and its junior partner, the Young Ireland Branch of the UIL notwithstanding, Kettle, Devlin and Richard Hazleton would represent a more youthful counterpoint to more established figures in the parliamentary party. For these younger constitutionalists, a Home Rule Ireland beckoned with the promise of power and prestige in an Irish House of Commons.³⁵ The party's primacy in the country remained intact until the third home rule crisis and the outbreak of the First World War. The contrast between the central position the party occupied before the War and the marginal position of former party

³⁰ Dermot Meleady, *John Redmond: The National Leader* (Sallins: Merrion, 2014), pp. 76-7, 147-8; McConnel, *The Irish Parliamentary Party and the Third Home Rule Crisis*, pp 141-7; Wheatley, *Nationalism and the Irish Party*, pp 66-8, 256.

³¹ R.F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600 - 1972* (London: Penguin, 1987), p. 431; Brian P. Murphy, *Patrick Pearse and the Lost Republican Ideal* (Dublin: James Duffy, 1991), pp. 18-19.

³² Myles Dillon, 'Douglas Hyde' in Conor Cruise O'Brien (ed.), *The Shaping of Modern Ireland* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960), p. 57.

³³ McConnel, *The Irish Parliamentary Party and the Third Home Rule Crisis*, p. 20; Meleady, *John Redmond: The National Leader*, pp. 176-7, 230.

³⁴ Senia Pašeta, *Before the Revolution: Nationalism, Social Change and Ireland's Catholic Elite* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1999).

³⁵ This has been attested not only by Pašeta, but in memoirs of the time, Patrick Heffernan, *An Irish Doctor's Memories* (Dublin: Clonmore & Reynolds, 1958).

politicians and followers in 1922 is an important starting point in tracing its legacy in independent Ireland.

The writing of the Irish Party's history

Relatively little has been published concerning the afterlife of the Irish Party. Perhaps one of the reasons for this has been that the historiography of the party at its zenith developed somewhat spasmodically and many aspects were neglected until recently. Although John Redmond has often been seen as Ireland's forgotten leader, and the Irish Party as a sometimes maligned movement, the breadth of scholarship on Redmond the party is perhaps surprisingly large. However, coverage of the party and Redmond may be allotted to discrete periods.

There was a tradition of writing about the Irish Party's recent history, and its enigmatic former leader Charles Stewart Parnell, in particular, before 1918.³⁶ The historiography of John Redmond commenced in 1919 with former MP and Great War veteran Stephen Gwynn's *John Redmond's Last Years*.³⁷ A sensitive and warm portrayal of his former leader, the book dealt with Redmond's personal difficulties in these years while also acknowledging his failings. In line with many IPP loyalists, Gwynn lamented Lloyd George's treachery in 1916 and saw real grounds for settlement in the Irish Convention, in spite of his distaste at northern unionist delegates' arriving without the authority to agree to any tangible compromise.³⁸ Redmond was, in fact, the subject of three biographies within twelve months of his death. American journalist Warre B. Wells's book was not in the genre of historical biography and was a defence of Redmond without recourse to archival materials.³⁹ Rev. Robert O'Loughran published *Redmond's Vindication*, but this was also less a biography than a strident case for the wisdom of Redmond's policy.⁴⁰

³⁶ R. Barry O'Brien, *The Life of Charles Stewart Parnell, 1846-1891* (London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1899); St John Ervine, *Parnell* (London: Benn, 1925). In the 1930s, Henry Harrison led a campaign to defend Parnell, Henry Harrison, *Parnell Vindicated: The Lifting of the Veil* (London: Constable, 1931).

³⁷ Stephen Gwynn, *John Redmond's Last Years* (London: E. Arnold, 1919).

³⁸ Gwynn, *John Redmond's Last Years*.

³⁹ Warre B. Wells, *John Redmond: a Biography* (London: Nisbet, 1919).

⁴⁰ Robert O'Loughran, *Redmond's Vindication* (Dublin: Talbot Press, 1919).

Although he withdrew from politics from 1921, Gwynn maintained a weekly column on Irish affairs in the *Observer*, and also published many books on Irish matters which will be discussed where relevant throughout the thesis. Others from the old parliamentary background (though not necessarily the Redmondite stem) also wrote early histories of the party. William O'Brien was prolific with books such as *The Responsibility for Partition*, *The Irish Revolution* and *Parnell in Real Life* published in the 1920s.⁴¹ Like many writings of former politicians, these books reflected the preoccupations of the latter part of O'Brien's career in public life and will be discussed in greater detail below. Tim Healy published *Letters and Leaders of My Day* in 1929, and in the same year, T.P. O'Connor published his voluminous memoirs of the party.⁴² By contrast, it would take until 1948 for Cork solicitor and former Irish Party organiser J.J. Horgan to publish his *Parnell to Pearse*, a staunch defence of Redmondism, arguing that those who deposed the party 'sacrificed Irish unity for Irish sovereignty and attained neither.'⁴³

Stephen Gwynn's work thus remained the major study of Redmond's life until his son, Denis, produced his *Life of John Redmond* in 1932. Covering the entire period of Redmond's life and enjoying access to the subject's private papers, Denis's book defended its subject. Gwynn argued that nobody would have accepted partition of any kind while Redmond lived and made the more contentious argument that, in the atmosphere of the time, devolved power would have been granted anyway without the bloodshed which followed.⁴⁴ After Denis Gwynn's book, no further account of Redmond's life was written until Paul Bew wrote a short life of Redmond in 1996.⁴⁵ A modern *long durée* biography finally arrived in recent years with the two volume work by Dermot Meleady.⁴⁶ Meleady's books, rich in detail and the result of much research, came either side of Joseph Finnan's *John Redmond and Irish Unity* which examined Redmond's attitude to partition. Both authors displayed an affinity for

⁴¹ William O'Brien, *The Responsibility for Partition, considered with an eye to Ireland's Future* (Dublin: Maunsel & Roberts, 1921), *The Irish Revolution and how it came about* (Dublin: Maunsel and Roberts, 1923) and *The Parnell of Real Life* (London: Unwin, 1926).

⁴² T.M. Healy, *Letters and Leaders of My Day* (2 vols.) (London: Frederick A. Stokes, 1929).

⁴³ J.J. Horgan, *Parnell to Pearse: Some Recollections and Reflections* (Dublin: Browne & Nolan, 1948), p. 354.

⁴⁴ Denis Gwynn, *The Life of John Redmond* (London: G.G. Harrap, 1932).

⁴⁵ Paul Bew, *John Redmond* (Dundalk: Historical Association of Ireland, 1996).

⁴⁶ Dermot Meleady, *Redmond the Parnellite* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1998); *John Redmond: The National Leader*.

Redmond. Finnan's work reflected the atmosphere of the Northern Irish peace process by linking Redmond to SDLP leader John Hume. Meleady also felt that with the peace process, Redmond's ghost might be 'appeased'. However, although he pondered on what a home rule Ireland might have looked like in his appendix, Meleady only mentioned commemorations of Redmond briefly.⁴⁷ The 'decade of centenaries' has offered further opportunities to discuss Redmond's merits. Chris Dooley profiled his political decline in *Redmond: A Life Undone*, a work drawn almost exclusively from contemporary accounts and written in the present tense.⁴⁸ A dual biography of Redmond and his political nemesis Edward Carson is forthcoming from Alvin Jackson in the Royal Irish Academy's 'Judging' series although for the moment it seems, Meleady's two books will remain the major in-depth studies of the IPP leader.

The progress of historiography of the party itself also splintered into different periods. After the flurry of memoirs and writings by contemporaries, little was written until the middle of the century. Conor Cruise O'Brien (himself descended from an Irish Party family, the Sheehys) and F.S.L. Lyons then produced studies of the party both before and after Parnell while Lyons published an excellent account of John Dillon's life.⁴⁹ More recently, Redmond's other chief lieutenants, T.P. O'Connor and Joe Devlin, have been the subjects of biographies while Frank Callanan (who has also provided a major account of the Parnell split) produced a major work on maverick MP Tim Healy, who became the Free State's first Governor-General.⁵⁰ Parnell's lingering appeal was evident in studies from distinguished scholars such as Lyons, R.F. Foster and Paul Bew.⁵¹ However, although publications to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising featured

⁴⁷ Joseph Finnan, *John Redmond and Irish Unity, 1912-1918* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2004), pp. 237-8; Meleady, *John Redmond: The National Leader*, p. 467.

⁴⁸ Chris Dooley, *Redmond: A Life Undone* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2015).

⁴⁹ Lyons, *The Irish Parliamentary Party*; Conor Cruise O'Brien *Parnell and His Party 1880-90* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957); F.S.L. Lyons, *John Dillon: A Biography* (London: Routledge & Paul, 1968). See also Nicholas Mansergh, 'John Redmond' in Cruise O'Brien (ed.), *The Shaping of Modern Ireland*, pp. 38-50.

⁵⁰ Frank Callanan *T.M. Healy* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996); A.C. Hepburn, *Catholic Belfast and Nationalist Ireland in the Era of Joe Devlin, 1871-1934* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); L.W. Brady, *T.P. O'Connor and the Liverpool Irish* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1983); Joseph O'Brien, *William O'Brien and the Course of Irish politics, 1881-1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976). O'Connor had been the subject of an earlier biography, Hamilton Fyfe, *T.P. O'Connor* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1934).

⁵¹ Paul Bew, *Enigma: A New Life of Charles Stewart Parnell* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2011); F.S.L. Lyons, *Charles Stewart Parnell* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2005).

coverage of the Irish Party, in-depth studies of the latter day party of Redmond did not follow.⁵² The rise of revisionism in Irish historiography, which questioned traditional narratives of nationalist struggle and independence, did not necessarily alter the picture. Even Cruise O'Brien, perhaps the most famous public exponent of revisionism, was, arguably, more concerned with the contemporary context of the Troubles in Northern Ireland and questioning the effects of violent nationalism in Irish history than explicitly staking a claim for Redmond's memory.

In the absence of any authoritative account of the post-Parnell party since Lyons, broader studies of the period helped to illuminate the picture. The Land League and its relationship with the party has benefited from much scholarship on the nineteenth century.⁵³ Paul Bew examined grazier-land labourer tensions in the wider Home Rule movement in his *Conflict and Conciliation*.⁵⁴ In *Ideology and the Irish Question*, Bew explored the politics of 'Redmondism', examining the party's view on fiscal autonomy as well as the implications of Redmond's World War I strategy.⁵⁵ Bew's research significantly attempted to ascertain the extent of support for the Irish Party between the outbreak of War and the 1916 Rising. Patrick Maume's *The Long Gestation* was also a huge addition to scholarship. Covering the period 1890-1918 with impressive detail and colour, Maume explained the Irish Party as part establishment party, representing the mass of nationalist opinion while also part protest party, articulating the views of a nation which sought self-government from Britain.⁵⁶ Maume's 1999 publication was complemented by the contemporary release of Michael Laffan's comprehensive account of the revitalised Sinn Féin party which supplanted the Irish Party after the Easter Rising.⁵⁷

⁵² Lyons, 'Dillon, Redmond, and the Irish Home Rulers', F.X. Martin (ed.), *Leaders and Men of the Easter Rising: Dublin 1916* (London: Methuen, 1967), pp. 29-42; Lyons, 'Decline and Fall of the Nationalist Party', Owen Dudley Edwards and Fergus Pyle (eds), *1916: The Easter Rising* (London: McKee and Gibbon, 1968), pp. 52-61; Lyons, 'The Irish Parliamentary Party', F.S.L. Lyons and Brian Farrell, *The Irish Parliamentary Tradition* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1973), pp. 195-207.

⁵³ David S. Jones, 'The Cleavage between Graziers and Peasants in the Land Struggle, 1890-1910', P.J. Drudy (ed.), *Irish Studies 2 – Ireland: Land, Politics and People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 381-93; Ó Gráda, *Ireland: A New Economic History*.

⁵⁴ Paul Bew, *Conflict and Conciliation in Ireland, 1890-1910: Parnellites and Radical Agrarians* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).

⁵⁵ Paul Bew, *Ideology and the Irish Question* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 123-9, 144-150.

⁵⁶ Patrick Maume, *The Long Gestation: Irish Nationalist Life, 1891-1918* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1999).

⁵⁷ Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland*.

Our knowledge of the Irish Party in these years has also been expanded by a number of local studies covering the revolutionary period in Ireland. David Fitzpatrick's examination of Clare, *Politics and Irish Life* remains the classic in this genre, underpinned by his contention that the switch from the IPP to Sinn Féin was less a new beginning than the process of putting 'old wine in new wine bottles'.⁵⁸ This thesis that the new nationalist movements built on the old is significant for this project and subsequent continuities between the Irish Party and the post-Sinn Féin parties will be analysed in later chapters. Fitzpatrick's micro level study of Clare was more or less unchallenged until Fergus Campbell's study of Galway argued for a new interpretation of Sinn Féin as representing a kind of underclass which then usurped the Irish Party.⁵⁹ Perhaps taken with other insightful local studies by Coleman, Borgonovo, Farry and others, such disjuncture highlights the regional variation in the experience of the Irish revolution.⁶⁰ This was especially true of Pat McCarthy's *Waterford in the Irish Revolution*, which offered a great insight into the development of Redmondite loyalty in the former party leader's constituency.⁶¹

In spite of such research, it could be argued that specific studies of the latter day party led by Redmond continued to lag behind for some years. At the turn of the twenty-first century, the work of James McConnel and Michael Wheatley altered the picture. While both scholars helped to correct Lyons's view of the Irish Party as being in decline from the Parnell split onwards, McConnel illuminated much of the party's work with his examination of the role of backbench MPs in the Edwardian and early Georgian periods.⁶² Wheatley built on the emerging field of local studies to add much to our understanding of the local power structures of the party. In comparison to Wheatley's grassroots approach, Conor Mulvagh's 2012 thesis

⁵⁸ Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, pp. 127-8.

⁵⁹ Fitzpatrick, 'The Geography of Irish Nationalism'; Fergus Campbell, *Land and Revolution: Nationalist Politics in the West of Ireland, 1891-1921* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁶⁰ Marie Coleman, *County Longford and the Irish Revolution, 1910-1923* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2003); Michael Farry, *Sligo: The Irish Revolution, 1912-23* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2012); John, Borgonovo, *The Dynamics of War and Revolution: Cork City 1916-1918* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2013).

⁶¹ Pat McCarthy, *Waterford: The Irish Revolution, 1912-23* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2015). See also Alice McDermott, 'Bridget Redmond: The Keeper of the Redmondite Flame in Waterford', *Decies*, 66 (2010), pp. 87-102; "'The Heart of the Matter": An Analysis of the Most Significantly Influential Factor in the Creation and Configuration of Redmondism in Waterford City from 1891 to 1918', *Decies*, 69 (2013), pp. 139-151.

⁶² Wheatley, *Nationalism and the Irish Party*; McConnel, *The Irish Parliamentary Party and the Third Home Rule Crisis*.

adopted a high-politics approach towards the study of the IPP at Westminster.⁶³ Mulvagh scrutinised the evolution of the party's leadership circle as well as conducting detailed statistical interrogation of the IPP's behaviour at question time and in divisions, placing the party in a British constitutional context.

Although gaps in the scholarship are now being filled, the historiography of the party's demise and aftermath remains far sparser. Writing in *Ireland 1798-1998: Politics and War*, Alvin Jackson argued 'it would seem futile to argue that there was any marked survival of the parliamentary tradition in the aftermath of the 1918 contest'. The only aspect of an Irish Party legacy which Jackson thus examined was the extent to which Sinn Féin took on the Parnell tradition.⁶⁴ In *Home Rule: An Irish History*, Jackson acknowledged a Redmondite legacy in Waterford and the prominence of Frank MacDermot and James Dillon; yet, he was more interested in the legacy of home rule as a legislative concept bequeathed to Northern Ireland after 1918.⁶⁵ However, the legacy of the party itself – politicians, support organisations and voters - has received little attention apart from passing references in studies with an alternative focus.

Although it is acknowledged that Nationalist candidates won seats in the 1920 local elections, particularly in urban areas, no scholar has looked at what happened to UIL branches after the 1918 election.⁶⁶ Unquestionably, the party's organisational corpus was in serious decay before that election, but beyond noting that it was almost wiped out in December 1918, there has been little attempt to specify when exactly the Irish Party's organisation ceased to function. However, even with the difficulty that not all UIL archives survived, the patchwork of correspondence and newspaper columns of UIL activities in 1918 and 1919 tells us much about the party's final demise and why it was allowed to peter out after the party's spectacular election defeat in 1918. Colin Reid's work on Stephen Gwynn illuminated the efforts of moderate nationalists to form new organisations during the War of Independence.⁶⁷ However, as much as we

⁶³ Mulvagh, "Sit, Act, and Vote".

⁶⁴ Alvin Jackson, *Ireland 1798-1998: Politics and War* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), p. 211.

⁶⁵ Alvin Jackson, *Home Rule: An Irish History, 1800-2000* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003), p. 201.

⁶⁶ Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland*, pp. 323-9.

⁶⁷ Colin Reid, 'Stephen Gwynn and the Failure of Constitutionalism in Ireland, 1919-21', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 53, no. 3 (Sept. 2010), pp. 723-745.

can learn from Gwynn's writings in the independent Ireland period, Gwynn was, as Reid has observed, 'spiritually hyphenated' in the Free State and did not play nearly as prominent a role subsequently as others from Home Rule backgrounds.⁶⁸

While Maume reflected that 'all shades' of the Irish Party fared more or less equally badly in 1918, he pointed to the 'self-conscious' Redmondite loyalty which continued in counties such as Waterford and Louth.⁶⁹ This persistence has also been remarked on by Tom Garvin, who referenced instances of the Treatyite party absorbing elements of the Home Rule movement. However, Garvin concluded the crossover at elite level was 'rather weak' and did not address a specific Irish Party legacy in depth as will be attempted here.⁷⁰ In fact, the historiography of the place of former Home Rule politicians in the Free State was, up to recently, meagre considering the breadth of studies on the period in general. In 2000, Senia Pašeta contributed a chapter on 'Ireland's Last Home Rule Generation' in Mike Cronin and John M. Regan's *Ireland: The Politics of Independence*.⁷¹ Building on her earlier work on the Catholic middle class, this piece dealt chiefly with efforts at constitutionalism and the campaign to erect a bust of former IPP MP Tom Kettle in Stephen's Green with only brief reference to former Home Rulers in post-independence politics or other aspects of the party's legacy.

Persistence of AOH/IPP support was stronger in Northern Ireland nationalism; this has been well discussed in a number of works on nationalist politics in the six counties from 1921 onwards.⁷² However, some elements of the party's legacy south of the border have received virtually no scholarly attention. In addition to the scarce references to John Redmond and Willie Redmond anniversaries, there has been only

⁶⁸ Colin Reid, *The Lost Ireland of Stephen Gwynn: Irish Constitutional Nationalism and Cultural Politics, 1864-1950* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011).

⁶⁹ Maume, *The Long Gestation*, p. 219.

⁷⁰ Tom Garvin, *The Evolution of Irish Nationalist Politics* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1981), pp. 110, 151.

⁷¹ Senia Pašeta, 'Ireland's Last Home Rule Generation: The Decline of Constitutional Nationalism in Ireland, 1916-30', Mike Cronin and John M. Regan (eds), *Ireland: the Politics of Independence, 1922-49* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), pp. 13-29.

⁷² Eamon Phoenix, *Northern Nationalism: Nationalist Politics, Partition and the Catholic Minority in Northern Ireland, 1890-1940* (Belfast: Ulster Historical Foundation, 1994); Enda Staunton, *The Nationalists of Northern Ireland 1918-1973* (Dublin: Columba Press, 2001). On the Catholic Church's reaction to events, see Mary Harris, *The Catholic Church and the Foundation of the Northern Irish State* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1993).

one article on the town tenants' movement by a historian.⁷³ The historiography of the Ancient Order of Hibernians remains a largely untilled field. Michael Foy's 1976 dissertation is an important work, but was written without access to the minutes of the Board of Erin and the study does not discuss the persistence of the AOH after 1918 at any great length.⁷⁴ Other studies discussing the Order, such as the work of Fergal McCluskey, deal exclusively with the six counties.⁷⁵ However, as will be shown, the Order retained currency in counties in the Free State too particularly, those just south of the border. The only meaningful attempt to examine this phenomenon was Seamus McPhillips's dissertation on the history of the Order in the parish of Achabog, Co. Monaghan.⁷⁶ McPhillips provides a very interesting perspective on the tensions involving the AOH, particularly during the War of Independence. However, given its narrow parish focus, the controversies in the area over the killing of three Hibernians and the legacy these events left in the Order locally, the picture in Monaghan is hardly typical and needs to be contextualised.⁷⁷ Similarly, works on Catholic action have referenced the AOH, but tended to discuss other bodies in greater depth.⁷⁸

On the other hand, the impact of the IPP on democratic and political culture has received some comment. Perhaps one of the most provocative pieces of writing was Emmet Larkin's 1975 argument that between 1882 and 1885 Parnell created 'a national and local political apparatus that gave both substance and coherence to the idea of a de facto Irish state'.⁷⁹ In Larkin's thesis, the de facto state was anchored in the person of Parnell, the party and the Catholic Church. He conceived of the state as

⁷³ Martin O'Donoghue "'The Renewal of a Pledge of Faith'"? John Redmond Days in the South-East in the 1920s', *History Ireland*, vol. 23, no. 1 (January/February 2015), pp. 38-41; McNamara, 'A Tenants' League or a Shopkeepers' League?'

⁷⁴ Michael Foy, 'The Ancient Order of Hibernians'.

⁷⁵ Fergal McCluskey, "'Make Way for the Molly Maguires!' The Ancient Order of Hibernians and the IPP, 1912-14', *History Ireland*, vol. 20, no. 1 (January-February 2012), pp. 32-36; Hepburn, 'Catholic Ulster and Irish Politics: The Ancient Order of Hibernians, 1905-14'.

⁷⁶ Seamus McPhillips, 'The Ancient Order of Hibernians in County Monaghan with particular reference to the Parish of Achabog 1900-1933', unpublished MA thesis, Maynooth University (1999).

⁷⁷ Peadar Livingstone, *The Monaghan Story: A Documented History of the County Monaghan from Earliest Times to 1976* (Enniskillen: Clogher History Society, 1980).

⁷⁸ Maurice, Curtis, *The Splendid Cause: The Catholic Action Movement in Ireland in the Twentieth Century* (Dublin: Greenmount Publications, 2008). On the Spanish Civil War, see Fearghal McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1999).

⁷⁹ Emmet Larkin, 'Church, State and Nation in Modern Ireland', in Larkin, *The Historical Dimensions of Irish Catholicism* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1976), p. 110. This article was first published in the *American Historical Review*.

that structure (de facto or de jure) which maintained law and order. However, in 2000, Larkin's thesis was undermined by J.J. Lee who argued against 'imprisoning' the subsequent direction of the Irish state in the events of 1891. Lee presented a compelling case for the importance of contingent events in directing later developments such as the fall of the Irish Party itself, the intervention of military action and the possibility of alternative outcomes of the War of Independence and Civil War, the development of a multi-party state after the supremacy of the IPP, and the fact that no subsequent leader exercised the personal power of Parnell thereby altering the structure of any subsequent state.⁸⁰ The debates over the status of the state in the period discussed here would seem to support Lee's point further and, as will be seen, individuals from Home Rule backgrounds were among those who offered alternative views to Fianna Fáil's Ireland of the 1930s.⁸¹

With these reservations stated and acknowledgement that definitions of state may vary,⁸² it will, however, be argued here that the institution of political organisations around the country under a central party helped to forge a political structure and a

⁸⁰ Lee, 'On The Birth of the Modern Irish State: The Larkin Thesis' in Stewart J. Brown and David W. Miller (eds), *Piety and Power in Ireland, 1760-1960* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2000), pp. 130-157. Lee's critique elsewhere of unionist opposition to home rule in 1912-14 has also come in for criticism, Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985: Politics and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 4-7, 21; Graham Walker, *A History of the Ulster Unionist Party: Protest, Pragmatism and Pessimism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 32-3. Nevertheless, the presence of the unionist community further problematizes Larkin's theory on the existence of a de facto state.

⁸¹ Larkin expanded on his initial argument in Larkin, 'The Irish Political Tradition' in Thomas E. Hachey and Lawrence J. McCaffrey (eds), *Perspectives on Irish Nationalism* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1989), pp. 99-121.

⁸² The Weberian definition included a monopoly on the legitimate use of force; centralisation of the means of rule; distribution of power among various organs; an administrative and legal order which claim binding authority, not only over the members of the state, the citizens, but to a large extent over all actions taking place within its area of jurisdiction'; subjection to change order through legislation; organised actions to enforce the existing order, and regulation of the competition for political offices and selection of the bearers of rulership according to established rules', Karl Duszka, 'Max Weber's Conception of the State', *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*, vol. 3, no. 1 (Autumn, 1989), pp. 75-6, 80. While this may seem to support Larkin's thesis, it seems that the de facto state would only fulfil these criteria in a partial manner. One could argue that the Irish Party accommodated itself to the British state in ways; the RIC, as a police force of the British state, (although almost all of its members were Irish) was actually accorded much respect and obedience after the 1880s and, despite the power exercised by the Home Rule movement in the country, the British legal apparatus still operated largely with legitimacy until the arrival of the 'Dáil courts' in 1920. Part of the IRA's success in creating a de facto state after 1918 was the delegitimising of the British police force. The work of Paul Bew on the tensions between agrarian agitators and the Redmondite party also makes it plausible to question whether the Redmondite party controlled law and order as Larkin has argued for Parnell in 1880s.

culture of party political activism that influenced politics in independent Ireland.⁸³ Of course, there have been various interpretations of the term ‘political culture’ and it has been argued with cause that ‘no two historians defined political culture (explicitly or implicitly) in the same way.’⁸⁴ However, Gabriel Almond’s early conceptualisation of political culture as the ‘particular pattern of orientations to political action’ retains influence; in the words of another American historian, Jack P. Greene, political culture is not just the ‘intellectual and institutional inheritance which conditions... political behaviour’, but also ‘assumptions, traditions, conventions, values, modes of expression, and habits of thought and belief that underlay those visible elements.’⁸⁵ In the introduction to the one investigation into political culture in Ireland, J.H. Whyte approximated the concept to ‘national character’.⁸⁶ It is acknowledged that social and demographic factors are also important (and that the kind of public surveys used to assess political culture in modern societies are not available for the Free State period).⁸⁷ However, continuities between pre- and post-independence Ireland are visible – from the basic idea of Ireland as a national entity to expectations of the role(s) of a political representative.⁸⁸ In the words of Maurice Manning, the Irish Party

familiarised generations with the workings of parliamentary institutions, showed how real achievements could be made through parliament, in a sense socialised the vast majority into seeing parliament as the normal forum for

⁸³ In the most recent study of the party at Westminster, Conor Mulvagh did not engage with Larkin’s work but stopped short of defining the Irish Party’s structures as that of a state. Mulvagh instead argued, using Mosei Ostrogorski’s typologies, that the Irish Party’s grassroots organisation ‘more closely reflects that of the municipal government, a single party representing the vast majority of nationalists in Ireland’, Mulvagh, ‘“Sit, Act, and Vote”’, p. 161.

⁸⁴ Ronald P. Formisano, ‘The Concept of Political Culture’, *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, vol. 31, no. 3 (Winter 2001), p. 414. Formisano provides an excellent (if American-centric) overview of the academic uses of the term and the various approaches attempted in both political science and history.

⁸⁵ Gabriel Almond, ‘Comparative Political Systems’, *Journal of Politics*, vol. 18, no.3 (August 1956), pp. 396- 397; Jack P. Greene, ‘Changing Interpretations of Early American Politics in Greene (ed.), *Interpreting Early America: Historiographical Essays* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1996), p. 105.

⁸⁶ J. H. Whyte, ‘Introduction’, John Raven, C.T. Whelan, Paul A. Pfretzschner and Donal M. Borock, *Political Culture in Ireland: The Views of Two Generations* (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 1976), pp. 1-2.

⁸⁷ Such factors include the size of the country, the rural nature of society and the central role of the Catholic Church, John Coakley, ‘Society and Political Culture’, John Coakley and Michael Gallagher (eds), *Politics in the Republic of Ireland* (New York: Routledge, 2010), pp. 37-67.

⁸⁸ D. George Boyce argued Ireland always possessed a notion of ‘corporeal existence’ and described home rule as both a ‘demand for self-government and a protest against bad government’, *Nationalism in Ireland* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1982), pp. 270-271.

the working-out of democracy – in other words, created a political culture which had parliament at its centre.⁸⁹

Accepting this broad view, it can be said that the IPP played an integral role in developing a political culture – a set of beliefs surrounding politics and a set of norms which governed political behaviour. McConnel’s work on the party’s backbench MPs illustrated how constituency service was long established before independence and not simply a product of the multi-seat constituencies and proportional representation electoral system that independent Ireland adopted.⁹⁰ However, with the exception of some work by political scientists and computer science scholars, comparatively little research has been done on the parliamentary work of TDs in the early decades of independence.⁹¹ In the Irish case, discussion on the importance of constituency service is thus still partially reliant on field work and research carried out for later decades.⁹² While this present study is not intended to be a thesis focussed on parliamentary behaviour, similarities between the *modus operandi* of IPP MPs and Irish TDs will be discussed to consider similarities and differences between Irish politicians across generations.

The tendency to compartmentalise pre- and post-independence Irelands has also been undercut by important studies of land issues. Terence Dooley and Tony Varley have emphasised the continuing primacy of land issues as an unfinished element of Irish

⁸⁹ Maurice Manning, ‘Houses of the Oireachtas: Background and Early Development’ in Manning and Muiris Mac Carthaigh (eds), *The Houses of the Oireachtas: Parliament in Ireland* (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 2010), pp. 15-17. Such a view builds on the views of political scientist Brian Farrell who looked at an Irish constitutional tradition as having roots before 1922, Lyons and Farrell, *The Irish Parliamentary Tradition*; Brian Farrell, *The Founding of Dáil Éireann: Parliament and Nation Building* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1971). The formation of the new Irish state and the development of nationalism from the switch to Sinn Féin after the Easter Rising through the War of Independence and the Civil War has been examined by Garvin, *The Evolution of Irish Nationalist Politics*.

⁹⁰ McConnel, ‘The View from the Backbench’, pp. 278-82.

⁹¹ Sarah-Jane Delany, Richard Sinnott and Niall O’Reilly, ‘The Extent of Clientelism in Irish Politics: Evidence from Classifying Dáil Questions on a Local-National Dimension’, *AICS: Proceedings of 21st Irish Conference on Artificial Intelligence and Cognitive Science*, NUI Galway, 30 August- 1 September 2010, pp. 84-93; Robert Elgie and John Stapleton, ‘Testing the Decline of Parliament Thesis: Ireland, 1923-2002’, *Political Studies* vol. 54, no. 3 (2006), pp. 465-85; Basil Chubb, ‘“Going About Persecuting Civil Servants”: The Role Of The Irish Parliamentary Representative’, *Political Studies*, vol. 11, no. 3 (October 1963), pp. 272-86.

⁹² Shane Martin, ‘Parliamentary Questions, the Behaviour of Legislators, and the Function of Legislatures: An Introduction’, *Journal of Legislative Studies*, vol. 17, no. 3 (September 2011), pp. 259-270; Lee Komito, ‘Brokerage or Friendship? Politics and Networks in Ireland’, *Economic and Social Review*, vol. 23, no. 2 (1992), pp. 129-145; Komito, ‘Irish Clientelism: A Reappraisal’, *Economic and Social Review*, vol. 15, no. 3 (1984), pp. 173-94.

independence.⁹³ Indeed, Varley and Raymond Ryan have shed much light on attempts to form farmers' movements into political parties.⁹⁴ Bew, Hazelkorn and Patterson's work also highlighted the presence of the Land League legacy in Irish politics, especially during the Blueshirt crisis.⁹⁵ This will be discussed in this study with particular focus on the role of politicians from former Home Rulers and attempts to appropriate various legacies of Davitt and Parnell. However, while studies on the two former Land War leaders abound and interesting work has been done on the mythology of Parnell by Foster, Jackson and others, little has been written about attempts to commemorate Davitt and Parnell, let alone Redmond in independent Ireland.⁹⁶

Another subject which has been recently restored in Irish historiography is the Great War and its memory in independent Ireland. Myles Dungan and Kevin Myers helped to bring the matter into public debate while Keith Jeffery has examined the remembrance of the War dead on both sides of the border including the machinations surrounding the erection of war memorials both in Dublin and around the country.⁹⁷ The work of the Ex-Servicemen's League and the interventions of Captain William Redmond, who was a member of the League, are referenced by Jane Leonard.⁹⁸ Ian McBride's collection on memory also helps to encompass the importance of this aspect of the new state.⁹⁹ These works help to capture the importance of war memorials for old Redmondites, but also former unionist elements and the extent to

⁹³ Terence Dooley, *The Land for the People: The Land Question in Independent Ireland* (Dublin: UCD Press, 2004).

⁹⁴ Tony Varley, 'Irish Farmers' Parties, Nationalism and Class Politics in the Twentieth Century' in Liam Weeks and Alastair Clark (eds), *Radical or Redundant? Minor Parties in Irish Politics*, (Dublin: The History Press, 2012), pp. 159-173; Raymond Ryan, 'The National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League', *Studia Hibernica*, no. 34 (2006-07), pp. 173-192.

⁹⁵ Bew, Hazelkorn and Patterson, *The Dynamics of Irish Politics*, pp. 50-53.

⁹⁶ Exceptions are Laurence Marley, 'Anomalous Agitator? Defining and Remembering Davitt', Fintan Lane and Andrew Newby (eds), *Michael Davitt: New Perspectives* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2009); William Michael Murphy, *The Parnell Myth and Irish Politics 1891-1956* (New York: Peter Lang, 1986); R.F. Foster and Alvin Jackson, 'Men for All Seasons? Carson, Parnell, and the Limits of Heroism in Modern Ireland', *European History Quarterly*, vol. 39, no. 3, pp. 414-436.

⁹⁷ Keith Jeffery *Ireland and the Great War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Myles Dungan, *They Shall Not Grow Old: Irish Soldiers and the Great War* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1997). See also Jason R. Myers, "'A Land Fit For Heroes'?: The Great War, Memory, Popular Culture, and Politics in Ireland since 1914', (PhD thesis, Chicago, Loyola University, 2010).

⁹⁸ Jane Leonard, 'Survivors' in John Horne (ed.), *Our War: Ireland and the Great War* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2008), pp. 209-223.

⁹⁹ Ian McBride, *History and Memory in Modern Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

which they often agitated radical nationalists.¹⁰⁰ Such concerns will be addressed in the thesis while eschewing any tendency to conflate ex-servicemen and old home rule supporters.

The issue of how long the absorption of former home rule activists and voters into the new body politics took and its unevenness has been acknowledged in the work of some political scientists such as John Coakley. However, while the work of scholars outside Ireland provides a framework for politics in newly independent states, there have been few, but passing references to ex-Irish Party influences on the proliferation of small parties and independents in the early Free State in the historiography.¹⁰¹ The exception to this has been the attempt to reform old home forces in the National League.¹⁰² J. Anthony Gaughan mined the Thomas O'Donnell Papers in the National Library to produce his biography of the former MP and National League co-founder, telling the story the latter party in the process.¹⁰³ However, it was only with Neil Glackin's minor dissertation on the League that a specific study of the League was attempted.¹⁰⁴ This dissertation contains many important insights into the party and its place in the Free State politics. However, Glackin did not make use of the John Dillon papers, useful for the origins of the League, or the archives of the AOH. As well as interrogating the League's categorisation as a 'mobilising party', the present study intends to view the League through the lens of the wider Irish Party legacy both before and after the League's brief duration.

Perhaps the most famous (and controversial) public voice on the Irish Party's place in history recently has been former Fine Gael Taoiseach John Bruton. Assessing the birth of the Free State, Bruton has written that 'after all the bloodshed, Sinn Féin

¹⁰⁰ Fearghal McGarry, "'Too Damned Tolerant' Republicans and Imperialism in the Irish Free State', McGarry (ed.), *Republicanism in Modern Ireland* (Dublin: UCD Press, 2003).

¹⁰¹ Gary Reich, 'The Evolution of New Party Systems: Are Early Elections Exceptional?', *Electoral Studies*, vol. 23, no. 2, pp. 235-260; John Coakley, 'Minor Parties in Irish Political Life, 1922-1989', *Economic and Social Review*, vol. 21, no. 3 (April 1990), pp. 269-97.

¹⁰² Other individuals from Irish Party backgrounds who played differing roles in the Free State have been the subjects of studies by descendants. These include Patricia Lavelle, *James O'Mara: The Story of an Original Sinn Féiner* (Dublin: The History Publisher, 2012) and Jasper Ungoed-Thomas, *Jasper Wolfe of Skibbereen* (Cork: Collins Press, 2008).

¹⁰³ J. Anthony Gaughan, *A Political Odyssey - Thomas O'Donnell, M.P. for West Kerry, 1900-1918* (Dublin: Kingdom Books, 1983).

¹⁰⁴ Neil Glackin, 'Home Rulers in a Free State: The National League 1926-31', unpublished MA thesis, University College Dublin, 2012.

now had to prove that the policy of its defeated parliamentary party opponents could be made to work after all.¹⁰⁵ Faced with such a task, Cumann na nGaedheal had to deal with the constituency of opinion which remained loyal to the old Irish Party. Accordingly, the recent growth in studies on Cumann na nGaedheal by scholars like Maurice Manning, Ciara Meehan and Mel Farrell has provided some insights into the party's relationship with residual Home Rulers.¹⁰⁶ Manning's biography of James Dillon provided rich detail on his interactions with many Home Rule legacies in independent Ireland and Dillon's opposition to Ireland's wartime neutrality. However, there remains little biographical work on prominent politicians with Irish Party roots such as Capt. William Redmond or Frank MacDermot.¹⁰⁷

The most provocative examination of the relationship of the Treatyite party and its members from Home Rule backgrounds has come from John M. Regan, who argued that the Cumann na nGaedheal's consolidation of the revolution actually amounted to a counter-revolution.¹⁰⁸ Regan's stimulating work represented a welcome attempt to consider the continuity between pre and post-independence politics and his thesis rested partially on the assimilation of former Home Ruler and Unionist politicians. However, apart from his argument that Kevin O'Higgins owed his management of Cumann na nGaedheal to a political education in an Irish Party milieu, his work is more concerned with the conservatism of the party and the re-emergence of the pre-revolutionary Catholic middle class than a distinct Irish Party legacy or Cumann na nGaedheal's attitude to the memory of John Redmond or Parnell.¹⁰⁹ While, as Pařeta has shown, many middle class Catholics had looked forward to gaining power in a

¹⁰⁵ John Bruton review of Donal P. Corcoran, *Freedom to Achieve Freedom: The Irish Free State 1922-32* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2013), *Dublin Review of Books*, no. 48, January 2014 - <http://www.drb.ie/essays/governing-in-hard-times> Accessed 30 May 2016.

¹⁰⁶ Mike Cronin has subsequently added to scholarship on the Blueshirts, *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1997).

¹⁰⁷ Maurice Manning, *James Dillon: A Biography* (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1999). On other issues surrounding World War II, see Steven O'Connor, *Irish Officers in the British Forces, 1922-45* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Donal Ó Drisceoil, *Censorship in Ireland, 1939-1945: Neutrality, Politics and Society* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996) and Brian Girvin, *The Emergency: Neutral Ireland, 1939-45* (London: Pan Books, 2007).

¹⁰⁸ John M. Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution, 1921-1936: Treatyite Politics and Settlement in Independent Ireland* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2001).

¹⁰⁹ Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution*, pp. 246, 259-260.

home rule Ireland, some of that class had always grown to hold more advanced nationalist views.¹¹⁰

In response to Regan, Mel Farrell has made the case that Cumann na nGaedheal was a new national party seeking to attract various shades of opinion rather than plotting a conscious counter-revolution.¹¹¹ While this thesis will discuss the sense to which the old party influenced post-independence parties in terms of *modus operandi*, the focus will also be on the direct influence of politicians from Irish Party backgrounds, the memory of the party as well as the influence on political culture where this may apply.

Structure of thesis

The fall of the Irish Parliamentary Party can sometimes appear both a perennial conundrum and, conversely, an historical inevitability – how did a once mighty party fall into political oblivion so suddenly? However, this study is concerned with another important aspect of the Irish Party’s defeat. What was the party’s legacy in the Free State? How did former party supporters react? Did they adapt themselves to the new politics? What influence did the party have on its successors? How were the Irish Party and its leaders like Charles Stewart Parnell and John Redmond perceived? It is the objective of the study to estimate its legacy: the memory of the party, the persistence of its political culture, the roles of former members and their contribution to the new politics.

This thesis is organised in a broadly chronological manner. However, any estimation of the legacy of the Irish Party must first examine its decline and the immediate

¹¹⁰ Pašeta’s *Before the Revolution* was an insightful examination of Irish class and education has also contributed significantly to our understanding of the textures of Irish society at the time and how it interacted with the shifting political strands of Irish Party loyalty and rising advanced nationalism, Pašeta, *Before the Revolution*; Patrick Maume review of Senia Pašeta, *Before the Revolution, History Ireland*, vol. 8, no. 1 (Spring 2000).

Another valuable contribution to the field is Ciarán O’Neill, *Catholics of Consequence: Transnational Education, Social Mobility, and the Irish Catholic Elite* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

¹¹¹ Mel Farrell, ‘Cumann na nGaedheal: “A New National Party”?’ , Farrell, Jason Knirck and Ciara Meehan (eds), *A Formative Decade: Ireland in the 1920s* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2015), pp. 36-58. Jason Knirck has actually disputed Regan’s thesis entirely and argued no counter-revolution took place while Ciara Meehan’s work took a much more party political approach by examining Cumann na nGaedheal’s day-to-day politics and electoral strategies, Jason Knirck, *Afterimage of the Revolution: Cumann na nGaedheal and Irish Politics, 1922–1932* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2014); Ciara Meehan, *The Cosgrave Party: A History of Cumann na nGaedheal, 1923-33* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2010).

aftermath of its electoral defeat in 1918. Consequently, the first chapter examines the period from the beginning of the third home rule crisis in 1912 through to the 1918 election before reflecting on the uncertain years between the landmark election and the foundation of the Free State. This includes examination of the position of the remnant of the party at Westminster, the efforts of grassroots activists to organise after 1918 as well as the reactions of Home Rulers to the War of Independence.

Having established the extent of residual Irish Party organisation in the Free State, chapters two and three examine the legacy of the party in the period up to the foundation of the neo-Redmondite National League in September 1926. Chapter Two examines the presence of individuals from Irish Party backgrounds in the Third and Fourth Dáils. It provides an analysis of former MPs returned to the Dáil and Seanad as independents as well as discussions of Home Rulers in each of the major political groupings, analysing the number of TDs with Home Rule roots and considering possible comparisons between the IPP and each new party.

Chapter Three highlights the previously understated prominence of the Irish Party in public debate and memory in the early Free State. This includes discussion of how former Irish Party followers viewed the new state with reference to private correspondence, public statements, publications and clubs and organisations with links to the Irish Party or former MPs. The presence of old Irish Party supporters in World War I commemorations is discussed, but there is special focus on attempts to commemorate both John Redmond and his brother Willie as clear evidence that the Redmonds were far from forgotten.

Chapter Four analyses the National League as an attempt by dissatisfied former Home Rulers to revive the Irish Party tradition in the Free State. Interrogating the League's categorisation as a 'mobilising' party which arose from a new policy position away from the Civil War cleavage, it is argued that the League served as a 'legacy party'. This is illustrated in the League's personnel, organisation, ephemera and nomenclature and the debate surrounding John Redmond and the old IPP featured during the June 1927 election campaign. The League's attempt to enter government and its dramatic collapse in the Jinks affair in August 1927 offer insights

into the attitudes of old Home Rule supporters and their implications for an evolving Free State body politic subsequently.

Chapters Five and Six look at the integration of individuals from Home Rule backgrounds into Irish politics after the National League and the evolving place of the Irish Party and its former leaders in the public memory of the state. This period is scrutinised to demonstrate how the invocation of the Land League legacy and the threat of direct action by farmers presented dilemmas for politicians from Home Rule backgrounds like James Dillon and Frank MacDermot.

As the remnants of Irish Party support became largely assimilated into Fine Gael from 1933, the final chapter surveys the reactions of ex-Home Rulers to major events at home and abroad to determine to what extent such figures continued to act distinctively and if this was due to their Irish Party lineage. However, in an era of Fianna Fáil ascendancy, there is also sustained focus on how the Irish Party was remembered. The comparative neglect of Redmond and the latter day party is juxtaposed with the commemorations and public memory of the early party of Parnell and Davitt which, by contrast, were partially assimilated into the Irish nationalist story.

Primary sources

This empirical study utilises the private papers of a number of prominent political figures. For the pre-1918 period, the John Redmond papers in the National Library of Ireland yield much valuable insight along with the John Dillon papers in the Manuscript Departments, Trinity College Dublin. John Dillon's papers, are however, also very useful for estimating the post-1918 period, in particular, his correspondence with T.P. O'Connor. The Manuscripts Department, TCD also houses the papers of Dillon's James, later a leader of Fine Gael. It is regrettable that much of the material from the James Dillon papers remains uncatalogued and is therefore unavailable to researchers. However, some of this material has been quoted in Maurice Manning's *James Dillon: A Biography*. While it is also frustrating that there is no collection of papers for John Redmond's son Capt. William, it is some consolation that the papers of the Irish National League are to be found in the Thomas O'Donnell collection in the NLI. These papers contain much information on

the organisation of the party and the personnel contacted by the leaders as well as the financial difficulties which soon engulfed the League. The W.G. Fallon collection provides additional information on the National League as well as further details on the lives of former Irish Party figures in independent Ireland.

The Archives Department in UCD offers a fantastic array of material for the early years of independence. Although it contains few collections of individuals from Home Rule backgrounds, comments on former Home Rulers in Free State politics and the party's legacy appear in the papers of some of the major figures on either side of the Treaty divide. The papers of Cumann na nGaedheal, Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil are also valuable resources, particularly in relation to the turbulent years of the Irish National League.

The family papers of William O'Brien and his private collection in UCC provide interesting accounts of O'Brien's interactions with various figures in the 1920s.¹¹² Cork City and County Archives are also home to a lot of rich material, including the archives of the AOH in Cork and the diaries of Liam de Róiste, which provide commentaries on the dynamics of Cumann na nGaedheal policy and organisation in Cork. The NLI and NAI both hold runs of the AOH's monthly newsletter *The Hibernian Journal* which contains lengthy pieces from National Secretary John Dillon Nugent on contemporary events and Hibernian policy. This study, with the kind permission of the AOH's governing Board of Erin, also makes use of the minutes of meetings of the Board of Erin in the National Archives. This source provides invaluable internal information on the Order and, to this author's knowledge, has not been previously consulted by any scholar except for McPhillips in his local study of Monaghan.

While some of the sources for the AOH may have had only a small audience outside of the organisation's membership, a study such as this also examines public forums of debate and primary sources of a public nature are also very important to a study such as this one. As mentioned above, there are number of books and memoirs written by former Irish Party MPs and supporters. Although such works are coloured

¹¹² Philip Bull, 'The Manuscripts of William O'Brien in the Library of University College, Cork', *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society*, no. 75 (1970), pp. 129–41.

by the authors' own experiences and sometimes betray bitter undertones, they nonetheless provide fascinating insights into the various ex-Irish Party perspectives in independent Ireland. Dáil and Seanad debates are utilised to assess the contributions to debates of politicians with IPP roots. Newspapers are similarly a primary concern here. The Irish Party's old organ the *Freeman's Journal* continued until 1924 as a pro-Treaty paper which retained interest in old Home Rule organisations and supporters. The *Irish Independent*, so antagonistic to the Irish Party prior to 1918, remains the major daily newspaper in the Free State as a pro-Treaty journal. The *Irish Times* began life in independent Ireland as the old unionist organ; however, under the editorship of Bertie Smyllie in 1934, its editorial line was more in tune with the evolving independent state.¹¹³ From its foundation in 1931, the Fianna Fáil backed *Irish Press* is used to discern the views of Fianna Fáil opinion on the memory of Parnell, Redmond and the Irish Party generally. *Irish Truth* (1924-7) was a brief weekly newspaper which backed the National League in 1927. Edited by former MP Henry Harrison, it reflected his concerns about partition, the plight of ex-servicemen, and the Free State's fiscal health. Another element of the party's legacy is the continuance of many regional papers once loyal to the Irish Party. The old party's powerful network of provincial journals is assessed to ascertain how they adapted to the changed circumstances of the Free State particularly in areas where persistent Home Rule loyalty was strongest.

¹¹³ Mark O'Brien, *The Irish Times: A History* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2008).

Chapter 1

The Irish Party and the struggle for Independence, 1912-22

The old Irish Party spoke, to all appearances, for a united nation, and it was generally believed, in that period between 1914 and 1916, that the fight was over, that we had won.

James Dillon draft autobiography p. 10, TCD James Dillon Papers 1054/1.

In this rebellion, for the first time in the history of Ireland, at least nine out of every ten of the population were on the side of the Government. Is that nothing? It is the first rebellion that ever took place in Ireland where you had a majority on your side. It is the fruit of our life work. We have risked our lives a hundred times to bring about this result. We are held up to odium as traitors by those men who made this rebellion, and our lives have been in danger a hundred times during the last thirty years because we have endeavoured to reconcile the two things, and now you are washing out our whole life work in a sea of blood.

John Dillon, Commons Debate, 11 May 1916, Hansard Series 5, vol. 82, col. 940.

John Dillon decried the Westminster parliament's incomprehension of Irish nationalism in the aftermath of the Rising. His sense of loss was clear, but what was being lost in Dillon's view? Shocking many within the chamber and drawing respect from a population in Dublin moving more and more towards sympathy with the defeated rebels of the 1916 Rising, Dillon's words neatly capture what the party felt it had achieved by that time. They also summed up the vulnerability of the party's position in the aftermath of the Rising. In the years that followed, the IPP would be overwhelmed by a re-energised Sinn Féin in the changing landscape of Ireland and Europe.

The momentous decade 1912-22 was one of major political change in Ireland. A central force in 1912, the Irish Party would be one of its biggest casualties. This chapter examines the conduct of the IPP and its leader John Redmond during the crisis sparked by the third Home Rule Bill. The transformative events of World War I and the 1916 Rising are situated within the context of the Irish Party's place in Irish politics to highlight the disintegration of party support as well as pointing to where loyalty remained. The 1918 election remains the most significant election in Irish history as the IPP were swept aside by Sinn Féin. With a wider focus on the party's afterlife and legacy, this chapter examines the differing tactics and priorities of both

parties as well the extent to which supporters of both parties were influenced by as the World War came to an end.

In the aftermath of Sinn Féin's stunning victory in 1918, the Irish Parliamentary Party and its supporters undoubtedly found themselves in a strange and unfamiliar position. In many ways, the success of the party had always been its ability to represent many things at once. At times, separately and simultaneously it could be said to represent in its membership and auxiliary organisations constitutional politics, support for the Great War, the 'Redmondite' project of self-government and Imperial co-operation, the Fenian legacy, the Land League tradition, increased opportunity for the emergent Catholic middle class, English Liberalism, Catholic sectarianism in the form of the Ancient Order of Hibernians and even a concern for the working class of towns through its 'Labour-Nationalist' element. This chapter identifies and addresses which elements of this broad coalition survived the IPP's dramatic electoral collapse as well as exploring the responses of Home Rulers to the War of Independence which followed. The outbreak of violence in 1919 left Home Rulers at all levels with a dilemma whether to maintain action with a shrunken base, to form new organisations, to remain in the background and leave the field to Sinn Féin or to transfer active support to the new party (unpalatable for many IPP loyalists). Although the escalation of the War of Independence meant that the space for constitutional action was severely constricted, the activities of home rule activists reveal a movement that was not quite moribund; it was, rather, a lack of initiative from its leadership which would see the party finally cease to exist.

The Home Rule Crisis and the emergence of the Volunteers

In 1912, circumstances seemed to suit the Irish Party. Exploiting the arithmetic of the House of Commons, the party was able to extract a third home rule bill and although the Lords rejected it, Redmond and his party appeared set to welcome the legislation through the Commons two years later.

The IPP had always been dependent on British parties; however, a long period of Conservative reign brought much reform legislation, but not the promise of Home Rule. Even the Liberals' accession to power in 1905 was not especially promising at first; a landslide election victory in 1906 meant the Prime Minister Henry Campbell-

Bannerman was not obliged to grant home rule. The closest the party got was the ill-fated Irish Councils Bill of 1907, which provided limited autonomy for the country. Redmond and others were, at first, to welcome the proposal until public opinion at home forced them to beat a hasty and somewhat embarrassing retreat.¹ However, the elections of 1910 once again brought the Irish Parliamentary Party to the forefront of British political concerns as it held the balance of power. The naturally cautious Redmond was rewarded for steering his party on a careful course of broad Liberal support for the previous decade. The IPP had backed of Lloyd George's 1909 'People's Budget' which, with its duties on liquor, was very unpopular in Ireland. However, unrest over the budget in Britain helped to bring the conflict between the Liberal Government and the Conservative House of Lords to a conclusion. When such a conclusion came, the Lords lost out with victory for the Liberal government beneficial for its ally, the Irish Parliamentary Party. The veto of the Lords was to be reduced to a mere two year delay and the way was finally clear for the passage of the third Home Rule Bill through both Houses at Westminster.

The measure has looked rather limited in retrospect with no control over foreign affairs or military matters, limited power concerning remaining land reforms and no power over policing for six years. Any home rule government would also have to contend with the fact that Ireland had become a net beneficiary rather than contributor to the British exchequer by this time.² However, in many ways, the long struggle of Redmond and the party had been simply about achieving home rule; the concept was malleable in the speeches of many party members. It was this broad united front that had allowed the party to remain a catch-all party for nationalist Ireland for so long.

In spite of the more imperially-tinged rhetoric of Redmond and others, in Ireland, there existed a hope that more powers and greater prosperity would flow from it.³ Indeed, the major obstacle facing the Irish Party was not nationalist scepticism about

¹ Meleady, *John Redmond: The National Leader*, pp. 100-108.

² Bew, *Ideology and the Irish Question*, pp. 124-6.

³ It can of course be argued whether Redmond personally would have pursued a strong course in seeking greater independence. Meleady, *John Redmond; The National Leader*, p. 214. On the increasing incorporation of references to Empire in the speeches of some Irish Party MPs, see McConnell, 'The View from the Backbench', pp. 71-7. However, a majority of MPs made no reference to Empire in this way.

the scope of the measure offered. Writing in 1937, Dorothy Macardle claimed there was ‘no considerable section of nationalist opinion’ at that point who would not have accepted a ‘genuine Home Rule Act as a stage on the way to independence’ and the measure famously even had the support of the future 1916 leader Patrick Pearse.⁴ The IPP’s more immediate concern was the entrenched opposition of unionists, particularly in north-east Ulster to any form of Irish autonomy.⁵ Incomprehension of this fact was soon to prove an alarming weakness in the party’s ambitions and the events set in train by unionist action changed Irish politics irrevocably.⁶

Although the Irish Unionist Party was led by Trinity College Dublin MP Edward Carson, the movement was strongest in north-east Ulster where Unionist candidates had always held sway in many constituencies at election time. Unionist supporters promised to defend the union with Britain even to the extent of extra-parliamentary methods. Ulster Day was held on 28 September 1912 when 237,368 men signed the ‘Ulster Solemn League and Covenant’ to oppose home rule and refuse to recognise its parliament while 234,046 women signed a supporting declaration.⁷

Irish unionists were initially opposed to any form of exclusion for Ulster counties with unionist majorities. Nevertheless, by January 1913, Carson moved an amendment to the bill for the exclusion of the entire province of Ulster although he still maintained his opposition to the measure *in toto*.⁸ Plans were set in train to begin a ‘provisional government’ in Ulster to ignore and resist British attempts to enforce any home rule legislation and an Ulster Volunteer Force [UVF] was also established in January 1913.⁹ The force drew recruits and began training, successfully landing arms in the infamous ‘Larne gun-running’ of April 1914. These

⁴ Dorothy Macardle, *The Irish Republic* (London: Corgi Press, 1937), p. 77. Macardle was close to de Valera and would certainly have been in no way naturally sympathetic to the IPP.

⁵ Stephen Gwynn actually came close to denying this in his bid to allay Unionist fears, Stephen Gwynn, *The Case for Home Rule* (Dublin: Maunsell, 1911), pp. 78-82. It can be said this ‘over-selling’ of the measure was actually damaging in that it heightened unionist fears about home rule.

⁶ Even younger elements within the party like Thomas Kettle betrayed some lack of understanding concerning the seriousness and sincerity of unionism. Allowing for some literary flourishes in his book *The Open Secret of Ireland* published in 1911, Kettle clearly did not feel unionism was any more than a bluff, Thomas Kettle (ed.), Senia Pašeta, *The Open Secret of Ireland* (Dublin: UCD Press, 2007).

⁷ Joseph E.A. Connell, ‘The Ulster 1912 Covenant’, *History Ireland*, vol. 20, no. 5 (September/October 2012), p. 66.

⁸ Meleady, *John Redmond: The National Leader*, pp. 217, 224-5.

⁹ Brian P. Murphy, *Patrick Pearse and the Lost Republican Ideal*, p. 43.

Volunteers benefitted, in some cases, from training and drilling by former British Army officers.

While this created significant difficulties for Redmond and his party, nationalists in the south began to mobilise in new ways as home rule appeared to be at risk. The 'Irish Volunteers' were formed under the perhaps unlikely leadership of UCD history professor Eoin MacNeill in November 1913, ostensibly to defend home rule. Initially, however, this Volunteer movement remained independent of the Irish Party (though Tom Kettle's brother Laurence was involved from the first meeting).¹⁰ Although there were some within the new volunteer movement including its IRB [Irish Republican Brotherhood] grouping who wished to remain free from Irish Party interference, the party itself preferred to stay aloof and not encourage anything approaching a military force.¹¹ The Fenian heritage of many of its MPs had faded into the background by this point and its constitutionalist ethos appeared secure.¹²

As the Volunteers developed an organisation outside the central control of the party, the IPP and the Liberals struggled to find a way out of the impasse over Ulster. Developments reached a nadir with the 'Curragh Incident' on 21 March when, given the option of taking action against Ulster resistance or accepting dismissal, many British Army officers chose the latter course.¹³ Such a move seemed to vindicate the extra-parliamentary methods of the Ulster Volunteers and left Redmond in an invidious position. The reaction in nationalist Ireland was negative and the growing popularity of the southern Volunteers soon forced Redmond to reconsider his initially cautious attitude to the organisation. In June, the Irish Party attempted to subsume the Irish Volunteers within the buckle of their rule just as it had done with the rural agitation movement, the AOH, William O'Brien's UIL and other organisations. An alliance of the party and MacNeill's Volunteers was duly accomplished, though it took an ultimatum delivered by Redmond to the Volunteer

¹⁰ However, he was not well received. See F. X. Martin (ed.), *The Irish Volunteers, 1913-1915: Recollections and Documents* (Dublin: J. Duffy, 1963), p. 107. See also *Irish Independent*, 26 November 1913.

¹¹ J.J. Horgan recounted that MP John Muldoon advised caution, Horgan, *Parnell to Pearse*, p. 226.

¹² McConnel, "'Fenians at Westminster': The Edwardian Irish Parliamentary Party and the Legacy of the New Departure", *Irish Historical Studies*, vol. 34, no. 133 (May 2004) pp. 42-64.

¹³ Foster, *Modern Ireland*, p. 469; Meleady, *John Redmond: The National Leader*, p. 268.

leadership as the IPP insisted on a large unwieldy committee in charge of a new movement which still included figures drifting towards if not already in the secret IRB.¹⁴ This element was, in almost every way, inimical to the control which the Irish Party sought to impose on the body. Distrust of the British was further exacerbated on 26 July when British soldiers fired on a crowd in the city after Irish Volunteers had imported arms at Howth.¹⁵ An outraged *Freeman* highlighted the double standards from the nationalist perspective in the aftermath of the successful and unperturbed UVF landing at Larne.¹⁶

Amid a vista of civil war in Ireland, the King moved to bring both sides together in July 1914 at a conference at Buckingham Palace. The incompatibility of nationalist and unionist demands was barely altered by such an occasion. Carson again made the case for the exclusion of the whole province ‘or least the six plantation counties’ while Redmond instead proposed ‘county option’ whereby each county would have the right to opt out of a home rule Ireland for a period of years.¹⁷ Carson was never enthusiastic about any ‘stay of execution’ before a final assimilation in a home rule polity and could not agree on which counties to exclude in any case, with particular dispute over Fermanagh and Tyrone which contained slim nationalist majorities. However, as Redmond prepared to allow county option with, crucially, no time limit on exclusion, events further afield altered the Irish picture utterly.¹⁸

The Redmondite vision at the outset of war and how it crumbled

The shooting dead of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo sparked a chain of events leading to the outbreak of what would become known as the Great War. For the Unionists, wedding themselves to Britain and the Empire, the opportunity was

¹⁴ Horgan, *Parnell to Pearse*, pp. 228-231. See also Bulmer Hobson’s logic for accepting Redmond’s ultimatum in order to avoid splitting the movement, F.X. Martin, *The Irish Volunteers*, pp. 46-55. Denis Gwynn felt Redmond’s move towards the Volunteers was a popular move apart from some ‘jealousy’ in Dublin, Denis Gwynn, *The Life of John Redmond*, pp. 310-311, 316.

¹⁵ Charles Townshend, *Easter 1916: The Irish Rebellion* (London: Penguin, 2006), p. 57.

¹⁶ The *Independent* called the actions of the British forces an ‘unprecedented outrage’, *Irish Independent*, 27 July 1914. The *Freeman* highlighted the difference between ‘Passive in Belfast: Active in Dublin’ *Freeman’s Journal*, 27 July 1914. There were also resolutions of sympathy with the victims and congratulations given to the Volunteers for their ‘coup’, *Freeman’s Journal*, 31 July 1914; *Irish Independent*, 27 July 1914.

¹⁷ Meleady, *John Redmond: The National Leader*, p. 282.

¹⁸ Meleady has shown that, as talks broke down, Redmond was preparing to make one final move far beyond his previously vigorous statements in favour of unity. Meleady, *John Redmond: The National Leader*, p. 284. Redmond had earlier declared the two-nation theory as an ‘abomination’, *Freeman’s Journal*, 14 October 1913.

perhaps obvious. For militant nationalists outside the broad moderate church of the Irish Party, the war would be another object lesson in the adage that ‘England’s difficulty was Ireland’s opportunity’. The IPP, however, under Redmond’s leadership would also seek to make the war an opportunity.

Firstly, Redmond succeeded in getting the Home Rule Bill through the Commons once the veto of the Lords had lapsed. It was placed on the statute book on 18 September; its enactment was suspended until the end of the war. This, in itself, represented a victory for Redmond and the Irish Party as a legal if not yet tangible outcome of their lives’ work. It also won the party praise in the provincial press in Ireland and helped to assuage doubts about whether the protracted political crisis would see the home rule measure eventually passed.¹⁹

However, in anticipation of home rule, Redmond had already addressed the Commons in August and made a magnanimous offer that Irishmen of both political persuasions would unite to defend their country in the war. His colleague, Stephen Gwynn, would later record that such a speech, without consultation with others in the party, perfectly judged the mood of the House and sealed a day which for the IPP, seemed like one of triumph.²⁰ Nonetheless, Redmond’s next step in war time arrangements was to prove more controversial and eventually test his leadership of nationalism to the limit.

Addressing Volunteers at Woodenbridge, Co. Wicklow, on 20 September, Redmond implored them to defend home rule and to fight ‘wherever the firing line extends’.²¹ While some within the Irish Party like Kettle genuinely felt the moral action was to defend Belgium in a spirit of enlightened Europeanism, Redmond later defended his actions on three grounds. Firstly, he argued that once home rule was granted, joining with Britain in a just war was exactly what his predecessors would have done. His speeches then called on Irishmen to defend Catholic Belgium before he finally told audiences that ‘policy’ was important too. By this, Redmond pointed to the chances

¹⁹ Frustration that the legislation was delayed so long was even visible in the papers in Redmond’s native Wexford, *People*, 23 September 1914.

²⁰ Stephen Gwynn, *The Student’s History of Ireland* (Dublin: The Educational Company of Ireland, 1925), p. 295.

²¹ *Freeman’s Journal*, 21 September 1914.

of success on unity if unionists fought, but nationalists did not.²² The idea of north and south fighting together in a ‘union of hearts’ fed perfectly into Redmond’s personal vision of imperial nationalism and seemed a possible panacea to the conflict over the home rule proposal.²³ Yet, such an ideal was haunted by the spectre of nationalist-unionist conflict despite Redmond’s hope that his Volunteers would be constituted as an Irish Brigade or division in the British Army. However, the moves by Redmond and a number of other MPs to import arms to establish and bolster a ‘home rule army’ could be also seen to suggest Redmond was arming his Volunteers in anticipation of whatever post-war situation emerged regarding home rule.²⁴

So what effect did Redmond’s war policy have on his party and his supporters? Wheatley has demonstrated how the imperial conciliatory nationalism of Redmondism was a ‘minority’ taste, but Redmond’s 1914 war strategy was shared by some within the parliamentary party.²⁵ Nonetheless, many MPs never took the step of actually calling for recruitment.²⁶ Even though Redmond’s parliamentary opponent William O’Brien had advocated enlistment first, Redmond’s new departure was later described by one of the pre-war Catholic middle class generation, C.P. Curran, as ‘lamentable’ and that it ‘flung discord into the movement’.²⁷ As Redmond’s brother Willie enlisted, the sentiments of his wife Eleanor in 1914 encapsulated the conflicting feelings. Writing to party activist J.J. Horgan, Eleanor reflected that ‘although he [Willie] is quite convinced he is doing the right thing and the best he can to make home rule a certainty, he thinks that some may think it almost wrong he don the uniform [and] join the Irish brigade’.²⁸

²² *Freeman’s Journal*, 21 December 1914.

²³ McConnel, ‘John Redmond and Irish Catholic Loyalty’, pp. 83-111.

²⁴ Conor Mulvagh, ‘The Chief and the Chairman: Parnell and Redmond compared’, Parnell Summer School, 12 August 2014; James McConnel, ‘John Redmond and the Guns of August’, Irish Historical Society Lecture, 16 December 2014.

²⁵ Wheatley, *Nationalism and the Irish Party*, p. 79.

²⁶ McConnel, ‘Recruiting Sergeants for John Bull? Irish Nationalist MPs and Enlistment during the Early Months of the Great War’, *War in History*, Vol. 14, No. 4, 2007, pp. 408-428.

²⁷ Curran, *Under the Receding Wave*, p. 131; *Free Press*, 5 September 1914.

²⁸ Eleanor Redmond to J.J. Horgan, 28 December 1914, NLI J.J. Horgan Papers P4645. Paul Bew has written on how Redmond’s call created problems for the party at local level in 1914, Bew, *Ideology and the Irish Question*, pp. 122-3.

At the same time, the majority of the population clearly still supported the Irish Party.²⁹ Despite evidence of war enthusiasm in Ireland in 1914, some local newspapers which had lauded Redmond for securing the passing of the home rule measure devoted less attention on his Woodenbridge call; some editorials carried an apparent underlying assumption that some Irishmen would enlist in any case.³⁰ Rallying to the Volunteer cause and defending Irish shores could be extolled with little reference to going to the front.³¹ Irishmen had previously fought in the British Army for a variety of reasons, discussion of which would be outside the scope of this study.³² What was unprecedented about Redmond's move was that this represented the first time mass enlistment by Irishmen was being requested and led by the popular nationalist movement of the time. Critiques of Larkin's argument about Parnell notwithstanding, with the Home Rule Act (Government of Ireland Act) on the statute book, in 1914 Redmond was left to act as Irish Prime Minister in waiting, commanding a soon to be independent Irish army fighting with Imperial colleagues.³³ However, all this was coming before self-government had become an established fact and defence was one of the areas outside the scope of the Home Rule Bill. The unusual set of circumstances made for a series of disagreements and disappointments in wartime policy which were to antagonise the party and hinder its policy. Nevertheless, even when the Volunteer movement split over that issue, the rump of 'Irish Volunteers' (led ostensibly by MacNeill, but containing a concealed

²⁹ One of Redmond's biographers detailed how even Griffith, for example was neutral in 1914, Warre B. Wells, *John Redmond*, p. 160.

³⁰ Caitriona Pennell, *A Kingdom United: Popular Responses to the Outbreak of the First World War in Britain and Ireland* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012). One newspaper went so far as to claim Redmond's Woodenbridge speech left enlistment a personal issue for nationalists 'and beyond that the sage Mr Redmond has not attempted to put it', *Anglo-Celt*, 10 October 1914. Wexford's *Free Press* praised the passage of the Act in September as clearing any suspicions that home rule would not pass and only on 3 October did the paper discuss a choice between fighting the Germans in Europe and waiting until they landed in Ireland.

³¹ See for example muster of Wexford volunteers with local MP Sir Thomas Henry Grattan Esmonde, *Freeman's Journal*, 1 April 1915.

³² Keith Jeffery (ed.), *An Irish Empire? Aspects of Ireland and the British Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996); Joanna Bourke, "'Irish Tommies': The Construction of a Martial Manhood 1914-1918', *Bullán: An Irish Studies Journal* vol. 3, no. 2 (1998), pp. 13-30. The IPP's attitude to the issue had often been complex. The party bitterly opposed the Boer War; yet, Redmond still praised the bravery of Irishmen who fought for the British in South Africa. Similarly, opposition to British army enlistment had not always been confined to advanced nationalists, but could include the AOH as well, Terence Denman, 'The Red Livery of Shame': The Campaign against Army Recruitment in Ireland, 1899-1914', *Irish Historical Studies*, vol. 29, no. 114 (Nov., 1994), pp. 208-233.

³³ Larkin, 'Church, State and Nation'; Lee, 'On the Birth of the Modern Irish State'.

IRB element) which seceded, seemed small enough not to occasion excessive concern.

From the beginning, the aim of Redmond and the IPP to have an Irish division based on the Volunteers was not recognised by General Kitchener in the War Office.³⁴ While the nationalist press and local MPs continued to praise Redmond's Volunteers, the vitality of the body diminished from 1915 onwards. On the one hand, this was due to those who enlisted. However, in many other cases, it seems Volunteers stopped drilling in case it would lead to their being pressured to enlist.³⁵ Such nationalists supported the Allies; however, in many rural areas, agriculture was booming during the war and farmers would not give up their sons to the battlefields. Conversely, the ideological underpinning of the decision to fight among many of the urban poor could be debated.³⁶

Another controversy for Redmond came in the formation of the wartime cabinet in May 1915. Seats were offered to both Redmond and Carson, but whereas the latter took his position as Attorney-General, Redmond declined due to the convention that no Irish politician would take a government position without home rule first being achieved. To many nationalist eyes, this played into the idea of the favourable treatment of unionists by the British Government.³⁷ The war also weakened party organisation. Land purchase schemes were largely suspended at the outbreak of hostilities while there was to be no general election in 1914. As home rule remained on the statute book, the UIL was left without its two major organisational purposes.

³⁴ Kitchener did not regard the Volunteers as a professional military force. This state of affairs was seen to be made worse by the creation of the Ulster Division though in Kitchener's view, the two predominantly nationalist and unionists divisions should merely adopt the appellations 16th (Irish) Division and the 36th (Ulster) Division, John Redmond memo, September 1915, TCD John Dillon Papers, 6749/579.

³⁵ Breandán Mac Ghiolla Choille, *1913-16 Intelligence Notes* (Dublin: State Papers Office, 1966). Most reports on the National Volunteers from the outbreak of war reported declining memberships. Such figures were even then often described as merely 'nominal' e.g. in Louth and Meath pp. 85-7 and Longford p. 143.

³⁶ See for example Pauline Codd, 'Recruiting and Responses to the War in Wexford', David Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Ireland and the First World War* (Dublin: Trinity History Workshop, 1986), pp. 15-26. For an interesting survey on the effects of war on Ireland's demography and economy as well as its political life, see David Fitzpatrick, 'Irish Consequences of the Great War', *Irish Historical Studies*, vol. 39, no. 156 (November 2015), pp. 643-658.

³⁷ D.P. Moran, editor of *The Leader* newspaper and self-styled spokesman for 'Irish-Ireland' was among those who disagreed with Redmond's course of action on this matter. See Patrick Maume, *D.P. Moran* (Dublin, Historical Association of Ireland, 1995).

Decline undoubtedly set in and the party was forced to recruit paid organisers to bolster the UIL in 1915. Nevertheless, although Bew's research shows some weakening in IPP support, no major break with the party is evidenced in the country until April 1916.³⁸

The Easter Rising launched on Easter Monday, 24 April was, in purely military terms, a wholly unsuccessful rebellion. Comprising only a small force of Irish Volunteers (led by the IRB elements of the organisation), Cumann na mBan, the boy-scout movement Fianna Éireann, and James Connolly's Irish Citizen Army, the rebels took Dublin by surprise, occupying key buildings in the city before extra British forces were drafted in to put down the rebellion. Chances of a sustained insurrection with a real possibility of success were scuppered before the Rising began by the failure of Roger Casement's bid to land German arms and the countermanding order issued by Volunteers chief Eoin MacNeill on Easter Sunday, which reduced the number of volunteers mobilised significantly.³⁹ However, the Rising would have far-reaching political consequences.

Eugene Sheehy, serving in the Army in Ireland at the time, remembered the first changes in public opinion at the 'overbearing' behaviour by some British officers and the 'gallant fight' put up by the insurgents.⁴⁰ Such was the first evidence of the shift in public opinion which would destroy the political hegemony of the Irish Party. British suppression together with martial law, executions and the circulation of wild rumours, some of which (though not all) turned out to be true, proved fatal to British standing in Irish public opinion. However, even before the effect of this dynamic on public feeling became clear, an open rebellion in the capital of a country that the IPP leaders had declared solidly part of the empire and behind the War effort was the Irish Party's worst nightmare. Dillon's famous House of Commons speech a month later would confirm as much. While Redmond remained stationed in London

³⁸ Bew, *Conflict and conciliation in Ireland*, p. 212. The Party's weakness also seemed to be more apparent in urban areas before the Rising. Pdraig Yeates has noted Labour gains on the IPP e.g. the 1915 by-election between Thomas Farren and John Dillon Nugent. Bew, *Ideology and the Irish Question*, pp. 148-150; Yeates, *Lockout*, pp. 573-6.

³⁹ See Townshend, *Easter 1916* for a comprehensive account of the rebellion.

⁴⁰ Sheehy, *May It Please the Court*, pp. 90-91. Lee argues differently based on the problems in assessing a suppressed media in the period, J.J. Lee, *Ireland, 1912-1985: Politics and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 29-36.

trying to attain information on events at home, Dillon was locked in the heart of the battle at his North Great George's Street residence, equally cut off from the reaction in Britain and at Westminster. Redmond spent the days of late April and early May making representations to British politicians urging caution, but believing sincerely that the rebel leaders should be dealt with 'adequate severity' while 'the greatest leniency should be shown to the rank and file' as Prime Minister Asquith had informed him would be the case.⁴¹ However, assurances from Asquith and others in London were to prove meaningless as the military forces sought to restore control with the country now under the command of General Maxwell.⁴² Dillon reacted differently to the evolving political events after the Rising.⁴³ Dillon's correspondence with Redmond bristled with the urgency of a political leader fearing the ground slipping from beneath his feet. The contrast between the two men grew as Dillon advised a threat of IPP withdrawal of support for the Government, which Redmond only agreed to utter in a secret session.⁴⁴ When Dillon arrived in London, he shocked the Commons with his defence of the battle fought by the insurgents, however 'misguided' they may have been. That this speech saw the *Freeman* draw its best circulation in weeks said something of the charged atmosphere in Dublin and it was soon recognised in Britain that moves to secure a resolution to the 'Irish question' were needed before the end of the War in Europe and moves were made to introduce a form of home rule acceptable to all parties.⁴⁵

1916 Negotiations

Securing an immediate home rule settlement was crucial to Redmond's task of preserving the Irish Party's support base in the aftermath of the Rising. The opportunity to do so seemed to present itself when the new Secretary of State for

⁴¹ John Redmond to John Dillon, 1 May 1916, TCD John Dillon Papers, 6749/619.

⁴² Redmond to Dillon, 3 May; 4 May 1916, NLI Redmond Papers Ms. 15,182/22.

⁴³ After the failed negotiations of summer 1916, Dillon separated himself from the conciliation of Redmond, Conor Mulvagh, 'A Souring of Friendships? Internal Divisions in the Leadership of the Irish Parliamentary Party in the Aftermath of the Easter Rising', Diarmaid Ferriter and Susannah Riordan (eds), *Years of Turbulence: The Irish Revolution and Its Aftermath* (Dublin: UCD Press, 2015), pp. 85-106.

⁴⁴ Redmond to Dillon, 3 May 1916, TCD John Dillon Papers, 6749/620. In fact, so great were Dillon's fears that he refused Redmond's request to come to London until he had all the facts as it 'really would not be possible to exaggerate the desperate character of the situation here'. Dillon to Redmond, 17 May 1916, TCD John Dillon Papers, 6749/625.

⁴⁵ William Flynn of the *Freeman's Journal* wrote to Dillon to tell him that the edition reprinting the speech in full had sold, William Flynn to John Dillon, 17 May, TCD John Dillon Papers, 6805/277. See also Stephen Gwynn, *John Redmond's Last Years*, p. 231.

War, David Lloyd George initiated separate negotiations with both Redmond and Carson. Under the 1916 proposals, the home rule administration was still not to have any power over military affairs or the making of peace and war, the post office service nor the Dublin Metropolitan Police in time of war and the Lord Lieutenant would retain certain existing powers until hostilities ended.⁴⁶ In the light of the republican demands of the Easter rebels, such proposals may have seemed more moderate than they did in 1912 or 1914.⁴⁷ Redmond worked hard to ensure that his interpretation of temporary exclusion would be accepted by the party and nationalists at large. While the UIL and National Volunteers waned, the AOH had remained in better shape up to 1916. This was especially true in the Order's northern heartland and Joe Devlin fought hard to persuade his supporters in Ulster to agree to temporary exclusion.

As it was, the proposed solution was to prove a chimera with a home rule measure proposed with the option of exclusion for six Ulster counties for a period to be decided by Imperial conference. This provision proved flexible enough to mean different things to Carson and Redmond.⁴⁸ Carson meanwhile remained convinced that any exclusion would, in fact, be permanent. In the intervening time, Conservatives in the British cabinet opposed the settlement in any case. The damage done to Redmond and the party when this unravelled was inestimable and was to follow like a trail through numerous subsequent writings by the likes of Stephen and Denis Gwynn.⁴⁹

As decline set in, Dillon's worst fears began to turn into reality. Opinions of the men as 'misguided' as Dillon had articulated gave way to feelings of sympathy as stories of arrests and executions spread. Particular stories such as the execution of the wounded James Connolly and transport of hundreds of Irish people to prison in Frongoch in Wales, combined with investigations into the activities of numerous

⁴⁶ These included the authority to declare martial law and powers under the Defence of Realm Act. Redmond to Dillon, 2 July 1916, TCD John Dillon Papers, 6749/633.

⁴⁷ Dr Coyle to Redmond, 24 July, 1916, TCD John Dillon Papers, 6749/635. Memo to Redmond, No date, (apparently late 1916), TCD John Dillon Papers, 6749/642.

⁴⁸ R.B. McDowell, *The Irish Convention, 1917-18* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), p. 50.

⁴⁹ Denis Gwynn, *The Life of John Redmond*, p. 524. Dillon, in particular, was positively paranoid about the new Prime Minister and in the following years felt he was plotting his actions in a Machiavellian way to destroy the IPP, Lyons, *John Dillon*, pp. 435-437, 443-451.

nationalists employed in civil service jobs saw a perceptible change in atmosphere.⁵⁰ Even strict British censorship was overcome by various nationalist media outlets, including ones moving quickly towards defence of the rebels.⁵¹ The position of the Catholic Church, central to Parnell's power, and often subsequently an enemy of physical force nationalism if not always allied to the Irish Party, was also changing as Bishop O'Dwyer of Limerick and Archbishop Walsh of Dublin began to oppose Redmond.⁵² In a wrecked Dublin city, organisations such as the Irish National Aid Association looking after those bereaved or impoverished by the insurrection soon merged with the outlying elements of pre-Rising advanced nationalism to bring increased numbers into such bodies.⁵³ Griffith's Sinn Féin now became focal point for such coalescing forces in an expanded party which, though credited in the British press with instigating the Rising, would only establish itself as a mass nationalist party after the rebellion.⁵⁴

The first blow struck against the Irish Party was the victory of Count Plunkett, the father of one of the seven signatories executed after the Rising, in the Roscommon North by-election in February 1917. Although the constituency had been home to an IPP MP with a strong Fenian background, it was the start of a negative trend for the constitutionalists.⁵⁵ The Irish Party's next defeat was only marginal after a recount in South Longford, yet the effort the party expended in the constituency made the loss more depressing for Dillon and others.⁵⁶ Worse was to come personally and

⁵⁰ 'The Civil Servants' Tale' in Keith Jeffery (ed.), *The GPO and the Easter Rising* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006), pp. 109-140.

⁵¹ The *Catholic Bulletin* was probably the most famous of these with its almost hagiographical accounts of the seven dead leaders while it also rather ingeniously drew attention to the depth of British suppression by printing blank pages in its publication where articles had been disallowed, Brian P. Murphy, 'The Easter Rising in the Context of Censorship and Propaganda with special reference to Major Ivon Price' in Gabriel Doherty and Dermot Keogh (eds), *1916: The Long Revolution* (Cork: Mercier Press, 2007), pp. 165-168.

⁵² Jérôme aan de Wiel, *The Catholic Church in Ireland, 1914-1918: War and Politics* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2003); David W. Miller, *Church, State, and Nation in Ireland, 1898-1921* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973); Larkin, 'Church, State, and Nation in Modern Ireland'.

⁵³ Caoimhe Nic Dháibhéid, 'The Irish National Aid Association and the Radicalization of Public Opinion in Ireland, 1916-1918', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 55, no. 3 (September 2012), pp. 705-729.

⁵⁴ Murphy, *Patrick Pearse and the Lost Republican Ideal*, pp. 71-82. The Sinn Féin message of abstention from parliament had not won over every opponent of the IPP yet. Some in Ulster formed the Irish Nation League as one last attempt at vigorous constitutionalism though this was to prove short-lived and was eventually subsumed into Sinn Féin, Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland*, pp. 85-90.

⁵⁵ McConnel, "'Fenians at Westminster'", p. 47.

⁵⁶ Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland*, pp. 96-103.

politically for Redmond in June 1917 when his brother Willie was killed in Belgium and his seat taken in the ensuing by-election by one time mathematics professor and laterally a Volunteer leader at Boland's Mill on Easter week, Éamon de Valera. The result made grim reading for the IPP as public trust faded.

However, amidst all of the party's setbacks, Redmond sought the chance, for possibly the last time, of reconciliation as Lloyd George, now Prime Minister of a wartime coalition government, proposed an Irish Convention constituted of representatives of all shades of Irish nationalism and unionism. This body was to meet in private and Redmond put his faith in the British Government implementing the settlement if the Convention could come to agreement. Loyal colleagues such as Stephen Gwynn saw real grounds for settlement in this proposal in spite of his distaste at the northern unionist delegates arriving without the authority from the Ulster Unionist Council to agree to any tangible compromise.⁵⁷ However, Redmond's policies were losing favour in Ireland and Dillon refused to be a part of the Convention. Sinn Féin also shunned the Convention chaired by Sir Horace Plunkett, in addition to William O'Brien who had become more sympathetic to Sinn Féin as the 'only uncorrupted element in the country'.⁵⁸

The Convention thus took place as Sinn Féin advanced and discontent within the IPP became more evident. Cork West MP Daniel O'Leary, only elected in December 1916, was one of the party's youngest members. Although he retained Irish Party loyalties for years after the party's fall (working for the National League in 1927), in 1917, O'Leary harboured deep misgivings about the direction of Redmond's party. Writing to fellow MP Matthew Keating for support, O'Leary enclosed a letter for Redmond in which he declared that some within the party were 'striking out for a new programme'.⁵⁹ Confident that the plans would succeed as the only chance to 'save' the party, O'Leary wrote that 'reconstruction of the party is inevitable'.⁶⁰ He

⁵⁷ Stephen Gwynn, *John Redmond's Last Years*, p. 302.

⁵⁸ William O'Brien to Rev James Clancy, 29 June 1916, NLI William O'Brien Papers Ms. 8,506. O'Brien did privately acknowledge that the idea of a convention was not essentially a bad one, but he doubted the British and would have supported it had the British agreed to a referendum on any settlement agreed, O'Brien to R.H. Beamish, 29 July 1917, NLI O'Brien Papers Ms. 8,506.

⁵⁹ On O'Leary's relationship with the IPP leadership, see Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland*, pp. 73-4

⁶⁰ Daniel O'Leary to Matthew Keating, 18 July 1917; O'Leary to Redmond, 14 July 1917, TCD John Dillon Papers, 6749/657.

cited the Convention, the feeling in the country and the ‘paralysis’ of the Government in asserting that the IPP required ‘new methods’.

O’Leary’s letter was a clear indication of the changing political landscape as even those within the party moved from the 1912 Bill to a form of dominion settlement with a view to the post-war peace conference. He argued that if the Convention failed to come to a conclusive report or if it decided on a ‘constitution on the colonial model’ and the British refused to give it effect, the party should unite all Irish nationalists in an appeal to the United States, Russia and France, and finally to the post-war international peace conference.⁶¹ O’Leary’s letter even stated that the IPP rebels recognised the ‘inspiration’ of Sinn Féin while recognising it could bring nothing but rebellion and disenfranchisement for Ireland. Although the scope of this idea and its support is hard to determine, by the end of the Convention, Redmond himself conceded he would probably be out of sympathy with ‘much of the party’ as he faced surgery.⁶²

All the while, Redmond’s National Volunteers, in decline prior to the Rising, were withering while at local level, some members also left the UIL and moved towards Sinn Féin branches.⁶³ Even the party’s organ, the *Freeman’s Journal* was in a parlous state since the damage done to its premises in the Rising.⁶⁴ Dillon and *Freeman* editor Patrick Hooper were in almost constant contact to keep the paper afloat and make sure it presented the IPP’s point of view. However, the major disruptions the publication endured during the insurrection and in its aftermath created another major concern for a party struggling to maintain its position in the body politic.⁶⁵

⁶¹ O’Leary to Redmond, 14 July 1917, TCD John Dillon Papers, 6749/657.

⁶² Redmond to Dillon, 28 February 1918, TCD John Dillon Papers, 6749/669; Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland*, p. 85.

⁶³ Wheatley, *Nationalism and the Irish Party*, p. 111.

⁶⁴ Patrick Hooper to Dillon, 22 August 1916, TCD John Dillon Papers, 6840/2.

⁶⁵ In Redmond’s own view, the situation was ‘very terrible’ where the party faced an election with its funds ‘hypothecated’ amid the financial strain of the *Freeman*, Redmond to Dillon, 4 January 1918, TCD John Dillon Papers, 6749/666.

The collapse of the Convention and Dillon's leadership

The Convention provided no solace as Redmond's leadership suffered another damaging setback. Believing he had come to agreement with the southern unionist delegates led by Lord Midleton, the IPP leader hoped to secure a settlement that would satisfy everyone except the northern unionists. However, Redmond's nationalist support base was fraying. Fiscal autonomy assumed importance and the loss of customs was deemed too much of an imposition on Irish claims to freedom for two traditional Redmond allies: Joe Devlin and Bishop O'Donnell of Raphoe. When Devlin and O'Donnell indicated their refusal to support Redmond's proposal, he withdrew it and no complete settlement on any substantive issue proved possible after this point. Although Stephen Gwynn later argued that the break on customs was relatively small in the wider context of agreement and conciliation, it had some significance in terms of financial independence and perhaps more so in symbolic terms. The Home Rule Bill of 1912 had granted the Irish administration some powers over customs albeit within a networks of safeguards.⁶⁶

Redmond, in poor health by this point, formally departed from the Convention in early 1918 for surgery on an intestinal blockage.⁶⁷ Although his operation seemed to have been a success at first, his condition soon deteriorated and he passed away on 6 March before the Convention came to a conclusion. When such a finale came, it was a discordant and split series of decisions greeted with little fanfare as southern unionists and moderate nationalists led by Gwynn agreed to Lloyd George's scheme of self-government without control of customs and a proviso that a commission would rule on the matter after the war.⁶⁸

With the loss of Redmond, the party turned to Dillon who faced the unenviable task of fighting a rapidly expanding Sinn Féin movement in a battle for the IPP's very survival. Irish Party public statements had always tended to adopt more radical or more temperate stances, depending on location and audience. Nevertheless, Dillon

⁶⁶ McDowell, *The Irish Convention*, pp. 12-15. Hazleton and Devlin's correspondence also betrayed doubts about the scheme, Devlin to Dillon, 20 December 1917, TCD John Dillon Papers, 6730/184; Hazleton to Devlin, 18 February 1918, TCD John Dillon Papers 6730/190. Hazleton still supported Redmond, but was 'proud' Devlin held to the course he did.

⁶⁷ Meleady, *John Redmond: The National Leader*, p. 455.

⁶⁸ Reid, *The Lost Ireland of Stephen Gwynn*, p. 158; *Report of the Proceedings of the Irish Convention*, p. 29.

undoubtedly adopted a more radical line than Redmond to try to re-assert the party's place amidst public disillusionment and the distaste of many nationalists for the British politicians who had tainted the IPP by association.⁶⁹ Initially, the IPP seemed to recover some ground with by-election successes in early 1918 in Ulster and Waterford where Redmond's son, Captain William Redmond took his father's seat. This was in spite of the outcry over the death of 1916 rebel Thomas Ashe, who collapsed and, later died, after forcible feeding while on hunger strike.⁷⁰ These victories were, however, also redolent of the persistence of AOH organisation in the north and Redmondite loyalty in the south-east.⁷¹

Any IPP progress was quickly halted in early 1918. Faced with pressure at home and an increasingly serious situation on the continent, Lloyd George proposed the introduction of conscription to Ireland. This was to have a radicalising effect and antagonised Irish Party supporters as much as other nationalists; the UIL national directory passed a motion against the imposition of what was called a 'blood tax'.⁷² Dillon united with Sinn Féin, the Catholic Church and O'Brien's All-For-Ireland League to combat the proposed introduction of conscription into Ireland, even following Sinn Féin's lead and withdrawing MPs from Westminster. Though this campaign was ultimately successful, the galvanising effect it had on nationalist opinion was to be to the benefit of Sinn Féin rather than the Irish Party. To make matters worse for the Irish Party, Sinn Féin gained further popularity from the British Government's failed attempts to link it with their wartime enemies in the 'German plot'.⁷³

⁶⁹ Mulvagh, "'Sit, Act, and Vote'", pp. 159, 317, 327. Analysing parliamentary questions, Mulvagh has also argued that IPP had become 're-radicalised after the Rising, "'Sit, Act, and Vote"', pp. 188, 326-7.

⁷⁰ C.J. Woods, William Murphy, 'Ashe, Thomas', in James McGuire and James Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish Biography*. (Cambridge, 2009). (<http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a0247>) 8 August 2016.

⁷¹ In Maume's view a recovery was blunted by the party's continued commitment to the War for fear of 'government retaliation'. Maume, *The Long Gestation*, p. 204. On the South Armagh by-election, see Erica Doherty, "'The Party Hack, and Tool of the British Government': T.P. O'Connor, America and Irish Party Resilience at the February 1918 South Armagh By-Election", *Parliamentary History*, vol. 34, no. 3 (2015), pp. 339-364.

⁷² Motion by J.J. Horgan, Meeting of UIL National Directory, 30 April 1918, NLI UIL National Directory Minutes, Ms. 708.

⁷³ The 'German plot' emerged in April and May 1918 where the Dublin Castle administration claimed evidence existed of a conspiracy between prominent Sinn Féin leaders and Germany and arrested many Sinn Féin leaders though others anticipated action and escaped arrest.

The momentum of the victories in Ulster and Waterford was thus checked in Cavan in June as Arthur Griffith defeated the Nationalist candidate John F. O’Hanlon.⁷⁴ Six months later, the country faced its first General Election in eight years and it was to be a bitter contest. Since the outbreak of war, the so-called ‘mosquito press’ of advanced nationalist opinion led by Griffith had turned increasing ire on the war policy of Redmond and the Irish Party.⁷⁵ However, the rebranded Sinn Féin of the post-Rising period turned up the levers of attack on a party now being linked to the faithlessness of British politicians and the war.

The campaign was arguably the most vigorous in Irish history up to that point. Although weaknesses in Irish Party organisation, the threat of intimidation, and the inevitability of defeat saw Sinn Féin stand unopposed in many constituencies, a large number of areas saw a real electoral combat between Home Rulers and the pretenders to their crown as the popular voice of nationalism.⁷⁶ The Irish Party was ill-equipped to deal with the Sinn Féin threat. John Borgonovo has argued that in Cork, the UIL was strong enough to win seats in the 1918 election if ‘it could find support among voters’; however, the UIL organisation nationally had been in difficulty even before the war.⁷⁷ The meeting of the UIL’s national directory in February 1916 recorded 863 paid up branches, compared with a high of 1,230 in 1902.⁷⁸ The Dublin branch of the UIL had, in fact, taken to writing to members to ensure they attended meetings by May 1918 while even the AOH had declined outside Ulster and had lost members to the newer nationalist bodies.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ There had been talk of Cavan being uncontested under War arrangements and the Mansion House agreement, but in the end it was contested, Dillon to Archbishop Walsh, 27 April 1918, DDA Walsh Papers (laity) 1918, 386/3.

⁷⁵ Ben Novick, *Conceiving Revolution: Irish Nationalist Propaganda during the First World War* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001); Virginia Glandon, *Arthur Griffith and the Advanced Nationalist Press* (Michigan, P. Lang, 1985).

⁷⁶ Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland*, p. 166. The AOH blamed intimidation for the IPP’s defeat, *Hibernian Journal*, January 1919, p. 185. The violence was certainly not all on one side either, see Pat McCarthy, ‘The Irish Volunteers and Waterford, Part II, 1916-1919: The Resistible Rise of Sinn Féin’, *Decies: Journal of Waterford Historical and Archaeological Society*, no. 61 (2005) pp. 251-5, 257-61.

⁷⁷ Borgonovo, *The Dynamics of War and Revolution*, p. 213.

⁷⁸ Returns of subscriptions 34th Meeting of UIL National Directory, 14 February 1916, NLI Minutes of UIL National Directory Ms. 708. This decline in paid up UIL branches set in much earlier but worsened during the war, McConnel, ‘The View from the Backbench’, p. 129.

⁷⁹ UIL Metropolitan Branch Committee Meeting, 28 May 1918, NLI O’Donnell Papers Ms. 16,185. The Hibernians were very disorganised in 1917 for the Roscommon by-election and some divisions even congratulated Plunkett on his victory, Foy, ‘The Ancient Order of Hibernians’, pp. 148-9. Sinn Féin was infiltrating the AOH by 1917. National Secretary John Dillon Nugent reported to Dillon that

The events of the previous years and the actions of prominent national figures also militated against the Irish Party. The AFIL left the way clear to Sinn Féin in Cork; O'Brien did not endorse the entire Sinn Féin programme by any means, but he felt the people wanted rid of what he had always viewed as the corrupt and ineffective IPP.⁸⁰ Sinn Féin also absorbed radical former Irish Party figures. Maverick MP Laurence Ginnell stood for Sinn Féin while former MP James O'Mara, who defected to Griffith's party as early as 1907, was Sinn Féin director of elections in 1918. The Irish Party's tendency to encompass different shades and traditions also allowed some local activists and councillors to shift allegiance over the course of the Great War. However, Wheatley has shown regional variation e.g. while in Sligo, many Hibernian-Labour followers went into Sinn Féin, in other areas many party activists simply retained old allegiances or disappeared.⁸¹

In 1918, the Sinn Féin election manifesto included an implicit, yet bruising critique of the IPP; it represented a paradigm shift from the party's traditional policy of attendance at Westminster, which it criticised on grounds of both 'principle' and 'expediency'.⁸² Sinn Féin called for independence for the Irish nation and campaigned on an appeal to the post-war peace conference. Although Michael Laffan has argued that Sinn Féin's commitment to the peace conference was 'merely tactical',⁸³ it tapped into a fascination with US President Woodrow Wilson which had extended to Irish Party followers.⁸⁴ Griffith's newspaper articles and the party's advertisements cast the election as Ireland's 'independence day' and Sinn Féin was called the 'Irish for self-determination'.⁸⁵

the President of the Solohead Division had defected; John Dillon Nugent to Dillon, 29 August 1917, TCD John Dillon Papers 6758/1338.

⁸⁰ As early as October 1916, O'Brien wrote that people in West Cork were not revolutionaries striking out for a republic, but turning to Sinn Féin in 'universal revolt against the corruption and incompetence of Parliamentarianism', O'Brien to Morton Frewer, 21 October 1916, NLI O'Brien Papers, Ms. 8,557 (5).

⁸¹ Wheatley, *Nationalism and the Irish Party*, p. 111. Wheatley also found that those who supported maverick MP Laurence Ginnell before the war were likely to follow him into Sinn Féin.

⁸² Sinn Féin original manifesto <http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/E900009/index.html>
Sinn Féin manifesto as passed by Dublin Castle - <http://www.ucc.ie/celt/online/E900010.html> date accessed 20 June 2016.

⁸³ Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland*, pp. 250-251.

⁸⁴ J.J. Horgan, 'The World Policy of President Wilson', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, vol. 7, no. 28 (December 1918), pp. 553-563.

⁸⁵ *Nationality*, 14 December 1918; Brian Girvin, *From Union to Union: Nationalism, Democracy and Religion in Ireland from Act of Union to EU* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2002), p. 55.

The rhetoric of the Peace Conference came in spite of initial anti-Wilson rhetoric from Sinn Féin and the fact that the Irish Party had been also trying to trade on Wilson and the language of self-determination from 1917.⁸⁶ On 29 July, Dillon put down a motion at Westminster calling for Irish self-determination. The Irish Party published an appeal to President Wilson in November while forty Irish town councils passed resolutions inviting Wilson to Ireland, some of these joint declarations came from both the Irish Party and Sinn Féin.⁸⁷ In another sign of Irish Party opinion moving beyond the 1914 proposal towards ‘dominion’ or ‘colonial’ home rule, J.J. Horgan called for a joint conference of the Irish Party and Sinn Féin to present a united front to the post-war peace conference. However, Dillon was not favourable towards the idea and doubted that Sinn Féin would grant the IPP such respect.⁸⁸

Although it sought to undermine the methods of constitutional nationalism while embracing electoral competition, Sinn Féin also invoked the Parnell legacy. Advertisements carried in the *Irish Independent* contrasted quotes from Parnell and Dillon from the 1880s with the more recent policies of the Irish Party.⁸⁹ Against such attacks and increasing opposition among the populace, Dillon and the Irish Party were required to battle for damage limitation. The *Freeman* scoffed at Sinn Féin’s chances of being heard at any conference in the light of the reference to German aid in the 1916 Proclamation.⁹⁰ However, after Dillon warned Hooper that attacks on the German links were antagonising people, the *Freeman* stressed the achievements of the constitutional tradition stretching from Grattan to Parnell.

Dillon and his followers spoke around the country often competing with hecklers and actual violence.⁹¹ Dillon tended to distance himself and the party from

⁸⁶ Wilson had earlier been dismissed as Britain’s catspaw, see Maume, *The Long Gestation*, pp. 211; Dillon quoted in Jérôme aan de Wiel, *The Irish Factor, 1899-1919: Ireland's Strategic and Diplomatic Importance for Foreign Powers* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2008), p. 283.

⁸⁷ Maurice Walsh, *Bitter Freedom: Ireland in a Revolutionary World 1918-23* (London: Faber and Faber, 2015), p. 36; *Freeman’s Journal*, 11 November 1918.

⁸⁸ Lyons, *John Dillon*, pp. 444-55; Girvin, *From Union to Union*, pp. 57-9; Borgonovo, *The Dynamics of War and Revolution*, pp. 224-5.

⁸⁹ *Irish Independent*, 13 December 1918.

⁹⁰ *Freeman’s Journal*, 14 November 1918.

⁹¹ See for example *Freeman’s Journal*; *Irish Independent*, 27 November 1918. Lyons has shown Dillon seemingly unaware of the scale of the defeat facing the party until a very advanced stage Lyons, *John Dillon*, pp. 453-5.

recruiting. His main argument was, therefore, that Sinn Féin's campaign was based on dishonesty. In August, Dillon had argued a republic could not be won without 'beating England to her knees' and 'every man... who is not an idiot knows perfectly well that is not possible'.⁹² Approaching polling day, he added,

I never denounced an Irish republic, but what I did say and do say is this: that it is, in my opinion, a sin and a crime to tell the Irish people that they can win an Irish republic when they know they cannot win it, and if they attempt to win it, instead of getting an Irish republic, they will bring bloodshed and ruin and disaster.⁹³

Accusations of disloyalty were thrown on both sides; 'separation women', who received monies for their husbands serving in the war, were often involved in clashes with Sinn Féin followers and became targets for criticism. Even though the editorship of Patrick Hooper at least allowed the IPP total control of one news outlet, the growing weakness of the *Freeman's Journal* as propaganda tool hardly helped the Irish Party's cause.⁹⁴ The major daily newspaper, the *Irish Independent* did not endorse Sinn Féin, but advocated colonial home rule.⁹⁵

Even taking all this into account, the party's reverse in the election on 14 December was nonetheless spectacular. The Irish Party returned 6 MPs while Sinn Féin won 73 seats.⁹⁶ The party held five of the seats in Ulster; three of these owed much to an arrangement with Sinn Féin brokered by Cardinal Logue of Armagh whereby the IPP and Sinn Féin would not split the nationalist vote and allow the Unionist Party to win seats. Nevertheless, the results highlighted areas where Irish Party loyalty and organisation remained strongest. The AOH survived best in the northern half of the country and Joe Devlin scored a decisive victory in West Belfast over Éamon de Valera. In Waterford, Captain Redmond once more retained a seat in the city

⁹² *Weekly Freeman's Journal*, 17 August 1918.

⁹³ *Belfast Morning News*, 7 December 1918.

⁹⁴ Dillon tried to orchestrate the paper's reporting and IPP speeches to sow doubts in people's minds about Sinn Féin, Dillon to Hooper, 27 November 1918, TCD John Dillon Papers, 6840/57.

⁹⁵ The *Independent* was a vigorous critic of the IPP and advocated dominion status, but did not endorse Sinn Féin. Patrick Maume, 'William Martin Murphy, the *Irish Independent* and Middle Class Politics 1905-19', in Fintan Lane (ed.), *Politics, Society and the Middle Class in Modern Ireland* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

⁹⁶ Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland*, pp. 166-7.

constituency. However, such successes were overshadowed by many disastrous reverses. Dillon was beaten by de Valera by a margin of almost two to one in East Mayo.

Various explanations for the party's defeat have been offered since 1918. Patrick Maume has argued that any pragmatic considerations such as the economic benefits of the 'British connection' meant little to the young who believed an 'independent Ireland could do better for its citizens'.⁹⁷ In rural Ireland, one might argue this meant the smaller landholders who failed to prosper from the legislative achievements now had an alternative.⁹⁸ Although post-Rising Sinn Féin had been anxious not to endorse a new round of cattle driving by smaller farmers in the west either, the rural -Irish Party shield appeared to have finally sundered. The threat of conscription had been particularly acute in rural areas while for Maume, the larger farmers who supported the party in the hope of counter-acting wage demands were too small in electoral terms to effect any difference.⁹⁹ The dilemma of the 'catch-all' party contributed to its downfall.

Although the election had retained the 'first past the post' electoral system, the enfranchisement of 1,200,000 new voters including women aged 30 years and over as well as younger first-time voters has also been offered as an explanation.¹⁰⁰ In response, James McConnel has emphasised the fact that the Irish Party lost many votes among the older generation and those who already had the vote, rather than the party being sunk by a wave of new radical young voters.¹⁰¹ Such a view is sustained by Sinn Féin by-election victories on the old franchise throughout 1917 and 1918. Indeed, legacy of persistent support for the Irish Party after 1918 also reveals that

⁹⁷ Maume, *The Long Gestation*, p. 193.

⁹⁸ Reid, *The Lost Ireland of Stephen Gwynn*, pp. 79-82.

⁹⁹ Maume, *The Long Gestation*, p. 208.

¹⁰⁰ Farrell, *The Founding of Dáil Éireann*, pp. 45-50. Discussing the fall of the Liberal Party in Britain in the same election, Duncan Tanner has argued the main change in the Representation of the People Act was extending the vote beyond householders, so it was young single men who were now being included for the first time, Duncan Tanner, 'The Parliamentary Electoral System, the "Fourth" Reform Act and the rise of Labour in England and Wales', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, vol. 56 no. 34 (November 1983), pp. 205-219.

¹⁰¹ McConnel, 'The Franchise Factor in the Defeat of the Irish Parliamentary Party, 1885-1918', *Historical Journal*, vol. 47, no. 2 (June 2004), pp. 355-77. Anecdotal evidence at the time often suggested that younger voters were moving away from the party of their parents. Sinn Féin's Seán Hales's father Robert was active in Land War, but reputed to be in the IRB, a good example of merging traditions through the IPP and Sinn Féin.

geographical explanations are as relevant as generational ones.¹⁰² Yet, as McConnel has also shown, despite the consensus at this remove that franchise was not the significant factor, the perception at the time in Ireland was rather different.¹⁰³ The ‘first past the post system’ also heightened the IPP’s collapse as it ensured the party failed to win seats in areas where support remained strong like Wexford and Louth.¹⁰⁴

The Irish Party had been repeatedly undermined by a chain of events since 1916 and the horror and length of the war in Europe which had exacerbated the problems arising from Redmond’s endorsement of recruiting in the circumstances of 1914. The fallout from the Rising and the public sympathy for the insurgents then left the party in a dangerous position, made worse by the farce of the negotiations of summer 1916. The position was irretrievable after the collapse of the Convention, the ‘German plot’ and Sinn Féin’s impressive showing in the face of conscription. Although the IPP’s pose as catch-all party created some of its difficulties, Sinn Féin’s success was due in part to mimicking this ability to encompass seemingly competing elements as well as its organisational structure in certain cases. The party’s leaders and those who remained loyal to the old party now faced a transformed political landscape.

The last days of Irish Party organisation, 1918-21

As the dust settled on the IPP’s dramatic defeat, Sinn Féin, tarnished internationally by its association with German aid, would struggle unsuccessfully to gain a hearing at the post-war peace conference. However, on 21 January, all available Sinn Féin TDs met at Dublin’s Mansion House to constitute the ‘First Dáil’ rather than attend Westminster. On the same day, Volunteers led by Dan Breen ambushed RIC at Soloheadbeg, Co. Tipperary, an event often seen as the beginning of the War of Independence. The remnant of the IPP was divorced from both events and opposed to the methods employed. In the months which followed, some individuals drifted further from the party and tried to form new centrist or moderate nationalist

¹⁰² Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland*, pp. 166-7.

¹⁰³ Garvin, *The Evolution of Nationalist Politics*, pp. 130-134.

¹⁰⁴ Ernest Blythe in 1950 argued that the 1918 show of nationalist strength would have been impossible under PR. Maume writes it was strongest in Ulster, the east, towns and middle-class Dublin; Maume, *The Long Gestation*, pp. 204, 213.

movements.¹⁰⁵ However, those who remained loyal to the party and its stem organisation remained in an acute political quandary.

The party faced a dilemma as to what their six elected MPs should do. Constitutional policy had always been their ideal. In this sense, attending Westminster was their logical course of action. Yet, they were a tiny grouping in a huge chamber, bereft of Irish representatives because of Sinn Féin abstention. Such a situation prompted Joe Devlin to wonder if they should even attend parliament at all. Writing to Bishop O'Donnell of Raphoe, he worried that attendance could only be seen as an attempt to embarrass Sinn Féin and damage its chances at the Peace Conference while conversely giving Sinn Féin a scapegoat should their policy fail, which Devlin felt sure it would.¹⁰⁶ Although the MPs did eventually take their seats and would contribute to debates on Ireland over the next three years, Devlin had encapsulated the problems facing the shadow of a once mighty party.

The UIL and AOH had both been beleaguered by apathy and defections. Police reports in January 1919 reported there were still 1,007 branches of the UIL and 838 of the AOH. However, such figures are unreliable and were often accompanied by remarks that such branches and members were nominal or notional and as the War of Independence progressed, the IRA and Sinn Féin dominated. In the words of the Inspector-General in January 1919, 'no effort to reorganize was made by the Constitutional Nationalists.'¹⁰⁷ However, in some areas, branches of the UIL and AOH support remained intact and some members sought to recover from the nadir of the 1918 election. It seems ex-MPs and others presumed the party would continue and contest the local elections which were just over twelve months away and initially at least, Devlin envisaged assembling MPs, ex-MPs and others for meetings in January 1919.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Paul Bew, 'Moderate Nationalism and the Irish Revolution, 1916-1923', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 42, no. 3 (Sept., 1999), pp. 729-749; Reid, 'Stephen Gwynn and the Failure of Constitutionalism in Ireland'; Pašeta, 'Ireland's Last Home Rule Generation'.

¹⁰⁶ Devlin to O'Donnell, 22 January 1919, TCD John Dillon Papers, 6730/204. It should also be pointed out that by 1919, ex-servicemen such as E.A. Aston, Gwynn, Capt. Redmond and Henry Harrison were seeking representation for Ireland at Paris, E.A. Aston – 'An Irish Constituent Convention' (Dublin: Kenny Press, 1919) in AOH pamphlet collection, NAI 14/14/66.

¹⁰⁷ Inspector General's Report, January 1919, TNA CO904/ 108.

¹⁰⁸ John Dillon Nugent to William Field, 14 January 1919, TCD John Dillon Papers 6753/439; Devlin to Dillon, 24 January 1919, TCD John Dillon Papers 6730/205.

In Cork, solicitor Henry F. Donegan wrote to Dillon on 2 January with hope for the future based on the ‘fine virile association of Nationalists’ he saw in the council chambers the previous evening. Although Donegan was disconcerted by the retirement of some activists like J.J. Horgan prior to the 1918 election, he praised those who continued to work for the cause.¹⁰⁹ In Galway, residual Home Rulers found safe haven for their views in the fraternal National Club. However, in Roscommon, James Naughton was proactive and wrote to Dillon to inform him of a Roscommon resolution calling on the UIL’s national directory ‘to form itself into a Home Rule League and to take steps to organise the Constitutional Nationalist forces throughout the country’.¹¹⁰

Although the AOH’s decline continued in many areas, it retained vitality, especially in northern counties.¹¹¹ Throughout 1919, it held rallies in Cavan and Monaghan, reaffirming faith in the Irish Party.¹¹² Although research on the UIL is hamstrung by the loss of many of the organisation’s records, the extant minute books of the Dublin city branch show it still met throughout 1919 and into 1920.¹¹³ This branch was advised by Devlin to keep the organisation going, though he cautioned that they should not place any ‘obstacles’ in the way of Sinn Féin. In the event, the only action apparently taken by the branch was attendance at the first anniversary memorial to John Redmond in March 1919 in Wexford town. Intended by local organisers to show ‘constitutional nationalists still have considerable strength’, it attracted thousands of old supporters from around the country. However, increased unrest in the country saw the Redmond anniversary revert to mere local gatherings in 1920 and 1921.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ Others to retire included George Crosbie of the *Cork Examiner* and W.F. O’Connor, Henry F. Donegan to John Dillon, 3 January 1919, TCD John Dillon Papers 6786/1878.

¹¹⁰ James Naughton to Dillon, 14 March 1919, TCD John Dillon Papers 6786/1903. Naughton was sure the weekly subscription lists in the *Freeman* demonstrated the persistence of UIL support; see Naughton to Devlin 4 February 1919, TCD Dillon Papers 6763/198; *Freeman’s Journal*, 27 January 1919. *Connacht Tribune*, 8 February, 8 March 1919.

¹¹¹ For examples of slipping membership and merging of divisions in Cork, see T.J. Hallinan to John Dillon Nugent, 2 May 1921, CCA AOH archives u389a/10 and Minutes of Cork County Convention, 9 February 1919, CCA u389a/25.

¹¹² *Hibernian Journal* October 1919, p. 43.

¹¹³ The records of the UIL were originally part of the John Redmond collection, but were lost in the 1930s. Minute books for metropolitan branch of the UIL (1918-20) are preserved in the Thomas O’Donnell papers in the NLI (Ms. 16,185). Other UIL correspondence files were moved to Hibernian offices after 1918 and destroyed, see T.J. Hanna letter to John Dillon, 15 June 1924, TCD John Dillon Papers 6763/212.

¹¹⁴ McGuire, Mayor of Wexford, to Dillon 3 March 1919 TCD John Dillon Papers 6786/1896.

It is clear that the UIL, where it persisted, received no meaningful encouragement from Devlin or Dillon. By February, Donegan's letters betrayed difficulties setting up meetings with Dillon and Devlin and he was forced to concede the moment was 'not propitious' for the Nationalists.¹¹⁵ Dillon, however, was too ill for public engagements through February and March and left Devlin to perform the oration at the Redmond anniversary in Wexford. On 15 April, the metropolitan branch passed a motion urging Dillon and Devlin to consider calling a congress of Irish Party supporters to debate the political situation and take action which might be needed to progress constitutionalism.¹¹⁶ Again, Dillon replied to the branch secretary James J. O'Neill that he and Devlin felt the time was not right for such a convention, though he said that he was strongly in favour of it at the opportune time.¹¹⁷ This apparent inertia contrasted with some private optimism on Devlin's part. Writing to Dillon in May, he still felt there was hope for a resurrection and that they should keep up the organisation in areas such as Donegal, Louth and Wexford, where they had polled well the previous December.¹¹⁸ However, another Dublin UIL resolution on 29 July led to nothing and Dillon and Devlin's envisaged suitable time never seemed to materialise. The remnants of the UIL were thus left bereft of any leadership or vision for the future. One supporter actually wrote to Dillon for permission to donate funds to the Self-Determination League.¹¹⁹

Dillon and Devlin proved just as sceptical of those who left the party's stem organisation to form new movements aimed at a constitutional settlement to the Irish question. Former MP Stephen Gwynn had moved towards acceptance that integrating unwilling northern unionists into any home rule settlement was impossible.¹²⁰ Gwynn formed the Centre Party in January 1919; this advocated federal self-government with a parliament for national affairs and four assemblies, one for each of the provinces. The idea behind this model was to smooth over the

¹¹⁵ Donegan to Dillon, 3 February 1919, TCD John Dillon Papers 6786/1889.

¹¹⁶ Committee Meeting UIL Metropolitan Branch, 15 April 1919, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms. 16,185.

¹¹⁷ Dillon to James J. O'Neill, 17 April 1919, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms. 16,185.

¹¹⁸ Devlin to Dillon, 22 May 1919, TCD John Dillon Papers, 6730/226.

¹¹⁹ This was presumably the Irish Self-Determination League, set up for the Irish in Britain by Art Ó Briain. Although he wrote as a Nationalist, he thought the League might do some good as 'we are out of the running at present', James G. Skinner to Dillon 19 May 1919, TCD John Dillon Papers 6758/1913.

¹²⁰ Gwynn had become interested in a federalist solution when it was proposed by Joseph Alexander Moles in the Irish Convention. However, Redmond had no interest in such a scheme in 1917, Reid, 'Stephen Gwynn and the Failure of Constitutionalism in Ireland', p. 724.

‘Ulster problem’ by taking away unionist fears. Members included former IPP MP Thomas Grattan Esmonde, but also Sir Hubert Gough, who had been at the heart of the ‘Curragh Incident’. Gwynn’s party merged with Sir Horace Plunkett’s Irish Dominion League [IDL], launched in June. This advocated dominion status for Ireland and included Esmonde and former Parnellite MP Henry Harrison.¹²¹

The metropolitan UIL branch had discussed the policy of the Centre Party in January, but it was eventually decided not to make any approach.¹²² This view was shared by Dillon and Devlin.¹²³ Plunkett approached Dillon and others within the IPP; however, he was not optimistic and conceded that Dillon could only join if he was to be leader and that he therefore expected he would remain aloof. Dillon, in any case, harboured a lingering distrust of Plunkett from the latter’s former unionist days.¹²⁴ Although there was press speculation that Plunkett and Dillon were going to come together, Devlin did not meet Plunkett until November 1919.¹²⁵ Even then he was left unimpressed and told Dillon that Plunkett knew very little of developments and had not met anyone. As it appeared to Devlin, his ‘idea now is that there ought to be a demand put forward to give Ireland the right, through an elected constituent assembly, to fashion out a scheme, leaving to the Imperial Parliament the right to accept it provided it gives what are regarded as adequate guarantees to Ulster.’¹²⁶ Proposing such a scheme in parliament was useless in Devlin’s opinion.¹²⁷ In a letter published in the *Hibernian Journal* the following April, Dillon stated that any proposal from Plunkett deserved ‘the most serious consideration of all Irishmen’. However, he was firmly against a constituent assembly meeting to decide a

¹²¹ Reid, ‘Stephen Gwynn and the Failure of Constitutionalism in Ireland’, p. 729; Pařeta, ‘Ireland’s Last Home Rule Generation’, p. 21.

¹²² Committee meeting UIL Metropolitan branch, 28 January 1919, NLI O’Donnell Papers Ms. 16,185.

¹²³ Devlin to Dillon, 26 May, 1919, TCD John Dillon Papers, 6730/ 229.

¹²⁴ Horace Plunkett to Dillon, 16 June 1919, TCD John Dillon Papers 6746/27.

¹²⁵ Plunkett to Dillon, 20 June 1919, TCD John Dillon Papers 6746/28.

¹²⁶ Devlin to Dillon, 10 November 1919, TCD John Dillon Papers 6730/242. Although Dillon and Plunkett corresponded fairly regularly at this point, Dillon had been quite suspicious of Plunkett and the IAOS at first, owing to Plunkett’s previous incarnations as a Unionist when he won a parliamentary seat in South Dublin in 1892 and unsuccessfully stood in Galway in 1901, see Dillon letter to the editor of the *Times*, 6 January 1912, TCD John Dillon Papers 6746/1d.

¹²⁷ Devlin wrote to Dillon that ‘there were about 60 present, all of them new Members, and most of them Tories. It was very interesting. Everyone one of them declared they were in favour of Colonial Home Rule, and did not see why we could not get it,’ Devlin to Dillon, 26 February, 1920, TCD John Dillon Papers, 6730/ 252.

constitution subject to minority guarantees as Plunkett suggested calling the idea ‘unworkable and very dangerous’.¹²⁸

The IDL certainly lacked momentum. Plunkett’s focus on unity diverged from the evolution of Gwynn’s thinking and, as Colin Reid has judged, the reaction to the League was ‘uniformly negative’.¹²⁹ In a period of little political progress (or military developments after the Soloheadbeg ambush), Warre B. Wells’s biography of Redmond emerged along with Gwynn’s *John Redmond’s Last Years and Irish Books and Irish People*. The latter work was not strictly a political piece at all though it featured a ‘personal’ and bitter opening from Gwynn, condemning the narrow vision which had overtaken the Gaelic movement, and in his view, led to the hardening of radical nationalist opinions.¹³⁰ Set against the now seemingly lost sacrifice of those who fought in the Great War, Gwynn reflected that Sinn Féin’s strength lay ‘not in what it offered, but in what it asked’ and that it replaced ‘a movement which, in its later phases, dwelt perhaps too much on the material advantages which it offered as the reward of its support’.¹³¹ Such an opinion, though prescient, seemed to signify a man looking to the decline of a past movement rather than vigorously promoting a new movement from its ashes.

At its 1919 convention, the AOH remained loyal to the Irish Party and opposed to Sinn Féin and violence. However, National Secretary John Dillon Nugent later explained that ‘they felt they would not be justified in organising opposition to the new movement’ and that members had been advised to ‘avoid, as far as possible, conflicts with brother nationalists who had accepted the republican pledges’.¹³² As 1919 closed, the AOH published a pamphlet highlighting Sinn Féin’s failure to get representation at the Paris Peace Conference as evidence of what their declarations were worth’. In south Dublin, Blackrock UDC lamented the wrongs of Sinn Féin’s abstention policy and called on,

¹²⁸ *Hibernian Journal*, April 1920, p. 201.

¹²⁹ Reid, ‘Stephen Gwynn and the Failure of Constitutionalism in Ireland’, p. 732.

¹³⁰ Stephen Gwynn, *Irish Books and Irish People* (Dublin: Talbot Press, 1919), pp. 2-3.

¹³¹ Stephen Gwynn, *Irish Books and Irish People*, p. 118.

¹³² Nugent did point out that this neutrality did not ease relations with Sinn Féin followers and that violence against Hibernians increased until Collins intervened. Michael Foy has argued that the extent of the violence against Hibernians sent the group ‘on a path of almost relentless decline’, Foy, ‘The Ancient Order of Hibernians’, p. 150.

... the leading Nationalists of the country to take steps forthwith to re-organise the Nationalist forces, so that the full strength of constitutionalism and sane Irish nationalism may be made manifest and effective for a practical and attainable settlement of the Irish question.¹³³

Dillon's reply was sympathetic to the Council's desires, but argued that the 'Military Government' in control at present was resolved 'to make any constitutional movement in Ireland impossible and to goad the people to acts of violence and folly'. Instead, Dillon wrote that he would be happy to return to public life when it was clear the Irish people had become frustrated with Sinn Féin, but that he could not see that he could do any good at that point. His final word was that Nationalists should organise, so that there 'may be some machinery in existence through which those who believe in the old Party and the old methods - may be able to take counsel together, and lay a programme of action before the people'.¹³⁴

However, any view that Sinn Féin would destroy itself in bloodshed and allow for the IPP's second coming was becoming less and less likely.¹³⁵ By April 1920, Devlin had reported to his old leader that the British were negotiating with Sinn Féin and that the Government was 'beaten'.¹³⁶ In such circumstances, the futility of the Nationalist MPs' existence in the Commons was heightened. Dillon was rarely impressed by the behaviour of IPP MPs such as Edward Kelly and Jeremiah McVeagh, who did not act in consort with O'Connor and Devlin in the Commons.¹³⁷ Devlin recognised that Nationalists should take some stance to oppose Sinn Féin yet, somewhat paradoxically, he remained of the belief that the 'proper' thing for them to

¹³³ The Anniversary of the General Election, 1918' (1919), Ancient Order of Hibernians pamphlet collection, NAI Dublin, 12/14/65; *Hibernian Journal*, January 1920, pp. 109-114. John Mooney town clerk of Blackrock UDC to Dillon, 4 December 1919, TCD Dillon Papers 6786/1941a.

¹³⁴ *Freeman's Journal*, 1 January 1920. This letter attracted a lot of attention in both the Irish and British newspapers see *Freeman's Journal*, 8 January 1920, *Irish Independent*, 5 January 1920, *Manchester Guardian*, 2 January 1920, *Times*, 2 January 1920 and in Stephen Gwynn's column, *Observer*, 4 January 1920.

¹³⁵ Dillon had originally hinted in 1919 that if Sinn Féin were given enough rope, they would hang themselves, Lyons, *John Dillon*, p. 469.

¹³⁶ Devlin to Dillon, 27 April 1920, TCD John Dillon Papers, 6730/261.

¹³⁷ Dillon attacked Edward Kelly and Jeremiah McVeagh for their behaviour in the House and for putting down amendments without telling others in the party, Dillon to O'Connor 4 April 1920, TCD John Dillon Papers 6743/754

do was to ‘maintain our separate existence as a distinct political force, small though we are in numbers’.¹³⁸

The escalation of violence in the country in 1920 isolated constitutionalists, leaving their only course of action to share the views of all nationalists in condemning the reprisals and excesses of British forces in the country. This stance was adopted by a number of former Irish Party newspapers such as the *Freeman's Journal* and the *Cork Examiner*.¹³⁹ The *Freeman* had changed ownership and was taken over by Hilton Edwards and Martin Fitzgerald, who preserved the paper's survival. Although Joe Devlin's initial fears that it would become a Sinn Féin paper seem an exaggeration, the paper advocated dominion status for Ireland and focussed on British oppression throughout the War of Independence before supporting the Treaty settlement in 1922.¹⁴⁰ The *Cork Examiner* at first defended the actions of the First Dáil as justified in the face of British policy. However, the Crosbie-owned publication refused to endorse violence, no matter how much it might condemn the British and instead favoured the kind of dominion settlement advocated by Horace Plunkett as a more realistic aim than a republic.¹⁴¹

The only apparent action taken by old party activists in the period was to campaign for the municipal elections to be held in January 1920. The UIL put notices for the Dublin branch AGM in the *Evening Telegraph* and *Freeman's Journal*.¹⁴² However, this appears to have been the final death pang of a local organisation devoid of leadership or an active party. Yet, this is not to say that Nationalist candidates fared that badly in 1920. Although Sinn Féin gained defectors (including ex-MP Stephen O'Mara, elected Mayor of Limerick), Nationalists fared well in urban areas, a result

¹³⁸ Devlin to Dillon, 5 March 1920, TCD John Dillon Papers, 6730/254.

¹³⁹ O'Connor to Devlin, 11 October 1920, TCD John Dillon Papers 6730/268; Reid, 'Stephen Gwynn and the Failure of Constitutionalism in Ireland', p. 733.

¹⁴⁰ Devlin to Dillon, 6 January 1919, TCD John Dillon Papers, 6730/202. Hooper had thought Sinn Féin would make a bid for the paper in 1919 before Fitzgerald purchased it. Hooper to Dillon, 12 September 1919, TCD John Dillon Papers, 6840/81. Devlin's view of the *Freeman* plummeted during the War of Independence for apparent neglect of MPs' Westminster work, Devlin to Dillon, 26 February 1920, TCD John Dillon Papers, 6730/252. See also Ian Kennelly, *The Paper Wall: Newspapers and Propaganda in Ireland 1919-1921* (Cork: Collins Press, 2008); Felix M. Larkin, *Terror and Discord: The Shemus Cartoons in the Freeman's Journal, 1920-1924* (Dublin: A & A Farmar, 2009).

¹⁴¹ Kennelly, *The Paper Wall*, pp. 119-122.

¹⁴² General meeting of UIL metropolitan branch, 2 December 1919, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms. 16,185.

Fitzpatrick has ascribed to the inability of urban nationalism to match the organisational skill of rural areas.¹⁴³ Despite the hostile atmosphere to older schools of nationalism between 1918 and 1922, the Home Rule movement had always been home to shrewd political operators. In Sligo, for example, Alderman John Jinks retained his seat as an independent in 1919 when many of his old colleagues were replaced by Sinn Féin members.¹⁴⁴ The 1920 contests were also fought on an older, more restrictive franchise rather than that used in 1918 and the advent of proportional representation favoured minority candidates. The results for urban areas showed a residual following with 238 ‘Nationalist’ councillors among the 1,806 returned nationwide.¹⁴⁵ Although Nationalists were behind Sinn Féin, Labour and Unionists, it was perhaps impressive, given Sinn Féin’s decision in many areas to run national candidates of renown lest the poll be seen as solely a plebiscite on local matters.¹⁴⁶ Such an outcome highlighted an extant constituency of Irish Party opinion; yet, it was an opinion without a party by this point. In June, the local elections in rural areas were uncontested in many areas as Sinn Féin asserted itself.

The Government of Ireland Act and the 1921 elections

The 1920 Government of Ireland Act, partitioning the country, provided for separate parliaments in Belfast and Dublin. Elections for these parliaments were set for 1921. From the old IPP perspective, this measure was abhorrent and T.P. O’Connor wrote to Dillon,

I feel today that all our work of 40 years had been destroyed by the folly of our own people, and the perfidy of Lloyd George. The one comfort is that everyone knows the present Home Rule Bill is impossible, and there will have to be another change of plan.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³ Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, pp. 113-44; *The Clongownian* (1921), p. 177.

¹⁴⁴ Farry, *The Irish Revolution, 1912-23: Sligo*, pp. 46, 74-5. In Cork, Borgonovo has noted that many UIL councillors ran for ‘the Commercial Party’ ‘thereby ending the UIL as a political entity’, Borgonovo, *The Dynamics of War and Revolution*, p. 115.

¹⁴⁵ Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland*, pp. 326-7.

¹⁴⁶ Micheál Martin, *Freedom to Choose: Cork and Party Politics in Ireland 1918-1932* (Cork: Collins Press, 2009), p. 19.

¹⁴⁷ O’Connor to Dillon, 29 June 1920, TCD Dillon Papers 6743/785.

Stephen Gwynn was not as negative towards the new measure. However, Gwynn's increasingly partitionist views, even if based on '*realpolitik*', were anathema to Plunkett and Harrison and many other moderates in the IDL, which rejected the Government of Ireland Act.¹⁴⁸ By 1920, the new moderate nationalist movements were unravelling; a peace conference in Dublin in August attended by the Irish Dominion League and southern unionists proved a failure as the centre ground of Irish politics was mercilessly squeezed.¹⁴⁹

John Dillon and Captain Redmond announced that they would not contest the 1921 election for the southern parliament while Devlin and the northern Nationalists entered into agreement with Sinn Féin for the new six-county territory.¹⁵⁰ However, staunch Hibernian councillor in Blackrock, Co Dublin, John P. McCabe had been determined to put himself forward. He argued Dillon's policies had been vindicated by the War of Independence and felt he was 'assured of success' although, echoing many party supporters in 1918 and since, he sought full self-government on dominion lines rather than 'home rule'.¹⁵¹

Dillon dissuaded McCabe from running and wrote on 7 May that 'the wisest and most patriotic course' for Nationalists was to stand aside as he could not condone the creation of bitter contest between nationalists and republicans amid the 'disorder and anarchy' already engulfing the country.¹⁵² Dillon then released a statement to the press announcing the IPP was formally withdrawing from the election in southern Ireland. Despite the inertia and hopelessness visible in his private correspondence, Dillon publicly insisted the Nationalist Party was 'not dead'. Instead, he argued that in the absence of any electoral arrangement with Sinn Féin such as pertained in the northern counties, the country needed to avoid conflict. However, Dillon insisted he was 'irreconcilably opposed' to the republicans and that had uncontested areas been fought in 1918 the IPP would have done much better. He even added that support for

¹⁴⁸ Reid, *The Lost Ireland of Stephen Gwynn*, pp. 181, 185

¹⁴⁹ The *Irish Statesman* had been forced to fold and the IDL was to follow suit as attacks and reprisals became ever more common. The *Statesman* was soon revived under AE (George Russell)'s editorship. See also Henry Harrison, 'The Irish Peace Conference 1920 and its betrayal: Does the Government want a genuine peace?' (Dublin: Irish Dominion League 1921), NLI Ir 94109 P4.

¹⁵⁰ Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland*, p. 339.

¹⁵¹ John P. McCabe to Dillon, 7 May 1921, AOH pamphlets NAI BRS LOU 12/14/67/1066-70.

¹⁵² Dillon to McCabe, 7 May 1921, AOH pamphlets NAI BRS LOU 12/14/67/1065-6.

the Irish Party had increased since then and that this would be shown if a free election could be held. He then somewhat bizarrely held that once the policy of the British government failed after the election, the Irish Party would hold a key position in forming any settlement.¹⁵³ In Dillon's view,

The fundamental difference between the National Party and the Republicans may be stated very briefly. We, the Nationalists, believe that the age-long quarrel between the British Government and the Irish Nation can best be settled on terms of compromise, without the establishment of an Irish Republic, and by peaceful means. The republicans hold that it can only be settled by war between the two nations, by driving the British forces forcibly out of Ireland, and by the setting up of an Irish Republic totally separated from Great Britain.¹⁵⁴

Sinn Féin thus had a clean sweep of the southern parliament, but continued to meet as Dáil Éireann while behind the scenes efforts at peace with the British remained on-going.¹⁵⁵ Violence and unrest in the country had become more brutal, sometimes leaving Irish Party supporters fearing for their safety. In Cork, the President of the AOH Michael Lynch, reported members unable to attempt to meet or reorganise because of 'horrible intimidation' and that, 'members going to and returning from their meetings were actually set upon and assaulted, and in a few instances AOH halls were forcibly taken possession of by Sinn Fein'.¹⁵⁶ Halls were also burned and cases of members being victimised led the governing Board of Erin to appeal to Collins, de Valera and Brugha. The Board claimed the AOH had adopted 'benevolent neutrality' towards the republicans as against their 'common enemy' and lamented being assailed by both Orange and Sinn Féin forces.¹⁵⁷ However, in county Monaghan, some Hibernians were accused of lining up with the enemy and three

¹⁵³ 'The Irish Elections 1921. The Nationalist Position. Statement by Mr. John Dillon.' NAI BRS LOU 12/14/67/1059-64

¹⁵⁴ 'The Irish Elections 1921. The Nationalist Position. Statement by Mr. John Dillon.' NAI BRS LOU 12/14/67/1064

¹⁵⁵ Four Unionist MPs were elected for the southern parliament in the constituency of Trinity College Dublin. In Ulster, Sinn Féin and the Devlinite Nationalists each won six seats; see Phoenix, *Northern Nationalism*, pp. 121-130.

¹⁵⁶ Minutes of Cork County Board convention, 18 January 1920, CCA u389a/25; cf. Borgonovo, *The Dynamics of War and Revolution*, pp. 117-118.

¹⁵⁷ Board of Erin Minutes, June 1922, NAI Ancient Order of Hibernians, NAI – LOU 13/1/3 cited in McPhillips, 'The Ancient Order of Hibernians in County Monaghan', p. 111.

members were killed by the IRA as alleged informers.¹⁵⁸ In Enniscorthy, two Irish Party supporters were shot dead for refusing to close their shop as a mark of respect for Terence MacSwiney following his death on hunger strike.¹⁵⁹

In such a situation, some Hibernians looked to their old leaders for guidance. The secretary of the AOH in Carrickmacross stressed that ‘the tension among Constitutional Nationalists at the present time is very great indeed, and they naturally feel that they should not be left in such complete isolation by their accredited guides of the past’.¹⁶⁰ His division passed a resolution after the truce calling (unrealistically) on Irish Party leaders to place their opinions on the British peace offer before the Dáil. However, privately, Devlin, O’Connor and Dillon admitted the Irish Party was moribund and Dillon’s son James hoped the fragment of the party at Westminster would die away lest it sully the IPP’s memory.¹⁶¹

The opening of the Belfast parliament by King George V in June 1921 and his speech laid the first public building blocks for peace. Plunkett’s continued efforts to get a dominions bill through the Commons were regarded as practically impossible by Dillon and suffered from an obvious lack of Sinn Féin support and British reluctance to attach too much significance to it if it did not command serious support in Ireland.¹⁶² Peace efforts between Sinn Féin and the British finally bore some fruit in July 1921 with the declaration of a truce. For old constitutionalists like Devlin and O’Connor, it was clear they were out of politics ‘for some time’.¹⁶³ Negotiations continued until late in the year when the Dáil sent a team of plenipotentiaries to negotiate a settlement with the British Government. De Valera stayed home while the two next senior figures in the party, Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins went to

¹⁵⁸ McPhillips, ‘The Ancient Order of Hibernians in County Monaghan’, p. 106; Bureau of Military History, Witness Statements (hereafter BMH WS) No. 574 John McGonnell and No. 575 Joseph McKenna.

¹⁵⁹ Bew, ‘Moderate Nationalism and the Irish Revolution’, p. 741.

¹⁶⁰ Joseph Gineay to Dillon, 19 August 1921; John Dillon Nugent to Dillon, 30 August 1921, TCD John Dillon Papers 6758/1960; 6758/1345. Dillon felt action would not be wise at the time, but by October with peace established, Gineay, who was also secretary of the south Monaghan UIL, wrote again to Dillon in opposition to the suggestion from Nugent that Hibernians should seek to arm Catholics in the north-east, Gineay to Dillon, 16 October 1921, TCD John Dillon Papers 6758/1962.

¹⁶¹ O’Connor to Dillon, 17 October 1921 and Dillon to O’Connor, 18 October 1921, TCD John Dillon Papers 6744/860, 861; Manning, James *Dillon*, p. 32.

¹⁶² Pašeta, ‘Ireland’s Last Home Rule Generation’, p. 25; Dillon’s notes on Irish politics, 30 April and 18 May 1921, TCD John Dillon Papers 6582.

¹⁶³ O’Connor to Dillon, 17 October 1921, TCD John Dillon Papers 6744/860.

London. Agreement was reached with difficulty and the Anglo-Irish Treaty signed on 6 December, 1921 gave the newly created Irish Free State dominion self-government. An oath of allegiance to the King was required of all serving in parliament while Britain retained control of certain 'Treaty ports'. In addition, partition remained though a commitment to a Boundary Commission to review the border was made. The Treaty fell short of the 32-county republic for which many in Sinn Féin and the IRA had striven and led to a process of serious disagreement. However, it was disagreement and division among nationalists who had left behind the party that had dominated the Irish political scene for so long.

Conclusion

The broad coalition of Irish Party support discussed in the introduction began to crumble in the decade which followed the third home rule crisis. As Wheatley has shown, not all strands of the grassroots movement had ever been as conservative or as conciliatory to empire as the 'socially conservative, conciliatory and imperialist' ideology of party leader John Redmond.¹⁶⁴ However, in 1914, Redmondism was crystallised by a set of actions adopted in particular circumstances.¹⁶⁵ There was a desire to respect Asquith's move to place home rule on the statute book and a feeling, espoused not just by Redmond, that right was on the British side in the war. Participation in war was a huge sacrifice and the longer it went on, and the more lives that were lost, the more Redmondism could only be justified by a major pay-off.¹⁶⁶ While this and the after-effects of the Rising undoubtedly caused many to shift perspective and look for more powers for any proposed Irish state in this period, home rule had, in a sense, always been about extracting the maximum possible concession from Britain by constitutional methods.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴ Wheatley, *Nationalism and the Irish Party*, pp. 9-10; McConnel, 'John Redmond and Irish Catholic Loyalty'. Denis Gwynn also felt Redmond's 'own views were much more imperial than those of the majority of the party', Denis Gwynn, *The Life of John Redmond*, p. 569.

¹⁶⁵ Boyce has argued that Redmond from 1912 'and, especially from September 1914, had transformed its (Home Rule) image' from a nation once again and independence to 'devolution and a wider British patriotism', Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland*, p. 288.

¹⁶⁶ Tim Healy wrote to his brother that 'our people are not pro-German, but think the price too high for the kind of Home Rule that has been "granted"', Healy, *Letters and Leaders of My Day*, vol. 2, p. 552.

¹⁶⁷ Alan J. Ward, *The Irish Constitutional Tradition: Responsible Government and Modern Ireland, 1782-1992* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1994), p. 51. See also Finnan, *John Redmond and Irish Unity*, p. 236.

In 1918, the party lost out at a time when a desire for self-determination for small nations spread across Europe. Although it has been argued that many voters who transferred support to Sinn Féin did not necessarily vote for violence, the fact that a majority had chosen the new party was clear.¹⁶⁸ More than anything else, as attempts to secure home rule settlement were frustrated, it seemed that many lost faith in the IPP's ability to deliver on its goals as much as they lost faith in either its methods or the goals themselves. Any compromise on the home rule settlement agreed that may have seemed acceptable in other circumstances was not going to be treated in the same light once thousands of Irishmen had died on foreign soil. The war, the events of Easter week and the crises which followed, most notably the conscription issue, exacerbated the situation driving a chasm between advanced and moderate nationalism that the IPP had assiduously tried to close since the days of Parnell and the 'New Departure'.

The ascendancy of Sinn Féin and its displacement of the IPP as the voice of nationalism was a bitter experience for John Dillon and others. While Paul Bew has argued that 'the historiographical neglect of the parliamentary nationalist critique of the impact of violence of the Irish revolution' has led some to disregard of the role of violence in worsening the problem of partition, such neglect mirrored the contemporary marginalisation of the IPP and the inaction of its former leaders.¹⁶⁹ The IPP as a functioning political party had essentially ceased to exist after 1918. While those who detached themselves from the old party to form new movements did seek to imagine new solutions to the 'Irish question', Dillon and others remained aloof and offered no innovative ideas. The paltry parliamentary representation did not capture the wider public imagination any more than the new attempts at constitutionalism by Plunkett and Gwynn. There was still grassroots support for the traditional Irish Party which persisted beyond the War of Independence. However, such supporters were a minority in a country convulsed by war; strong defiance turned to tragedy for a small number who became identified as the enemy and lost their lives.

¹⁶⁸ Bew, 'Moderate Nationalism and the Irish Revolution', p. 736; Diarmaid Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland, 1900-2000* (London: Profile Books, 2004), p. 184.

¹⁶⁹ Bew, 'Moderate Nationalism and the Irish Revolution', p. 748.

While age, infirmity and the unlikelihood of success undoubtedly influenced the inaction of Dillon and others, it was also obvious that they did not want to oppose their fellow nationalists in Sinn Féin openly and thus be associated with the British campaign in the country. While IPP leaders harboured bitterness and resentment towards Sinn Féiners who had deposed them in 1918, it should not be forgotten that their feelings for Lloyd George and the British politicians who they felt contributed to the IPP's demise were hardly any better. In a normal political situation, a reduced party like the IPP might have been able to hang on in the hope of possible recovery (though as the fall of the British Liberal party showed, it would have been no easy feat). However, when the electoral mandate was given to a new movement which drifted into guerrilla war against the traditional enemy of Irish nationalism, the constitutional minority was left enfeebled. In such a situation, regardless of the enthusiasm of some devoted followers, it is easy to see why Dillon and others felt it was a case of one path or another and that they had to retire to the background.

Chapter 2

The Legacy of the Irish Party in Free State Politics, 1922-25

Recent movements have more or less side-tracked men like Mr. Fallon out of politics, but we would welcome such men back again – sound political Nationalists, though not political revolutionaries. We have had rather a surfeit of revolution politicians, and the temper of the time welcomes Nationalists of thought and education

The Leader, 18 April 1925

In almost every county strong and uncompromising opponents of the policy of murder, pillage and strife were returned at the head of the poll. It may be that they went forward to the electorate as “Farmers”, “Business Candidates”, “Ratepayers”, “Independents” or the like. Be their designation what it may, those who were successful were in the main Constitutional Nationalists who emerged after a short retirement as the choice of the people

John D. Nugent in the *Hibernian Journal*, September 1925

Leaders like John Dillon, but also the activists and supporters who still looked to former leaders for guidance, faced a number of decisions when assessing the emerging politics of the Irish Free State. As the Sinn Féin movement split into two distinct camps over the Anglo-Irish Treaty and the spectre of Civil War arose, others who had remained more detached from the independence struggle also evaluated the settlement with Britain. Support for recalcitrant republicanism or violent methods appeared anathema to those who had long supported the Irish Party and its quest for self-government through constitutional methods. However, as the new Irish administration battled Civil War against its former allies who opposed the Treaty, former Home Rulers were left with a choice between two schools of the Sinn Féin movement which many had continued to reject in 1918. The embrace of parliamentary democracy by pro-Treaty Sinn Féin (soon to be formed into the Cumann na nGaedheal party), in one sense, demonstrated, what Michael Laffan has characterised as constitutionalism being ‘eclipsed and reborn’ after the fall of the Irish Party.¹ In this light, the new Treatyite party would form another link in a chain of nationalist parties. However, unlike the IPP which remained in perpetual opposition in a foreign parliament, and Sinn Féin which maintained consistent

¹ *Irish Times*, 25 April 2012. A meeting had been held among supporters of Pro-Treaty Sinn Féin as early as 7 September 1922 and the party ‘inaugurated’ at a subsequent meeting on 7 December. The Cumann na nGaedheal party was officially launched in April 1923, Meehan, *The Cosgrave Party*, pp. 6-9.

abstention, the Treatyites had to enter a parliament, form a government and establish a new state on firm grounds. Amidst the challenges of civil war and state-building, the Government received the broad support if not full endorsement of the other political and sectional groups represented in parliament.

This chapter examines how individuals from Home Rule backgrounds - former Irish Party MPs, councillors, activists and supporters - accommodated themselves to Free State politics and the roles they occupied in the new polity. Examination of both chambers of the new parliament (Oireachtas) is used to analyse the number of individuals from the wider Home Rule movement seeping into representative politics. Some such individuals remained 'independent deputies', not aligned with any party, but demonstrating clear reservoirs of old Irish Party support, as personified by Waterford's new TD, Capt. William Redmond. Additionally, there is scrutiny of each new political grouping, revealing the extent to which former Irish Party supporters were absorbed into each. Particular attention is drawn to Cumann na nGaedheal's efforts in this regard and there is comparison between how the party operated and the ways of the IPP; it is argued that the persistence of staunch Irish Party supporters contributed to the state's party fragmentation. While the focus remains on the distinct influences of the Irish Party and its associated political culture, this chapter also examines similarities between the work and behaviour of Irish Party politicians and their successors in the Free State parliament, discussing the importance of localism and constituency-brokerage.

It is hardly surprising that old Irish Party followers who remained outside the Sinn Féin tradition would have felt bitterness or at least a sense of dispossession in the aftermath of the Irish revolution. Amid stormy scenes on 7 January 1922, the Dáil ratified the Treaty setting up the new Irish Free State. However, de Valera soon led a significant minority of TDs who opposed the Treaty out of the chamber and the new state faced the very real risk of civil war. For some of the new moderate nationalist organisations, the Treaty settlement granted self-government broadly on the lines they had wished.² The Boundary Commission was given huge weight by pro-Treaty figures while to some others who had pursued a moderate path through the War of

² Pašeta, 'Ireland's Last Home Rule Generation', p. 25.

Independence period like Stephen Gwynn, initial partition was now even favoured as a stage to later reconciliation and unity.³

Civil War broke out on 28 June when Griffith's and Collins's Provisional Government attacked the anti-Treaty forces holding the Four Courts under the command of Rory O'Connor. The ensuing conflict would evoke much bitterness and division; the individuals lost were also particularly noteworthy on both sides. On 12 August, Arthur Griffith died of a brain haemorrhage, a 'heavy blow' to the new administration in John Dillon's opinion, and ten days later Collins was killed in an ambush at Beál na Bláth, County Cork.⁴ As the conflict became increasingly bitter, the Provisional Government's suppression of the republicans and the use of execution deepened wounds that would take decades to heal.

However, by 6 December 1922 when the Free State officially came into being, the pro-Treaty side had asserted control in the country. It was to be a Free State led by the somewhat unlikely figure of W.T. Cosgrave. A former Minister for Local Government in the First Dáil, he was thrust into leadership by the deaths of Collins and Griffith as the Treatyites consolidated their rule and formed the new Cumann na nGaedheal party around them. As Irish self-government became a reality, it was this party that held power against the political though not parliamentary opposition of those in Sinn Féin who still opposed the Treaty. Four years had now passed since the electoral defeat of the Irish Parliamentary Party which had led Irish nationalism for so long and for those with continued sympathies for the old Party, a period of adjustment to the new political constellation was necessary.

The transition to the Free State was encapsulated on a surface level by the handover of major military and political buildings as well as establishing the symbols of the new independent state. The older image of Irish self-government, often alluded to by the IPP, of Grattan's Parliament on College Green was left in the background and the new chamber set up temporary (later permanent) home in Leinster House on Kildare

³ Reid, *The Lost Ireland of Stephen Gwynn*, pp. 181-2. Patrick Maume has commented that the limits of Sinn Féin popularity actually helped to force the Treaty compromise in an allusion to the number of people who actually had not voted Sinn Féin in 1918, see Maume, *The Long Gestation*, p. 215.

⁴ John Dillon's notes on Irish politics, 13 August 1922, TCD John Dillon Papers, 6582.

Street.⁵ Like the adoption of many of the other trappings of the new state, this was done for convenience and without much pomp or ceremony. For Irish Party supporters, the tricolour would always be associated with the Easter Rising, but there was little question of it not becoming the new flag of the Free State. In later years, John Dillon's son James retained greater affinity for the older flag of St. Patrick of blue with a golden harp, but along with the unofficial nineteenth-century Nationalist anthem of 'A Nation Once Again', it was not to be used as a state symbol.⁶ The new anthem, 'The Soldier's Song' may have been adopted 'without fanfare', but most old Nationalists appear to have accepted another new symbol associated with the 1916 insurrection without too much public complaint.⁷

The new state also had to construct its army and civil service although in the latter instance, the state apparatus bequeathed by the British administration was used as a template. The army would be an issue that would trouble the Government in its early years, but along with those who had fought in the Irish revolution, there was also room for those who had followed Redmond's call to enlist in the British Army.⁸ However, ex-British army servicemen who had not thrown themselves into the fight for Irish freedom upon their return home were left waiting for British Government schemes to be extended to an Ireland ravaged by conflict and now no longer a primary legislative concern of Britain.⁹ Many ex-Irish Party men were left on the side-lines. The AOH complained of attack from Orange, British and Sinn Féin forces throughout the revolutionary period and now had to face independence with

⁵ Grattan's Parliament was alluded to by Parnell during the debate on the First Home Rule Bill though he conceded that the Bill did not match the powers granted to Grattan's Parliament, *Hansard*, HC Debates, vol. 306, cc. 1168-71, 7 June 1886.

⁶ Manning, *James Dillon*, p. 46; Peter Alter, 'Symbols of Irish Nationalism', *Studia Hibernica*, no. 14 (1974), pp. 104-123.

⁷ Ruth Sherry 'The Story of the National Anthem', *History Ireland*, vol. 4, no. 1 (Spring, 1996), pp. 39-43; Ewan Morris, *Our Own Devices? Nationalist Symbols and Political Conflict in Twentieth-Century Ireland* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2005), pp. 49, 240, n. 64, 65.

⁸ Report from Wexford to Election Sub-Committee, 4 May, 1922, UCDA Cumann na nGaedheal minute books P39/1 See also Conor Cruise O'Brien's comment from *States of Ireland* quoted in Pašeta, 'Ireland's Last Home Rule Generation', p. 22.

⁹ Their treatment in the revolutionary period is still a point of debate as those killed as informers by the IRA seem to have included a lot of ex-servicemen (some innocent), yet many argue the figures were hardly high enough to denote any systematic targeting of servicemen. It seems enough to note that they would have been figures of suspicion. See John Borgonovo, *Spies, Informers and the "Anti-Sinn Féin Society: The Intelligence War in Cork City, 1920-1921* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2007); Myers, 'A Land Fit for Heroes?', pp. 16-18.

organisational challenges caused by partition and the reduction in its support and membership.

Home Rulers at the dawn of the Free State

Although many former Irish Party representatives retired quietly from public life after the party's crushing defeat, the return to more normal constitutional circumstances saw the slow return of others to the political sphere. From the signing of the Treaty, John Dillon played the role of observer; his disengagement was consistent with the stance taken by almost all old Nationalists since 1918. Fear of intimidation and violence should not be underestimated. Anti-Treaty forces often occupied or attacked houses of the old Anglo-Irish ascendancy during the Civil War, but the houses of old IPP members were also targeted including John Redmond's residence at Aughavanagh. The homes of others such as John Dillon in Ballaghaderreen were occupied by Free State forces.¹⁰ Nevertheless, this pose of inactivity because of unpopularity or fear of attack among old Irish Party supporters had in some ways been a self-fulfilling prophecy. Integration within the new Free State, which would have been difficult anyway, became a slow, tortuous process for some irreconcilables who preferred private life.¹¹

Support for the Nationalist Party had remained stronger in Ulster and this continued to be the case through the War of Independence and Civil War. In this way, the Nationalist Party, aided by the AOH, survived in the new Northern Irish state. However, even with support from the southern administration, northern nationalists had to contend with sectarian violence and later, an electoral system which disadvantaged them.¹² There was also the nationalists' own reluctance to recognise partition. Nationalist MPs did not attend the Northern parliament until 1925 when Belfast representatives Joe Devlin and T.S. McAllister took their seats (MPs from

¹⁰ *Freeman's Journal*, 22 February 1923; *Irish Independent*, 21 November 1923. The destruction of the Protestant former MP Thomas Grattan Esmonde's house fell into both categories. *Irish Independent*, 12 March 1923; *Waterford Standard*, 14 March 1923. See also Manning, *James Dillon*, p. 34.

¹¹ Not everyone from 'old Nationalist' families remained committed to the old Party of course. Ex-MP Alfie Byrne was embarrassed early in his Dáil career as he gave a visitor's pass to Councillor Mrs. Sheehy-Skeffington who then helped to create a scene in the chamber, see *Dáil Debates*, vol. 1, cc. 522, 20 September 1922.

¹² This was especially so after the abolition of proportional representation for local government elections in 1922 and parliamentary elections in 1929.

other counties took their seats later with those from Fermanagh and Tyrone the last to do so).¹³ The result was a frustrated political existence for those like Joe Devlin, Thomas Harbison and John Dillon Nugent who had been spared the destruction of the party faced by men such as Dillon further south.

Some old IPP members also drifted towards British politics. Former Louth MP Richard Hazleton, seemingly a rising star in the 1910s, stood unsuccessfully for the Liberal Party in Bermondsey in 1923. Daniel Boyle was similarly unsuccessful as a Labour candidate in Peterborough.¹⁴ T.P O'Connor retained his Liverpool seat until his death in 1929 and, as left-leaning members of the old IPP, he and Joe Devlin drifted towards the growing British Labour Party.¹⁵ This added to retirements of older MPs and the proliferation of lawyers in the old Irish Party who increasingly devoted themselves to their professions rather than public life, reduced the number that could contribute to politics in the Free State.¹⁶

In the Free State, the question remained of how one might hope to resurrect the various elements of a once great nationalist movement upon a shrunken power base. Patrick Maume's reflection that all the various elements of the IPP appeared to fare more or less equally badly in the age of Sinn Féin may be qualified slightly.¹⁷ Personal loyalty to John Redmond had remained strong in pockets around the country and particularly in Waterford, where his son Captain William Redmond had retained his seat in 1918 and attended Westminster until 1922 when representation from the area under the new Free State ended. The IPP had clung to two seats in the twenty-six counties (which would become the Free State) in 1918 although Edward

¹³ Harris, *The Catholic Church and the Foundation of the Northern Irish State*, pp. 170, 174-5; Brian M. Walker, *Parliamentary Election Results in Ireland 1918-92* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1992), pp. 49-54.

¹⁴ Bridget Hourican, 'Hazleton, Richard' in James McGuire and James Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (Cambridge, 2009). (<http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a3887>) Accessed: 18 December 2013. See also *Freeman's Journal*, 30 November, 1923.

¹⁵ Devlin stood in 1922 for Labour in the Liverpool exchange division, see O'Connor to Dillon, 28 November 1922, TCD John Dillon Papers 6743/903. He was apparently asked to stand for the Dáil in 1923 but refused, Dillon to O'Connor, 31 August 1923, TCD John Dillon Papers, 6743/937.

¹⁶ Edward Kelly left politics in 1922 and eventually became a senior counsel in the Free State. See Dillon-O'Connor correspondence for examples of old MPs seeking and/or attaining jobs. O'Connor to Dillon, 11 January 1919, TCD John Dillon Papers, 6743/595; O'Connor to Dillon 16 January, 29 June 1919, Dillon Papers, 6743/598, 673. Jeremiah McVeagh apparently wanted to 'wash his hands completely of Irish politics', O'Connor to Dillon, 17 June 1921, Dillon Papers, 6743/845.

¹⁷ Maume, *The Long Gestation*, p. 213.

Kelly's success in Donegal East owed to the agreement brokered by Cardinal Logue. Though largely irrelevant in the grand scheme of the political change brought about by Sinn Féin's victory, Kelly's victory pointed to the persistence of support in the border regions of the new southern state as well as Northern Ireland. The Irish Party had polled reasonably well in other Donegal constituencies, Louth and the Redmondite heartland of Wexford in 1918.¹⁸ There was also the success of some figures traditionally aligned to the Parliamentary Party or local UIL branches in the 1920 local elections. However, there were still innumerable difficulties facing any attempt to reorganise them on a national basis.

Although the revolutionary Dáil included the former Parliamentary Party MP Laurence Ginnell who defected to Sinn Féin, by the 'Pact Election' in 1922 (where the two opposing Sinn Féin leaders Michael Collins and Éamon de Valera agreed to unify the conflicting pro- and anti-Treaty groups, though this plan failed at the last minute) there was still apparently the possibility, however remote, of a revival of the old Irish Party. Collins met with Joe Devlin to discuss the matter while John Dillon wrote to T.P. O'Connor that he had received 'friendly' warnings from republicans that the election would be a 'very savage and ugly business – and that it would be much wiser for us not to interfere – but allow two sides to fight it out'.¹⁹ It seems unlikely that Dillon would have considered resurrecting the old party in any case.

However, there was a colouring of Irish Party traditions that began to tinge Free State representative politics from the early 1920s. Alfie Byrne became the first MP defeated in 1918 to enter the Dáil in 1922. Though Byrne had distanced himself somewhat from official IPP policy after the Rising, he remained in the party until the 1918 election and had performed rather well in the Dublin Harbour constituency in that year's poll.²⁰ In 1922 and for many years subsequently, he was to stand as an independent with a significant personal following among working class voters in the

¹⁸ Brian M. Walker, *Parliamentary Election Results in Ireland, 1801-1922* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1978), pp. 187-191.

¹⁹ Dillon to O'Connor, 8 February 1922, TCD John Dillon Papers, 6743/873.

²⁰ Anne Dolan, 'Byrne, Alfred (Alfie)', in McGuire and Quinn (eds), *DIB*. (Cambridge, 2009). (<http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a1318>) Date accessed: 18 December, 2013. Charles Stewart Parnell's cousin John Parnell Mandeville stood as an Independent in Waterford-Tipperary East in 1922 and was nominated by the editor of the local republican paper the *Waterford News*. However, Parnell Mandeville polled just 583 first preference votes, *Waterford Star*, 10, 24 June 1922.

capital. Such personal followings were to provide one aspect of a legacy which would become far more visible at the next Dáil election just over twelve months later in August 1923.

Captain Redmond and Irish Party independents in the 1923 election

In June 1923, the *Irish Independent* had already started speculating on the return to the fray of old parliamentarians with rumours surrounding Capt. Redmond, Hazleton, Devlin and Patrick White.²¹ As the clearest symbol of the older nationalist tradition in the state, Captain Redmond demands examination. Bearing a striking resemblance to his father, Redmond maintained the strong local loyalty strengthened over years of parliamentary service by three generations of the family in the south-east. As the August election approached, the Government would have liked Redmond to stand for Cumann na nGaedheal in order to bolster the party in Waterford.²² However, support was not so easily transferred and Redmond instead stood for the Fourth Dáil on an independent platform.

In his campaign, Redmond sought to ally himself with peace and the constitutional tradition of his father stretching back to Parnell although his election platforms were still decorated with tricolours.²³ Citing what he saw as the parlous state of the country's finances, Redmond laid out plans for reconstruction of the country (arterial drainage, public works schemes and efforts to attract foreign capital) and the need to address social questions.²⁴ However, while the Treaty may have been the major issue between the two largest contesting groupings of Cumann na nGaedheal and anti-Treaty Sinn Féin, Redmond sidestepped any issues over whether he was an 'official Treaty candidate'. He claimed his right to stand with the Treaty and work with it as much as anyone else while also calling on everyone to try to work for the new state and persuade their 'fellow-country men' in the six counties to join them.²⁵ In spite of

²¹ *Irish Independent*, 22 June 1923.

²² The Government party had in fact as early as 1922 considered paying expenses for independent pro-Treaty candidates see Special meeting of Cumann na nGaedheal 1 June, 1922, UCDA Cumann na nGaedheal minute books P139/1. The pro-Government *Waterford Standard* also called for a consolidation of pro-Treaty support behind Cumann na nGaedheal and wished that old constitutionalists had united with Treatyites in the city, *Waterford Standard*, 29 August, 1 September 1923.

²³ *Evening Star*, 18 August 1923; *Waterford Star*, 10 August 1923.

²⁴ *Freeman's Journal*, 22 August 1923; *Irish Independent*, 18 August 1923.

²⁵ *Freeman's Journal*, 21 August 1923.

claims to support the Treaty without being ‘in ecstasies’ about it, Redmond, however, declared he had ‘no faith’ in the Boundary Commission and looked to Commonwealth countries like South Africa, Australia and New Zealand as models which he described as ‘the freest democracies in the world’.²⁶

Like some other old IPP or Unionist candidates, Redmond could draw on the Legion of Ex-Servicemen in Waterford city along with ‘many of his staunchest supporters during his successful 1918 campaign’.²⁷ The local town tenants’ movement decided against putting forward a candidate, further strengthening Redmond’s hand as the All-Ireland Town Tenants’ League endorsed his candidature at a gathering of women nationalists in the city on 23 August.²⁸ This endorsement owed much to old Irish Party networks as former IPP candidate J.M Coghlan Briscoe was still the Town Tenants’ League’s General Secretary while ex-MP William Field was also still involved in the League.²⁹

Redmond’s candidature created some intrigue on the hustings and also inserted another element to Treaty debates in the election as republicans like Annie MacSwiney (sister of the hunger striker Terence MacSwiney) could call John Redmond an ‘honest man’ who fully admitted he would not get a republic as opposed to the betrayal of the Treaty.³⁰ Cumann na nGaedheal senator John McLaughlin countered such arguments and along with party leader W.T. Cosgrave ridiculed Redmond’s record in the ‘last parliament he was in’.³¹ This conflict between Redmondites and the Government reached a violent and faintly farcical pitch when both sides’ rallies clashed at the Mall in Waterford city on 26 August, ending with band instruments being thrown into the river Suir.³²

²⁶ *Irish Independent*, 18 August 1923.

²⁷ *Freeman Journal*, 18 August 1923. He had support among other groups too – the remnants of the Hibernian movement in the area, a strong female vote and also the Ballybricken Pig-Buyer’s Association who held a strong affinity for the Redmond family dating back to a nineteenth-century industrial dispute, see Emmet O’Connor, ‘The Influence of Redmondism on the Development of the Labour Movement in Waterford in the 1890s’, *Decies*, no. 10 (1979), pp. 37-42.

²⁸ *Waterford Star*, 24 August 1923.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *London Times* quoted in *Waterford Star*, 14 November 1924. The anti-Treatyite Waterford *Evening News* also used Redmond’s statement that he stood for the same object as Parnell and his father as an opportunity to claim this statement was a remarkable comment on the ‘pretensions of the “Free State”’. *Evening News*, 25 August 1923.

³¹ *Freeman’s Journal*, 23 August 1923.

³² *Irish Independent*, *Irish Times*, *Freeman’s Journal*, 27 August 1923.

It must be pointed out that while Redmond and Alfie Byrne were, as independents, probably the most prominent symbols of the old party, a number of independents running for the Dáil and Seanad in this period were actually IPP men without a party. While Redmond and Byrne were elected comfortably on 27 August, James Cosgrave, who had represented Galway East in the Commons 1914-18, stood as a non-party candidate for Galway and was elected on the nineteenth count. As can be seen in the table below, this meant three former Home Rule MPs were elected TDs to the Fourth Dáil along with two former poor law guardians or councillors who had been broadly associated with the Home Rule movement, an improvement on the pact election of 1922.

Table 2.1 – Independents from Home Rule backgrounds 1922-7

	Total number of Independent TDs	Former Home Rule MPs	Former Home Rule Councillors/Guardians	Former IPP Candidates	Relations of Home Rule MPs
Third Dáil (1922-3)	10	1	2	0	0
Fourth Dáil (1923-7)	10	3	2	0	0

***Where TDs satisfy more than one criterion, they are not ‘counted double’. Instead individual home rule connections are counted in the following order of importance: ex-MP, former candidate, ex-councillor/guardian, then relation. Therefore, if a TD is an ex-MP and ex-councillor, he/she is only counted as ex-MP.**

However, perhaps the 1923 election was not completely encouraging for former Home Rulers as the numbers contesting the election had increased too, e.g. only two former councillors were unsuccessful in 1922 while in 1923, four ex-MPs, two former candidates and three ex-councillors or guardians were defeated as independent candidates. Such figures would suggest that association with the Irish Party was not always good for one’s electoral prospects.³³

³³ Hugh Law ran for the Farmers’ Party and defeated IPP candidate Daniel McMenamin stood in Donegal in 1923, but both fared badly. Among other figures to stand unsuccessfully as independents were former MPs Daniel O’Leary in Cork West, Thomas O’Donnell in Kerry, Patrick White in Meath and Jasper Tully in Roscommon while Thomas Sloyan, the Nationalist candidate in Galway North in 1918, was a beaten Town Tenants’ Association candidate in Galway. Hibernian and Irish Party follower James Coburn also stood in Monaghan as a town tenants candidate and although he fared better than Sloyan, and another old Irish Party man John MacCabe who failed in Dublin County, Coburn too was unsuccessful, Adrian Grant, ‘Donegal Labour in the 1923 General Election’, *Donegal Annual*, No. 60 (2008), pp. 275-290. Similarly Brereton Barry stood as Independent in Wexford and invoked Redmond and the IPP in his election speeches though he too garnered only 500 votes, *Free*

The Free State senate, established ostensibly to assuage unionist fears of discrimination in the new state, included some old IPP representatives too. Although William O'Brien was not receptive to an invitation to sit in the Seanad, former MP Sir Thomas Henry Grattan Esmonde was appointed to the Upper House in 1922.³⁴ *Freeman's Journal* owner Martin Fitzgerald was also elected along with Monaghan's James J. McKean (whose brother John had been a MP 1902-10). Other senators with Home Rule backgrounds of varying degrees included ex-MP Stephen O'Mara, Richard A. Butler (a member of the AOH since 1909) and from 1925, Joseph O'Connor.³⁵ Although a number of candidates with Irish Party heritage were unsuccessful at the triennial Seanad election of 1925, former MP P.J. Brady was also later co-opted to the Upper House.

Table 2.2 Seanad membership 1922-5³⁶

	Former MPs	Ex Home Rule candidates	Ex-Home Rule Councillors/Guardians	Relatives of MPs	AOH/Other Home Rule connection
1922 (60)	1	1	1	1	4
1925 (19 seats to be filled)	2	1	1	1	2

The Farmers' Party

Even by 1923, when W.G. Fallon attempted to put pre-1918 disappointments behind him and looked at running as a Farmers' Party candidate in Cork, such a move was advised against by local friends and allies.³⁷ Many seemed to fear the threat of violence or abuse from the revolutionary generation if the 'political issue' was introduced. However, despite Fallon's withdrawal, standing as farmer and

Press, 25 August 25, 1 September 1923; Walker, *Parliamentary Election Results in Ireland 1918-92*, pp. 111-115; *Irish Times*, 17 August 1923; *Freeman's Journal*, 27 August 1923.

³⁴ Callanan, *T.M. Healy*, p. 603.

³⁵ Fitzgerald had, however, been warmer to Sinn Féin after the IPP's demise and actually played a role in the truce negotiations of 1921, Felix M. Larkin, 'Fitzgerald, Martin Thomas', McGuire & Quinn (eds), *DIB* (Cambridge, 2009), (<http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a3173>). Former MP William Field was nominated by Alfie Byrne for a seat in the Seanad, but withdrew, *Dáil Debates*, vol. 2, cc. 39-40, 7 September 1922. See also *Irish Times*, 3 August 1940.

³⁶ In 1922, the four senators listed as having some other IPP/AOH connection were Richard A. Butler, Maurice Moore (former Chief of Redmondite Volunteers), Martin Fitzgerald, and Jennie Wyse-Power, whose connection was tenuous. Wyse-Power had been in Ladies' Land League, was later advanced nationalist and was a founding member of Cumann na mBan. Thomas Toal was a former Chairman of Monaghan County Council, Livingstone, *The Monaghan Story*, p. 407. Defeated candidates in 1925 included Jeremiah McVeagh, J.J. Horgan, Patrick Hooper, Henry Harrison, George Crosbie, Richard A. Butler and P.J. Brady.

³⁷ Henry Murphy to Fallon, 4 August 1923, NLI Fallon Papers, Ms. 22,581.

commercial candidates seemed to be a way of avoiding that risk for others.³⁸ The Farmers' Party originated as a political wing of the Irish Farmers' Union, a country-wide farming organisation (including nationalists and unionists) founded before the First World War; the party achieved initial success and won seven seats in the June 1922 election.³⁹

The IPP had based its rise to prominence on securing land purchase schemes for tenant farmers; yet as Bew, Hazelkorn and Patterson have argued, many of the larger farmers (though apparently not all) who had benefitted from parliamentary agitation abandoned the IPP by 1918 as they no longer had any reason to hold tight to the old party.⁴⁰ Similarly, the smaller farmers received the verbal support of the IPP, but not concrete ameliorative measures and the IFU had contained members who remained loyal to Unionism as well as Irish Party and Sinn Féin followers by 1918. The IFU remained determined to proceed together as farming activists regardless of party loyalties.⁴¹

However, the IFU was also associated with larger farmers, many of whom were increasingly fearful of what they perceived as left-wing threats in the post-war period as land agitation was revived and the proposed 1920 Land Act was marginalised by the independence struggle. The unfinished nature of land purchase, as Terence Dooley has demonstrated, thus left the new Government in the invidious position of trying to speed through its 1923 Land Act, which abolished the British Congested Districts Board, restructured the old Land Commission and aimed at completing land purchase and advancing land redistribution.⁴² The debates and unrest which accompanied these issues provided space for a party representing farmers who

³⁸ Murphy to Fallon, 4 August 1923, NLI Fallon Papers, Ms. 22,581. Another ally Dr Goold was more blunt writing: 'your intervention at present absolutely unthinkable', Goold to Fallon, 15 August 1923, NLI Fallon Papers, Ms. 22,581.

³⁹ Varley, 'Irish Farmers' Parties, Nationalism and Class Politics in the Twentieth Century', p. 161; Michael Gallagher, 'The Pact General Election of 1922', *Irish Historical Studies*, vol. 22, no. 84 (1979), pp. 404-421.

⁴⁰ Of course, Sinn Féin did not go as far as they wished either as they stopped cattle-driving, Bew, Hazelkorn and Paterson, *The Dynamics of Irish Politics*, p. 20.

⁴¹ For an example of divided party loyalties in the IFU, see Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, pp. 274-5.

⁴² Terence Dooley, 'Land and Politics in Independent Ireland, 1923-48: The Case for Reappraisal', *Irish Historical Studies*, vol. 34, no. 134 (Nov., 2004), pp. 175-197; Varley, 'Gaining Ground, Losing Ground; The Politics of Land reform in Twentieth-Century Ireland', Fergus Campbell and Tony Varley (eds), *Land Questions in Modern Ireland* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), p. 31.

experienced a decline in their fortunes after the wartime boom in agriculture. In the Farmers' Party of the early 1920s, some old Irish Party men thus found themselves in a sectional party which mostly represented larger farmers: some of the very people who had gained from the IPP's work in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Notwithstanding the concerns expressed by Fallon earlier, three of the seven Farmers deputies returned in 1922 were ex-Nationalist councillors or guardians (Dineen, Rooney and Gorey).⁴³ In the August 1923 election, the party recalled the record of farmers in the independence struggle in its election literature; however, its fifteen elected TDs which included one ex-Westminster candidate and five ex-Nationalist councillors (Dineen, Mulvany, Conlan, Patrick K. Hogan and Gorey) while one of the three Farmers senators elected in 1925 (Butler) was a former Nationalist councillor too.⁴⁴ Other unsuccessful Farmers candidates included David Leo O'Gorman, a Cork Home Ruler and father-in-law of ex-MP Tom Lundon, and the former MP Hugh Law.⁴⁵

The ex-Westminster candidate was Patrick McKenna elected in Longford-Westmeath. McKenna was an old agrarian agitator who had been defeated in the 1917 Longford by-election after a recount against Sinn Féin's Joseph McGuinness.⁴⁶ Farmers' deputies generally concentrated on agricultural and/or constituency matters in the Dáil and, with the exception of leader Denis J. Gorey, were not prominent speakers.⁴⁷ Prior to the emergence of the National League, former Home Rulers in the party showed little inclination in these years to resurrect older political arguments. However, of the TDs with Home Rule backgrounds, McKenna, P.J.

⁴³ Gorey had served on Thomastown Poor Law Union.

⁴⁴ See Farmers' Party- Points which may be of use- 'What part did the farmers take in the national movement?', NLI Irish Farmers' Union Papers Ms. 19021. According to Donal O'Sullivan's classifications of party loyalty in the House, Richard A. Butler was a Farmers' Party senator. He was also former Home Rule county councillor for Lusk, Co. Dublin, O'Sullivan, *The Irish Free State and its Senate* (London: Faber and Faber, 1940).; *Irish Times*, 25 June 1914.

⁴⁵ Marie Coleman, 'Lundon, William', in James McGuire and James Quinn (eds), *DIB*. (Cambridge, 2009) (<http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a4918>) Date accessed: 19 December 2013. Walker, *Parliamentary Election Results in Ireland 1918-92*, p. 110; Grant, 'Donegal Labour in the 1923 General Election'.

⁴⁶ Bew, *Conflict and Conciliation in Ireland*, pp. 197, 205-207.

⁴⁷ For examples, *Dáil Éireann – General Index to Parliamentary Debates [Official Report] Vols. 1 - 19 9 September 1922 – 20 May 1927*, pp. 148-150 (John Conlan), 221-2 (John Dineen), 295-301 (Denis J. Gorey) 342-3 (Patrick K. Hogan), 440-441 (Patrick McKenna) 471-2 (P.J. Mulvany), 549 (John Rooney).

Mulvany and John Conlan had stayed loyal to the party in 1918 and they, along with two further Farmers' Party deputies (Conor Hogan and T.J. O'Donovan) attended Redmondite commemorations in 1924 and 1925.⁴⁸ In contrast to the Farmer deputies, just one of the ex-councillors from Cumann na nGaedheal attended a Redmondite anniversary.

Table 2.3 - Individuals from Home Rule backgrounds in the Farmers' Party 1922-7

	Former Home Rule MPs	Former Home Rule Councillors/Guardians	Former IPP Candidates	Relations of Home Rule MPs
Third Dáil (1922-3)	0	3	0	0
Fourth Dáil (1923-7)	0	5	1	0

O'Brienites and 'Labour-Nationalists'

Although D. George Boyce has attributed some of Labour's good showing in 1922 to old Home Rulers 'who had not yet found their new political home', there appears to have been less direct crossover in candidates from the IPP to the Labour Party.⁴⁹ This is in spite of the small though distinct 'Labour-Nationalist' element to the IPP which had tried to represent urban working classes. The O'Brienites' main support organisation the Irish Land and Labour Association had sought to represent the rights of farm labourers and poorer classes where the AFIL held sway. The legacy of this organisation (a small number of its branches lasted into the 1930s) had some influence in the labour politics of the new state too. One former O'Brienite ended up a Cumann na nGaedheal TD, but most ILLA branches tended to develop into branches of the ITGWU from 1917 onwards. Consequently, three Labour deputies (Michael Bradley, T.J. Murphy and James Shannon) serving between 1922-6 had been members of this association.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ *Free Press*, 15 March 1924. Hogan does not appear to have been a Redmondite politician, but attended Willie Redmond events in his native constituency in Clare. Conlan and Mulvany, however, had been in the party, Representatives of Irish Farmers' Union National Executive 1923, NLI Irish Farmers' Union Papers Ms. 19021.

⁴⁹ Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland*, p. 331.

⁵⁰ Charles Callan and Barry Desmond, *Irish Labour Lives: A Biographical Dictionary of Irish Labour Party Deputies Senators, MPs and MEPs* (Dublin: Watchword, 2010).

One Labour Party TD, Henry Broderick, elected in 1923 seemed to be from the ‘Labour-Nationalist’ school as he was prominent in the Town Tenants’ League and the AOH in Athlone. Similarly, Galway TD Gilbert Lynch had previously been in the UIL of Great Britain while Independent Labour TD John Daly was also in the Town Tenants’ League. Some Labour deputies such as T.J. O’Connell seemed to ask questions in the Dáil which suggested an Irish Party base in their constituency.⁵¹ Yet the residue of the party’s small ‘Labour-Nationalist’ element in the 1920s seemed to remain distinct and was perhaps better demonstrated by Alfie Byrne and the three Town Tenants’ candidates who stood in 1923.⁵²

Cumann na nGaedheal - constitutional nationalism ‘reborn’?

In one sense, it could be argued that constitutional nationalism was alive and well in the Free State under the guardianship of the new government.⁵³ Cumann na nGaedheal espoused a constitutional brand of nationalism and was willing to work with Britain in a Commonwealth framework. While some old Nationalists may have grumbled that Cumann na nGaedheal were only coming to realise in 1923 what they realised in 1918 or 1916 - that a republic might be desirable, but was not possible and that peace was preferable to an unwinnable war with England - the Treatyites could be seen to represent the least bad option.⁵⁴

For many ordinary voters with stronger Irish Party loyalty in the pre-1918 period, it was, however, an unenthusiastic conversion to move slowly towards the new government. In January 1922, the Cork County Convention of the AOH had already looked towards establishing the Order as a Catholic social organisation in new circumstances. As will be discussed in later chapters, others remained attached to

⁵¹ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 1, col. 2547, 1 December 1922, vol. 2 col. 1025, 24 January 1923; vol. 3, cc. 1144-1145, 28 May 1923. For more on O’Connell’s familial links to the UIL, see John Cunningham and Niamh Puirseil, ‘T.J. O’Connell (1882-1969): Pioneer of the Irish National Teachers Organisation and Labour Party Leader’, in Gerard Moran and Nollaig Ó Muraíle (eds), *Mayo History and Society: Interdisciplinary Essays on the History of an Irish County* (Dublin: Geography Publications, 2014), pp. 731-56. T.J. Murphy had been an O’Brienite in his youth, Ungeod-Thomas, *Jasper Wolfe of Skibbereen*, p. 195.

⁵² Cork East TD John Daly had a history at local government level as Labour Nationalist too.

⁵³ Meehan, *The Cosgrave Party*, p. xi.

⁵⁴ John Dillon concluded in his correspondence that but for this old Irish Party support and the appeal from the altars, the Government would have fared even worse. Dillon to O’Connor, 21 September 1923, TCD John Dillon Papers 6743/939.

older political identities which might re-emerge at a later date; however, delegates agreed to support Arthur Griffith's government in the meantime.⁵⁵

Many old Nationalists may have been converted to Treatyites, but they were not the ones that Cumann na nGaedheal might have wished as their presence in the ranks of independents, farming and labour parties demonstrates. Such figures may have offered independent support to the Government - backing them where they were right, but remembering to challenge them where they felt that they were wrong. The main attraction of the new Government to these old party followers appears to have been the restoration of peace, law and order that they desperately craved.⁵⁶ Though some, like Dillon, might think it rich that former revolutionaries could don such constitutional clothing, unreconciled Irish Party voters were also a natural constituency for Cumann na nGaedheal if it wished to utilise the old party's networks.

There were clearly differences in context and character between the Irish Party and Cumann na nGaedheal. As Lee has demonstrated, there were changes in the political culture of the Free State which came into being in 1922 as Irish nationalism became dispersed across parties rather than the one-party structure of Parnell or subsequently the reunited Irish Party.⁵⁷ Cumann na nGaedheal was also a Sinn Féin party and, as Jason Knirck has argued, there was a distinction between Treatyite commitment to the Commonwealth as an 'anti-Imperial instrument' and John Redmond's 'conception of being part of the Empire's core'.⁵⁸ With that said, the ways in which the IPP and its methods of organisation and conception of party did influence the Treatyite party will now be discussed. Mel Farrell has identified Cumann na nGaedheal speakers using the term 'national party' and the party certainly eschewed any suggestion of appealing to merely sectional interests in its efforts to consolidate a new national political entity.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Minutes of Cork County Convention, 15 January 1922, CCA u389a/25; Borghonovo, *The Dynamics of War and Revolution*, p. 118.

⁵⁶ For example T.F. McGahon to Fallon, 23 August 1926, NLI Fallon Papers, Ms. 22,583.

⁵⁷ Lee, 'On the Birth of the Modern Irish State', pp. 153-6. On Cumann na nGaedheal's relationship with the Church, see Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution*, pp. 284-6; Dermot Keogh, *The Vatican, the Bishops and Irish Politics, 1919-39* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

⁵⁸ Jason Knirck, 'The Dominion of Ireland: The Anglo-Irish Treaty in an Imperial Context' *Éire Ireland*, vol. 42, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2007), p. 250.

⁵⁹ Farrell, 'Cumann na nGaedheal: A New National Party?', pp. 36-7, 41.

However, while Fitzpatrick has described how the Home Rule network of auxiliary organisations was quickly replaced by Sinn Féin ones like the GAA and Gaelic League, John M. Regan has argued that Cumann na nGaedheal actually struggled with local organisation from the beginning.⁶⁰ Farrell has explored such struggles and contended that there was a genuine desire in the party to sustain active local networks, citing the example of Dublin North where the Treatyites ‘continued a long-standing nationalist tradition of combining leisure and politics’.⁶¹ In areas where Cumann na nGaedheal organisation was weak, the party’s invitations to selection convention could sometimes echo the inclusive convention composition of the IPP aimed at all priests, local councillors and farming and business representatives as well as ex-Volunteers and Sinn Féin activists.⁶²

Desire for patronage visible in the era of the Irish Party did not disappear with independence either. Liam de Róiste lamented that in Cork, supporters of de Valera and the Irish Party obtained patronage ahead of Cumann na nGaedheal supporters.⁶³ This culture of expectation seemed to persist as supporters from Sinn Féin expected some reward from the Treatyite regime as part of the spoils of victory.⁶⁴ While accusations of patronage and jobbery had been consistently levelled at the IPP, Regan has argued that the promise of preferment helped to bolster Cumann na nGaedheal organisation in its early days, especially as the enactment of the 1923 Land Act began.⁶⁵ However, Cumann na nGaedheal was not as effective as the Irish Party in its organisation and, as will be discussed in later chapters, it was overtaken in this regard by Fianna Fáil.⁶⁶ Difficulties in fundraising and reliance on wealthy individuals also contrasted with the strength of the UIL at its height and the ability to access American funds in the pre-independence era.⁶⁷

⁶⁰ Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, pp. 128-30.

⁶¹ Mel Farrell, ‘Few Supporters and No Organisation? Cumann na nGaedheal Organisation and Policy, 1923-33’, unpublished PhD thesis, Maynooth University, 2011, p. 166.

⁶² Farrell, ‘Cumann na nGaedheal: A New National Party?’, p. 44.

⁶³ Liam de Róiste journal, 5 September 1925, CCCA de Róiste Papers, U271A, Book 53.

⁶⁴ Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution*, pp. 150, 214, 218-219.

⁶⁵ Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution*, pp. 203-6.

⁶⁶ Regan recorded 250 Cumann na nGaedheal branches in the state by January 1924, Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution*, p. 205.

⁶⁷ On Regan’s arguments about poor Cumann na nGaedheal organisation, see *The Irish Counter-Revolution*, p. 231. The party did look to America to ease debt problems in 1927, Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution*, p. 312.

In certain instances, Cumann na nGaedheal certainly looked on old Irish Party followers as at least less irreconcilable than those republicans who opposed the Treaty in the hurried drive to build up a political party out of a government. When organisation in Wexford and Waterford proved difficult because of the persistence of Redmondite fidelity, the new party's standing committee unsuccessfully attempted to bring Captain Redmond and his followers into the party.⁶⁸ As Regan has noted, former MP P.J. Brady was also a target, but he hesitated and declined, apparently concerned at the reaction his move would provoke among the likes of Dillon.⁶⁹

However, the Treatyites' bid to win over old Nationalists was certainly not wholly unsuccessful. Notable conversions included William O'Malley and Captain Henry Harrison (previously associated with the Irish Dominion League) whose *Irish Truth* newspaper attracted support from the Ex-Servicemen' League.⁷⁰ Harrison was apparently ready to co-operate with the party 'from the outside' by December 1924 and the organising committee invited him to a meeting soon afterwards.⁷¹ By the following month, Harrison was a member of the committee himself and he went on to win a Cumann na nGaedheal nomination for the senate election in 1925.⁷² Even at this though, Harrison's address to electors clearly laid out that 'no pledges' had been asked or given and that he was nominated on his record as a 'Parnellite Nationalist' and his defence of ex-servicemen.⁷³ Harrison's loyalty would prove transitory and he defected to the National League in 1926. It would take later events to see the more recalcitrant elements of old Irish Party support fully absorbed into the Treatyite party. On the other hand, the success of former O'Brienite Michael Egan in the 1924 Cork Borough by-election drew accusations from 'Irish-Irelander' and former Sinn

⁶⁸ Organiser J.J. Egan found that the strength of Redmondism in Wexford was also a stumbling block to Cumann na nGaedheal organisation, UCDA Cumann na nGaedheal minute books P39/1. Egan was successful in establishing a Cumann in Waterford though he reported the 'prevailing idea that coalition with followers of late Mr. Redmond best way to ensure success.'

⁶⁹ Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution*, pp. 232-3; Notes 4 December 1924, UCDA Mulcahy Papers P7/C/99 (69).

⁷⁰ Regan has speculated that Harrison's support for a new political party may have been a factor in this co-option, Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution*, p. 233. O'Malley attended a Cumann na nGaedheal meeting at Moate in November 1925, Farrell, 'Few Supporters and No Organisation?', p. 137.

⁷¹ Meeting of Organising Committee, 16 December 1924 UCDA Cumann na nGaedheal minute books, P39/1.

⁷² Harrison then attended a party meeting, 5 January 1925, UCDA Cumann na nGaedheal minute books, P39/1.

⁷³ Harrison's election committee included Capt. Redmond among other old Home Rule figures and southern unionists, *Irish Independent*, 29 August 1925; *Irish Truth*, 1 August 1925.

Féin TD Liam de Róiste that Egan's victory was (perhaps ironically given past rivalries) based on UIL and Hibernian support.⁷⁴ This leads us neatly to the arguments about the conservatism of Cumann na nGaedheal representatives in parliament, which has often been associated with a 'neo-Redmondite' element within the party.⁷⁵ Just how closely linked were some members of the new government to the old Irish Party?

As a starting point, Tim Healy's appointment as Governor-General (the King's representative) was probably the perfect blend of acknowledgment for and independence from the Irish Party for the state's new government.⁷⁶ At once a nod to the old constitutional tradition, Healy's appointment was also a further barb to his old political opponent John Dillon. As someone from the dominion, Healy was not wholly welcomed by the British either, but was proposed by Healy's nephew-in-law Kevin O'Higgins.⁷⁷ O'Higgins, Minister for Home Affairs from 1922 (later retitled Justice Minister) has indeed been probably the most discussed link to the older parliamentary tradition in Cumann na nGaedheal. Assessing the significance of O'Higgins's links with Healy to his own political development, Regan has broadened the debate by noting that O'Higgins, along with others like Agriculture Minister Patrick Hogan, came from the social background of the *fin de siècle* Catholic middle class that foresaw its rise to power under home rule.⁷⁸

In terms of assessing the conservative bourgeois character of the party, this is an interesting point. However, even if O'Higgins was from a similar background to many of those prominent in Home Rule politics, it would not necessarily follow that O'Higgins had always been a closet Irish Party man. The conservative Healy, for his part, had been anything, but a straightforward party follower from the time of the Parnell split. In spite of his brother's service in the Great War, O'Higgins's adolescent poetry mocking 'Redmond the superman' serves to underline his

⁷⁴ Liam de Róiste journal 28 October 1924, CCCA de Róiste Papers, U271A, Book 52.

⁷⁵ Building on Wheatley, Farrell has defined a neo-Redmondite presence as implying 'moderate nationalism, accommodation with the crown, and conservatism in both economic and social policy', Farrell, 'Cumann na nGaedheal: A New National Party?', p. 38.

⁷⁶ A part of the famous 'Bantry Band' of politicians from the Cork area which included the Sullivans, William Martin Murphy and Tim Harrington. Healy was related to Kevin O'Higgins.

⁷⁷ Callanan, *T. M Healy*, pp. 595-605.

⁷⁸ Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution*. Many middle class Catholics found their way into the revolutionary movement too, *The Clongownian* (1922), pp. 249-57.

opposition to Redmond and Irish enlistment in the British forces.⁷⁹ In fact, O'Higgins wrote in 1918 that he may not have been a doctrinaire republican, but that he was committed to more than home rule and accepted entirely 'the doctrine of Sinn Féin'.⁸⁰ O'Higgins's newspaper articles of 1919 showed his disdain for the later policy of Redmond and Dillon and aimed to destroy any resurgence of moderate opinion.

TDs from Home Rule backgrounds have been probed above to examine the influence on minor groupings even at this early stage. Nonetheless, given the contested views often expressed about Cumann na nGaedheal, the case of the Government party merits particular attention. If it was easier for those with Healyite rather than Redmondite links, O'Higgins was far from the only TD with connections to the older parliamentary tradition; some had more explicit links. Osmond Thomas Grattan Esmonde, was the son of a party MP, but famously campaigned against his own father in the 1918 General Election so, though he himself had been in Sinn Féin, he also came with a link to older constitutional nationalism stretching back to the eighteenth-century Irish House of Commons.⁸¹ This was not hidden either as his running mate declared himself 'proud' to stand with the 'lineal descendant of Grattan, the last leader of the Sovereign Parliament of Ireland' when heckled during the 1923 General Election campaign.⁸² Osmond's more advanced nationalist credentials could arguably be said to have been highlighted in 1924 when he briefly left Cumann na nGaedheal to join the 'National Group' after the Army Mutiny involving former IRB men in the new defence forces.⁸³

⁷⁹ Knirck has argued this persuasively; see Jason Knirck, 'Apostates or Imperialists? W.T. Cosgrave, Kevin O'Higgins and Republicanism', *New Hibernia Review*, vol. 14, no. 4 (Winter, 2010), pp. 51-73. See also John P. McCarthy, *Kevin O'Higgins: Builder of the Irish State*, (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006); 'Redmond the Superman', UCDA Kevin O'Higgins Papers, P197/134.

⁸⁰ O'Higgins to Sheridan, 20 October 1918, UCDA O'Higgins Papers, P197/102.

⁸¹ Henry Grattan was an MP in the old Irish House of Commons on College Green before its dissolution under the Act of Union. It had been Grattan's efforts which had previously gained legislative independence for the Irish Commons in 1782, thus attracting the moniker of 'Grattan's parliament'. Although Osmond's father Thomas Henry Grattan Esmonde later returned to the IPP, he was, along with C.J. Dolan and James O'Mara, one of the first to defect to Sinn Féin in 1907.

⁸² Republican hecklers constantly mentioned John Redmond and 1914 throughout McCarthy's speech though the newspaper report did not reference any slur on Esmonde, *Irish Independent*, 21 August 1923.

⁸³ *Irish Independent*, 8 December 1925. The National Group was dissatisfied with the Government's seemingly diminishing nationalism. For more on the 'Army Mutiny', see Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution*, pp. 163-97; Meehan, *The Cosgrave Party*, pp. 39-43.

John Marcus O'Sullivan was a brother of the MP Timothy O'Sullivan, while he too had been in the YIB branch of the party at UCD. Other notables with links to the IPP through marriage, family, or past membership of older nationalist organisations included James Dolan, George Gavan Duffy, Francis McGuinness, Piarás Beaslaí and Hugh Kennedy.⁸⁴ However, perhaps it was former councillors like P.J. Egan who had actually been Home Rule politicians in the past who provided a more tangible legacy (Egan switched to Sinn Féin after the 1918 General election).⁸⁵

Consequently, in terms of individuals who were actual ex-MPs or local councillors, the figures in Cumann na nGaedheal were reasonably low, but significant in these early years. In June 1922 there was just one ex-Nationalist county councillor (Peter Hughes who defected to Sinn Féin in 1916 due to antipathy towards the AOH) and no ex-MP elected for the pro-Treaty side.⁸⁶ By the Fourth Dáil though, Cumann na nGaedheal contained seven ex-Nationalists and one ex-O'Brienite councillor (Hughes, John Hennigan, Thomas O'Mahony, P.W. Shaw, Thomas Bolger, P.J. Egan, George Wolfe, and Michael Egan). However, it is important to note that four of these had switched from the Irish Party prior to 1918 while the party had just one former MP in the form of James O'Mara (winner of a by-election in Dublin South in 1924), who had also joined Sinn Féin in 1907.⁸⁷ Analysing those who moved from Home Rule backgrounds into early Cumann na nGaedheal thus provides a window into the evolution of nationalist politics through the Great War, War of Independence and subsequently the trajectory of opinions concerning independence and Ireland's constitutional status.

⁸⁴ Another relative, Eugene O'Sullivan, had also been a MP for the Parliamentary Party, Patrick Maume, 'O'Sullivan, John Marcus', in McGuire and Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish Biography*. (Cambridge, 2009).

(<http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a7062>) Accessed: 15 January 2014.

⁸⁵ Laurence William White, 'Egan, Patrick Joseph', McGuire & Quinn (eds), *DIB* (2011), (<http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a2897>) Accessed: 18 December 2013. Egan has elsewhere been described as a 'protégé' of O'Higgins having also attended Clongowes, Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution*, p. 216.

⁸⁶ Hughes actually ended up being imprisoned as part of the 'German plot', Corcoran, *Freedom to Achieve Freedom*, p. 99

⁸⁷ *Irish Independent*, 3 March 1924; Meleady, *John Redmond: The National Leader*, p. 109.

Table 2.4 – Individuals from Home Rule backgrounds in Pro-Treaty Sinn Féin/Cumann na nGaedheal 1922-7

	Former Home Rule MPs	Former IPP candidates	Former Home Rule Councillors/Guardians	Relations of Home Rule MPs
Pro-Treaty – Third Dáil (1922-3)	0	0	1	1 (Dolan)
Cumann na nGaedheal – Fourth Dáil (1923-7)	1	0	8	3 (Esmonde, Dolan and O’Sullivan)

It is also worth remembering that Sinn Féin in 1918 had two ex-MPs in O’Mara and Laurence Ginnell while, perhaps intriguingly given the claims of Griffith and others to be Parnell’s true inheritors, Count Plunkett had been a Parnellite candidate in the 1890s. As well as Plunkett, anti-Treaty Sinn Féin had one ex-Nationalist MP (Ginnell), an ex-councillor (J.J. Killane) and a former county council clerk (Samuel E. Holt) between 1922 and 1926. However, again it must be stated in Killane’s case that he left the UIL as early as 1912. Although Maume is correct in suggesting that the tendency to emphasise the Redmondite wing of the IPP in subsequent memoirs has neglected a radical element which would have been absorbed into Fianna Fáil in later years, conversion among politicians to the anti-Treatyite cause seems to have been rare in the early 1920s and possibly could have applied more among voters rather than those who entered national politics.⁸⁸

Table 2.5 – Individuals from Home Rule backgrounds in Anti-Treaty Sinn Féin 1922-6

	Former Home Rule MPs	Former IPP candidates	Former Home Rule Councillors/Guardians	Relations of MPs
Anti-Treaty – Third Dáil (1922-3)	1	1	0	0
Anti-Treaty – Fourth Dáil (1923-7)	0	1	1 (and a former clerk of a county council)	0

⁸⁸ Maume, *The Long Gestation*, p. 219. Those who did eventually end up in Fianna Fáil like will be discussed in later chapters, Garvin, *The Evolution of Irish Nationalist Politics*, p. 177 on both Civil War parties coming from one pan-nationalist stem.

An explanation for the success of Home Rule councillors?

In January 1927, Alderman John Magennis, a former Home Ruler still active on Kilkenny County Council, wrote that it was a pity the old Irish Party had not been kept together as a small number had retained prominent council positions in 1920 and even held their own in 1925 ‘and more could have been done were we banded together’.⁸⁹ Localism and ‘pipeline theory’ in political science including recent research on female representation suggest local office is a significant aid to winning election to a national parliament.⁹⁰

This is certainly visible in the number of former councillors or guardians present in the early Dáils, particularly in the Home Rule tinge identified in Cumann na nGaedheal. The enlarged representation offered by independence where more members of parliament were returned than had been the case under British rule certainly contributed to this. While Fergus Campbell disputed Fitzpatrick’s theory of crossover between Home Rule and Sinn Féin movements, the work of Michael Wheatley on the midlands makes an estimate of between 10-20% of Home Rule activists becoming active in Sinn Féin depending on regional variation.⁹¹ Nevertheless, pending an in-depth research project on all levels of local government before and after independence, it would seem that local politicians who survived the 1918-20 cataclysm were outliers like John Jinks in Sligo. Oliver P. Coogan recorded only four survivors in the elections to Meath County Council in June 1920 with patchy persistence in the urban areas polled five months previously.⁹² This may suggest that those who did survive (outside areas of strong Redmondite or AOH devotion) did so by re-labelling themselves under Sinn Féin or sectional banners were tough and popular local operators who could transition to the backbenches of the Free State parliament more easily than national figures with ostentatious Redmondite associations.

⁸⁹ John Magennis to Thomas Lawler, 17 January 1927, NLI O’Donnell Papers Ms. 15,462 (2).

⁹⁰ Fiona Buckley, Mack Mariani, Claire McGing and Timothy White, ‘Is Local Office a Springboard for Women to Dáil Éireann?’ *Journal of Women, Politics and Policy*, vol. 36, no. 3 (2015), pp. 311-335.

⁹¹ Campbell, *Land and Revolution*, pp. 223-5, 231, 308-311; Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, pp. 134, 138, 289; Michael Wheatley, “‘Right Behind Mr. Redmond’: Nationalism and the Irish Party in Provincial Ireland, 1910-14”, PhD thesis, St. Mary’s College, University of Surrey, 2002, pp. 341-8.

⁹² Oliver P. Coogan, *Politics and War in Meath 1913-23* (Navan: Meath County Council, 2013), pp. 223-252.

In the sample below examining just the county councils in four selected counties - the Redmondite citadel of Waterford, the Hibernian heartland of Louth, Clare in the west (subject of Fitzpatrick's study) and Westmeath in the midlands one can see that a minority of councillors remained in situ after 1920.

Table 2.6 – Persistence of pre-1920 councillors after independence

Clare County Council	1920	1925
Number of pre-1920 councillors elected	5	4
Westmeath County Council	1920	1925
Number of pre-1920 councillors	7	3
Waterford County Council	1920	1925
Number of former pre-1920 Councillors	3	5
Waterford Corporation		
Number of pre-1920 Councillors	14	10
Louth County Council	1920	1925
Number of pre-1920 Councillors	6	5

Some of the survivors had clearly transferred allegiance; while seven councillors elected in Westmeath in 1920 had previously been councillors, only three had been returned under a Nationalist banner in 1920 while no Nationalist was successful in Clare.⁹³ The comparison with Waterford county and city is striking; while the county is largely in line with the other three counties, the Redmondite phenomenon in the city identified by Pat McCarthy and others ensured a unique Redmondite legacy.⁹⁴ Even in 1925, five Redmondite councillors survived who remained free of any new party appellation.⁹⁵ In Louth, another trend of interest was the tendency of some individuals with Home Rule backgrounds to be elected for the first time or after a

⁹³ *Freeman's Journal*, 12 June 1920.

⁹⁴ McCarthy, *Waterford: The Irish Revolution*; Alice McDermott has linked Waterford's Norman and perceived Anglophile heritage with the city's embrace of John Redmond, McDermott, "The Heart of the Matter": An Analysis of the Most Significantly Influential Factor in the Creation and Configuration of Redmondism in Waterford City from 1891 to 1918', *Decies*, no. 69 (2013), pp. 139-51.

⁹⁵ *Munster Express*, 3 July 1925.

break in either 1920 or 1925. In this county, three ‘new’ councillors elected in 1920 were Patrick Deery, T.F. McGahon and James Coburn, all from Home Rule backgrounds. However, McGahon had previously been a councillor while Coburn was also not a first-time victor. The continued strength of the AOH in Louth was unquestionably a factor in this locality; in 1925, a former Home Ruler was made vice-chair of the council. At the level of urban district council, the town of Dundalk remained in ‘Irish Party’ hands after 1920.⁹⁶

In Clare and Westmeath, only a handful of councillors elected in 1925 appear to have been former Home Rule councillors or prominently associated with the legacy of the old Party. The fact that such individuals appeared at all illustrates how the return to peace and the refusal of Cumann na nGaedheal to contest the local election as partisan political contests on the national question offered ex-Home Rulers opportunities on the councils. In the examples above, it is perhaps unsurprising that the two areas associated with Redmondite and Hibernian loyalty would fare best. Redmond’s Dáil election in 1923 re-started this legacy while in time, the Hibernian organisation would ensure Louth sent a representative with links back to an older parliamentary tradition to Dáil Éireann for decades. Such continuities were reminders of a conspicuous political legacy which still paid tribute to John Redmond and the tradition of the Irish Party. In other areas which did not share such persistent devotion to the old IPP, the smaller figures of councillors who survived the Sinn Féin wave at local level may have represented elements of the populace who had switched allegiance from Home Rule to Sinn Féin or the newer parties formed after 1918, but also the continuity of Irish politics.

A relic of an older noblesse? The Irish Party legacy in the Fourth Dáil

As well as analysing the number of TDs and candidates with Home Rule heritage in each party, there remains the question of the impact of former Irish Party members and methods in the new chamber. Prominent former IPP figures like Capt. Redmond were certainly conspicuous in Dáil Éireann. Even in the pages of the old Irish Party journal, Redmond’s background sometimes made him a curiosity. D.M Lenihan, surveying the new Dáil in the *Freeman’s Journal*, imagined Redmond would be like

⁹⁶ Charles Flynn, ‘Dundalk 1900-1960: An Oral History’, unpublished PhD thesis, Maynooth University (2000), pp. 169-72.

a relic of an older ‘noblesse’.⁹⁷ This sense could only be reinforced by some of Redmond’s early forays into Dáil debate. He attracted attention for his contention that under the Treaty the rightful Commander-in-Chief of the new State’s Army was the King of England. Under the terms of the proposed Ministries and Secretaries Bill, this role was to be fulfilled by the Minister for Defence. Redmond’s point was successfully countered by the Attorney-General in the chamber while Cosgrave declared it was ‘no thanks’ to Redmond that the new state had ‘made friends after a long struggle’ with Britain and accused the deputy of ‘mischief-making’.⁹⁸ Redmond sought to quell the controversy by claiming the constitution Cosgrave had now ‘was what I always wanted’, but this was greeted with laughter in the chamber.⁹⁹

Alfie Byrne had already encountered such a clash of epochs in his attempts to defend the merits of moving the Oireachtas to College Green.¹⁰⁰ Angry at what he saw as lobbying and external forces seeking to move the parliament to the site of the Royal Hospital, Kilmainham, Byrne sought to shift the agenda back towards the building the IPP had always looked towards as the seat of Irish parliament. Ultimately, such pleas fell on deaf ears as W.T. Cosgrave doubted the suitability or convenience of the building then occupied by the Bank of Ireland. By the time an Oireachtas committee eventually came to decide on Leinster House as a permanent home, even Redmond seemed satisfied with the move though he still maintained that he hoped it would eventually move to ‘the place that we all hope, and that every Irishman throughout the world has hoped, we will one day occupy – our old parliament in College Green.’¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ *Freeman’s Journal*, 7 September 1923.

⁹⁸ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 5, col. 1764, 12 December 1923 for Cosgrave’s quote. Cosgrave added it was ‘certainly not in the interests of himself or his late Party or his late friends or any friends of this country that a statement like that should have been made here’. This was preceded by Redmond’s query which attracted opprobrium from most in the chamber except Patrick McKenna who interrupted to draw attention to Redmond’s point. Cf. *Freeman’s Journal*, 13 December 1923.

⁹⁹ *Freeman’s Journal*, 13 December 1923.

¹⁰⁰ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 2, cc.384-5, 19 December 1922. This question was asked on Byrne’s behalf by Richard Wilson of the Farmer’s Party.

¹⁰¹ Though there were accusations this because it allowed the law courts to remain in Dublin Castle. For setting up of committee, see *Dáil Debates*, vol. 6 cc. 564-6, 578-587, 24 January 1924.

The memory of the IPP and John Redmond arose in the chamber on other occasions, most significantly when the Boundary Commission crisis developed.¹⁰² The findings of the Commission had been leaked in the *Morning Post* newspaper in Britain in November 1925 and showed only slight amendments to the border and even some losses for the Free State. Governments north and south, and in London moved quickly to avert crisis and concluded a deal leaving the border as it was with some reductions in the Free State's liabilities to the British exchequer. In a stormy session, Redmond at one stage told the Dáil that partition had been caused by the Treaty rather than any Irish Party action while Alfie Byrne also intervened to protest at the memory of Redmond's father being 'assailed'. In further debates on the issue, the same deputy instead blamed the abstention policy of Sinn Féin for allowing partition to be placed on the statute book.¹⁰³

Like others, Redmond also sought to defend those entitled to compensation for damage to property during the Civil War. As stated, the victims of these cases were often Protestants, but could also be old Irish Party followers like Redmond himself (some like Stephen Gwynn could fall into both categories) and this was one area where Redmond's professional life as a barrister intersected with his political role as he often defended such individuals in court.¹⁰⁴ However, perhaps of most interest for the discussion here was that some of the issues which exercised him in the chamber linked him to old Irish Party support networks.¹⁰⁵ Personal experiences and interests were also likely to have been reflected in his interventions on legislation concerning the judiciaries, issues affecting demobilised soldiers from the National Army as well as ex-British servicemen and local matters affecting his Waterford bailiwick.¹⁰⁶ In fact, Redmond was one of a number of deputies who questioned Government ministers on the administration of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Trust set up by the

¹⁰² The Commission set up as per the terms of the Treaty had after some difficulties eventually been appointed in 1924. Under Judge Feetham with Eoin MacNeill representing the Free State and J.R. Fisher representing Northern Ireland.

¹⁰³ *Irish Independent*, 9, 11 December 1925.

¹⁰⁴ For Redmond's own case, see *Irish Independent*, 21 November 1923. Major Bryan Cooper and Redmond clashed with Blythe on the matter, *Irish Independent* 4 April 1924, 29 May 1925.

¹⁰⁵ McConnel, *The Irish Parliamentary Party and the Third Home Rule Crisis*, pp. 84, 92. McConnel does, however, frame the bulk of patronage in the period prior to 1918 as a symptom of Catholic's 'blocked mobility' under British rule.

¹⁰⁶ For example, *Dáil Debates* vol. 8, cc. 1834-1835, 22 July 1924; vol. 5 cc. 138-9, 3 October 1923. His concerns about the independence of the judges in judiciary legislation were shared by some academics and lawyers; see Corcoran, *Freedom to Achieve Freedom*, p. 109.

British Government to help provide for the housing needs of ex-servicemen in the Free State.¹⁰⁷ Although this was a British initiative introduced in 1919 and ostensibly outside the control of the Irish government, the roll out of the scheme was originally delayed in February 1922 due to what Minister Patrick Hogan termed ‘acute state of feeling existing in the country on the subject’.¹⁰⁸ Alfie Byrne also raised the matter in the Dáil and the Government replied that the scheme was not forgotten and it did indeed begin to help ex-servicemen as peace returned to the country.¹⁰⁹ Byrne asked about ex-servicemen’s welfare again in 1923, but Cosgrave sought to assuage his concerns by declaring he saw ‘no reason for thinking they ex-soldiers who are citizens of the Irish Free State will be placed in any less favourable position for treatment than soldier citizens of Great Britain’.¹¹⁰

Redmond was also prominent on railways legislation. Some members of IPP (though certainly not Redmond’s father) had long argued for consolidation of the various regional private railway companies introduced during the nineteenth century.¹¹¹ Redmond’s arguments also assumed a local character as he argued against the 1924 Railways Bill which he felt gave Rosslare preferential treatment over Waterford. However, it remained complex issue on all sides as any proposed solution had to take account of the border which politicians of different shades all hoped would be removed in time.¹¹²

Redmond also came to align himself with the vintners’ lobby as the 1920s wore on. Justice Minister Kevin O’Higgins led a campaign to introduce legislation limiting

¹⁰⁷ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 1, col. 639, 25 September 1922, vol. 5, cc. 727-8, 14 November 1923.

¹⁰⁸ *Dáil Debates* vol. 2 col. 716, 12 January 1923.

¹⁰⁹ *Dáil Debates* vol. 2 col. 1082, 30 January 1923. John Rooney was another to ask about the scheme as well as deputies Morrissey, Christopher Byrne and O’Shaughnessy among others, see also *Dáil Debates*. Vol. 2 col. 1530, 20 February, 1923, vol. 8, col. 786, 9 July 1924, vol. 9 cc. 865, 6 November 1924 for a sample. The Lands Trust was eventually set up for the operation of Irish Lands (Provision for Soldiers and Sailors Trust) Act in 1923, *Evening Star*, 19 June 1923.

¹¹⁰ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 2 col. 1531, 20 February 1923.

¹¹¹ *Irish Independent*, 29 February 1924. There was also an IPP connection with Thomas Grattan Esmonde chairman of the DSER railway company (one of the companies to be merged in any scheme). Esmonde presided at its 1924 AGM which made Redmond its auditor, McConnel, *The Irish Parliamentary Party and the Third Home Rule Crisis*, p. 233. See also J.J. Lee, ‘The Railways in the Irish Economy’, L.M. Cullen (ed.), *The Formation of the Irish Economy* (Cork: Mercier Press, 1968), pp. 77-89.

¹¹² *Irish Independent*, 12 April, 9, 21, 22 May 1924; *Dáil Debates*, vol. 6, cc. 3227-3230, 11 April 1924.

the number of public houses in the Free State and their opening hours.¹¹³ This eventually culminated in the 1924 Intoxicating Liquor Bill, which proposed to end the practice of mixed-trading (a staple of rural life where the one premises divided into two parts would function as grocer and public house), limit opening hours for vintners and reduce the number of pubs in the state by offering publicans compensation to close their businesses.¹¹⁴ Redmond was one of a number of TDs who expressed reservations about aspects of this legislation and personally sought earlier opening hours for licensed premises.¹¹⁵ Byrne perhaps did not go as far as Redmond, but, as a former trader himself, he spoke on one occasion against what he perceived as a notion in the House and outside it that vintners and grocers were inherently malevolent. Arguments over the legislation and the complaints of the licensed vintners led to the Intoxicating Liquor Commission where Redmond would ironically work as counsel for the Licensed Grocers Association in an inquiry chaired by another former Irish Party follower J.J. Horgan.¹¹⁶

Redmond's first major legislative step also provided an unusual echo of the Irish Party legacy in the new state. Having secured the support of the All Ireland Town Tenants' League, Redmond agreed to introduce a bill to ameliorate the position of urban dwellers.¹¹⁷ Amidst a sluggish building market, the introduction of the 1923 Rent Restrictions Act had increased the group's grievances; however, they were certainly not a homogenous group of ex-Irish Party followers, though the urban dwellers, like their rural counterparts, had strong connections with the old party. The League's whole agenda had echoes of the Land League. In late 1923, Coghlan

¹¹³ In spite of Redmond's clashes with O'Higgins, the latter was not always so utterly harsh on the IPP's legacy and he did include Redmond's father and the constitutional movement in the line of Irish leaders who had sought self-government when addressing the Irish Society at Oxford in 1924 although he termed the third Home Rule Act 'a very attenuated measure of local autonomy'. See text of speech, 31 October 1924, UCDA O'Higgins Papers, P197/141

¹¹⁴ Opening hours were to be reduced to 9.00-10.00 Monday-Friday and 9.00 – 9.30 on Saturdays. *Dáil Debates*, vol. 8 col. 286, 2 July 1924.

¹¹⁵ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 8 col. 320, 2 July 1924; vol. 9, cc. 238-240, 24 October 1924.

¹¹⁶ *Irish Independent*, 30 June 1925. See also J.J. Horgan, 'Prohibition in Practice', *Studies*, vol. 14, no. 56, Dec., 1925, pp. 545-558. The vintners also proved a powerful interest group in the Seanad elections of 1925. See Diarmaid Ferriter, *A Nation of Extremes: The Pioneers in Twentieth-Century Ireland* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1999), pp. 86-99 for the period under discussion here generally.

¹¹⁷ *Irish Independent*, 25 August 1923. It might be added that Coghlan Briscoe's low level machinations to gain a seat in the 1900s apparently disgusted Redmond's father) John Redmond to John Dillon, 30 September 1906, TCD John Dillon Papers, Ms. 6747/191 cited in McConnel, *The Irish Parliamentary Party and the Third Home Rule Crisis*, p. 64.

Briscoe declared a ‘comprehensive scheme of purchase was the only satisfactory basis of a final settlement of the Town Tenants’ question’, but acknowledged such a scheme was unrealistic at the time.¹¹⁸ Instead, the League’s executive praised the bill Redmond agreed to promote offering to extend the ‘Three F’s’ of Free Sale, Fair Rents and Fixity of Tenure to town tenants.

It is clear from Redmond’s own utterances that his help for the town tenants drew inspiration from his father’s party’s efforts to improve the lot of the rural tenants dating back to the Land League.¹¹⁹ Introducing the bill he sought to assuage fears that it was a compulsory or a state-purchase measure, declaring that ‘that so long as the tenant pays his rent and behaves himself in a proper manner as a citizen of Saorstát Éireann he shall not be disturbed from his tenancy.’¹²⁰ Redmond claimed that it was his intention to do for the urban dweller what had been done for the land tenant. Openly ridiculing the suggestion the bill was ‘Bolshevist’, he spoke of how he would have been with the proposers of the 1881 Land Act if he were around then and dismissed accusations that the analogy between land and buildings was not applicable. The bill also provided for a commission to decide fair rents.¹²¹

However, Redmond’s bill attracted criticism from many quarters including the Irish Houseowners’ Association, John Good of the Businessman’s Party and the relevant Minister Kevin O’Higgins who felt that the bill was ‘brought in in an utterly reckless, irresponsible spirit’.¹²² A split also emerged within the Town Tenants’ League executive with a number of branches seceding even before the bill was introduced, citing lack of communication from the Executive and the central control being exercised by it rather than any obvious policy matter.¹²³ The Town Tenants’ League’s response was couched in continuity with previous movements, stating that their organisation was set up to ‘get possible concessions, not to achieve such a revolution in town tenancy as took years of sacrifice and effort for the old Land and

¹¹⁸ *Freeman’s Journal*, 30 November 1923.

¹¹⁹ *Irish Times*, 30 April 1924 for an example of an editorial on landlords’ side.

¹²⁰ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 7, col. 1278, 23 May 1924.

¹²¹ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 7, col. 1284, 23 May 1924.

¹²² *Dáil Debates*, vol. 7, col. 1298, 23 May 1924. See also newspaper headlines, *Freeman’s Journal*, 10 January, 24 May 1924.

¹²³ In February 1924, the Carlow League had complained about the measure arguing it would delay and impede the ultimate goal of purchase, *Freeman’s Journal*, 14 February 1924.

National Leagues to achieve under Parnell and Davitt'.¹²⁴ Nonetheless, any estimation of the debates on this measure must reckon the level of support for Redmond's bill as mixed. The motion was seconded by former IPP MP James Cosgrave and also supported by Alfie Byrne, but neither spoke on the matter. The loopholes regarding fixity of tenure were seen as a weakness by Labour Party deputies while part two, giving an idea of dual ownership (a feature again analogous with the land), was also criticised even by many who voted for the measure in the absence of any other attempt to aid the urban dwellers.¹²⁵ Redmond offered to withdraw the bill if Cosgrave promised to introduce a more carefully drafted, acceptable measure in its stead. Cosgrave proved unwilling to commit to such a move and the legislation was defeated 36-30.¹²⁶

Although the bill undoubtedly contained measures which would have helped the tenant (Graham and Hood claimed it would have brought about a 'revolution' for town dwellers), it was also flawed legislation.¹²⁷ It reflected poorly on Redmond, as a trained lawyer, that he accepted the bill from the legislative committee of the Tenants League. Although the League stressed the rights of poorer tenants in tenements along with traders, certain features such as the creation in law of what might have been called "key money" where a tenant could sell his interest was analogous to previous land legislation, but practically of more benefit to the shopkeeper tenant than the urban poor. On the one hand, one could argue it won a measure of political success for Redmond as it established him early in his Dáil career and gave him a profile by promoting an issue similar to that which the old Irish Party would have done. However, as the IPP had always sought to do, Redmond and the League executive were, in reality, trying to unite competing elements under the one umbrella of his proposal rather than the town tenants issue being solely a Labour concern as it might otherwise have been.¹²⁸

¹²⁴ *Freeman's Journal*, 7 January 1924.

¹²⁵ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 7, col. 1304, 23 May 1924.

¹²⁶ *Freeman's Journal*, 5 June 1924.

¹²⁷ Graham and Hood, 'Town Tenant Protest in Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century Ireland', p. 54.

¹²⁸ Kelliher's League, though it supported Redmond's measure, responded to its defeat by arguing town tenants' interest were not best served by supporting a Private Members' Bill they felt had little chance of passage in the Dáil and instead favoured lobbying the Cumann na nGaedheal government for beneficial legislation, *Freeman's Journal*, 20 June 1924.

In other ways, Redmond was not always a committed parliamentarian. No record of attendance of members of the early Dáil was kept; however, a survey of the parliamentary session for the first half of 1925 found some ex-Irish Party figures among those with the worst records – James O’Mara failed to vote on any of the 83 divisions; Patrick McKenna voted on just three, while P.W. Shaw and Capt. Redmond voted on twelve divisions each.¹²⁹ Nonetheless, James Cosgrave and Alfie Byrne were better, voting on 45 and 48 divisions respectively in the period.¹³⁰

A legacy in how they did politics?

In September 1916, Eoin MacNeill wrote to Maurice Moore that

... the Irish Party [members] are hopeless and nothing can be made of them or done with them. For the most part, as well known, they have been chosen by reason, actually of their want of brains and character, because no able, honest man could sell his soul to his leaders in the way in which the Irish Party rank and file is expected to do.¹³¹

Claims of an Irish Party dependent on patronage and a parliamentary body that sat silently in London voting for whatever their leaders (or the Liberals) told them gained increasing currency in post-Rising Ireland. The parliamentary discipline so admired from the time of Parnell turned into an indictment of the party as representatives of nationalist opinion. Yet, as McConnel has shown, even Irish MPs who made few major speeches in the Commons were generally punctilious politicians; they interacted with their constituents, and were more likely to ask parliamentary questions than their British counterparts.¹³²

This raises the question of the extent to which the Irish Party’s *modus operandi* and the political culture surrounding the party persisted along with the ability of former

¹²⁹ This survey was completed and printed in *Irish Independent*, 10 July 1925. For more on the division records of Irish MPs, see McConnel, ‘The View from the Backbench’, pp. 238-47; Mulvagh, ‘“Sit, Act, and Vote”’, Chapter Five.

¹³⁰ Peter Hughes (72), Minister for Defence and former Kildare Home Rule councillor George Wolfe (69) were among the best attenders at division time.

¹³¹ Eoin MacNeill to Maurice Moore, 11 September 1916, NLI Moore Papers 10,561 (27).

¹³² McConnel, ‘The View from the Backbench’, p. 190.

members and activists to re-invent themselves in the Free State polity. Commenting on the work of F.S.L. Lyons on the Irish Party, McConnel noted:

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”, 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.¹³³

The persistence of former IPP members and elements of the party’s political culture hopefully serve as a corrective to this tendency. It may be a strange testament to the Irish Party’s record of constituency service that John Dillon was still occasionally asked for preferment or ‘wire-puling’ from old supporters up to late as 1923.¹³⁴ While Farrell and Regan have identified some Irish Party inspiration in Cumann na nGaedheal organisation, there are, unfortunately, no direct anthropological studies of the Irish electorate during the periods of IPP or Cumann na nGaedheal ascendancy. The research which has been carried out for the second half of the twentieth century has suggested that frequent popular complaints that Irish politics is bedevilled by ‘clientelism’ are not accurate; the ‘brokerage’ role identified by McConnel serves as a better description of post-1922 politics too.¹³⁵ This is because the extent to which voters maintain long term dyadic relationships with politicians has been judged quite weak in the Irish case with doubts expressed about whether people actually vote for the politicians whom they contact or indeed that politicians even have the power to actually deliver the services required.¹³⁶ Although brokerage is not unique to Ireland,

¹³³ McConnel, ‘The View from the Backbench’, p. 22; Lyons, *The Irish Parliamentary Tradition*, pp. 206-7.

¹³⁴ See for example John Donegan to Dillon, 10 April 1923; Denis O’Carroll to Dillon, 9 October 1923, TCD John Dillon Papers 6786/1980, 1989.

¹³⁵ Lee Komito, ‘Brokerage or Friendship? Politics and Networks in Ireland’; Komito, ‘Irish Clientelism: A Reappraisal’; R.K. Carty, ‘Brokerage and Partisanship: Politicians, Parties and Elections in Ireland’ *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue Canadienne de Science Politique*, vol. 14, no. 1 (Mar., 1981), pp. 53-81.

¹³⁶ Komito, ‘Brokerage or Friendship?’, p. 140. The centralisation of power in the 1940 County Management Act has been cited as an example of local councillors moving from patrons or clients to brokers as their real power was removed, Thomas M. Wilson, ‘From Patronage to Brokerage in the Local Politics of Eastern Ireland’, *Ethnohistory*, vol. 37, no. 2 (Spring, 1990), pp. 161-2. The clientelism present in Mediterranean countries for example is of a different character, Allen Hicken, ‘Clientelism’, *Annual Review of Political Science*, vol. 14 (2011), pp. 289-310.

Irish Parliamentary Party MPs were thus often brokers mediating between the citizen and the British state.¹³⁷

There were, of course, underlying reasons for such behaviour in the pre-independence era: Ireland remained a small country, brokerage was a factor in Irish society generally (as McConnel acknowledges, rural Catholics were accustomed to the role of ‘agent’ or middleman) and there was sense of alienation for many Irish people from an Imperial government based in London. McConnel made the point that the ‘idiosyncratic’ interaction between the British state and Ireland accounts for some of this too with apparent focus on welfare/pensions and land issues in Irish MPs’ questions.¹³⁸ It might have been presumed that such concerns would be at least reduced from 1922 onwards; yet, as now classic political science texts from Brian Farrell, and Basil Chubb demonstrated, durable aspects of political culture were bequeathed by the Westminster system and parliamentary procedure changed little across the two parliaments, as even the IPP’s whip system was embraced by latter day Irish parties.¹³⁹ It has been argued that reliance on brokerage can obscure discussion on the citizen’s disconnect from state bureaucracy.¹⁴⁰ Nonetheless, as has been pointed out, parliamentary questions are not the only way to judge if a politician is a local operator; observation and interview are also necessary.¹⁴¹

However, it is still interesting to note that in the only analysis of parliamentary questions in the Dáil published to date, Delany, Sinnott and O’Reilly have shown that while local concerns were seemingly less important than have been hitherto

¹³⁷ This role would also appear to be a corrective to the idea that the home rule state was in situ from the era of Parnell. At the very least, IPP MPs were forced to lean on British state structures, Larkin, ‘Church, State and Nation’. The UIL may, however, have been accused of exercising patronage at local level, Borgonovo, *The Dynamics of War and Revolution*, p. 11 cf. Michael Gallagher and Lee Komito, ‘The Constituency Role of Dáil Deputies’, Coakley and Gallagher (eds), *Politics in the Republic of Ireland*, pp. 244-6.

¹³⁸ McConnel, ‘The View from the Backbench’, p. 279.

¹³⁹ Farrell, *The Founding of Dáil Éireann*, pp. xviii, 83; Basil Chubb *The Government and Politics of Ireland* (London: Longman, 1992) *passim*; Manning, ‘Houses of the Oireachtas: Background and Early Development’, pp. 15-21; Lee, *Ireland*, pp. 88-9. See also Eunan O’Halpin ‘A Changing Relationship? Parliament and Government in Ireland’, in Philip Norton (ed.), *Parliaments and Governments in Western Europe* (London: Frank Cass, 1998), pp. 123-41.

¹⁴⁰ Michael D. Higgins, ‘The Role of the Public Representative in Today’s Oireachtas’, MacCarthaigh and Manning, *The Houses of the Oireachtas*, pp. 423-5; Higgins’s response is to the classic essay Chubb, “‘Going About Persecuting Civil Servants”.

¹⁴¹ Shane Martin, ‘Parliamentary Questions, the Behaviour of Legislators, and the Function of Legislatures: An Introduction’, *Journal of Legislative Studies*, vol. 17, no. 3 (September 2011), pp. 259-270.

supposed, between 40-50% of questions in the period discussed in this chapter were related to local constituency matters.¹⁴² McConnel's samples of Irish Party questioning between 1910 and 1914 suggests that this represents a decline in local questioning in post-1922 politics.¹⁴³ Furthermore, the period 1926-32 and a period in the 1980s were the only sustained periods where local concerns made up the majority of questions. While this suggests certain continuity with the IPP at Westminster, it must be acknowledged that circumstances were clearly different. Dáil TDs were more likely to live in their constituencies and new factors such as multi-seat constituencies and proportional representation have been among the causes identified for brokerage in the post-independence period.¹⁴⁴ Prior to 1918, Nationalist MPs were reliant on the convention system (and sometimes interventions from party leadership) to win their seats as most constituencies were uncontested.¹⁴⁵ Irish constituencies between 1884-5 and 1918 were smaller than English equivalents and multi-seat Dáil constituencies reduced the number of representatives per head of population still further, sometimes encouraging the retreat to a local bailiwick.¹⁴⁶

Redmond's legislation on town tenants referred to above, was clearly at the behest of an interest group which had endorsed his candidature. Yet in the wider sense, many TDs from Home Rule backgrounds also operated in the traditional role of constituency brokers. This aspect of former party activists' after-lives is restricted by the lack of personal papers for TDs such as Capt. Redmond, Bridget Redmond, James Coburn and John F. O'Hanlon. However, evidence remains of local concerns among some in Dáil debates while the papers of Alfie Byrne (dealing chiefly with the latter part of his career) are replete with constituency correspondence and appeals to him on a range of matters. In Byrne's case, this even extended to correspondence from abroad with one writer from Nashville, Tennessee, writing in 1931 for

¹⁴² Delany, Sinnott, and O'Reilly, 'The Extent of Clientelism in Irish Politics: Evidence from Classifying Dáil Questions on a Local-National Dimension'.

¹⁴³ However, the proportion of constituency-based questions also declined up to 1914, McConnel, 'The View from the Backbench', p. 194.

¹⁴⁴ McConnel, 'The View from the Backbench', p. 279. For the argument that PR-STV may not contribute to localism, see Gallagher and Komito, 'The Constituency Role of Dáil Deputies', pp. 248-250.

¹⁴⁵ Komito, 'Irish Clientelism: A Reappraisal', pp. 181, 190. However, Komito agrees PR-STV is of course just one reason for brokerage, Komito, 'Brokerage of Friendship?', pp. 139-40; cf. McConnel, 'The View from the Backbench', p. 279.

¹⁴⁶ McConnel, 'The View from the Backbench', p. 280.

assistance in finding a wife.¹⁴⁷ As will be discussed in later chapters, the persistence of the AOH in border areas facilitated constituency service as Hibernian deputies availed of the Order's network and interacted with members at gatherings. The Dáil performance of James Cosgrave was almost entirely centred around bringing the concerns of his constituents to the national legislature though Byrne was a more regular contributor to debates on a range of issues in addition to constituent concerns.¹⁴⁸ While Farmers deputies from Irish Party backgrounds like McKenna and Conlan were chiefly concerned with agricultural or local matters, and other councillors with Home Rule backgrounds were often backbenchers who confined themselves to questions relating to their constituency, Redmond involved himself in local matters as well as his more high-profile interventions on national issues.¹⁴⁹

The work of Delany, O'Reilly and Sinnott is the comprehensive analysis of parliamentary questions to date; a satisfactory analysis of backbench behaviour over the period covered by this thesis would be beyond the scope of the current work. However, the wealth of research referenced demonstrates scholarly agreement that something like the brokerage role of IPP MPs was adopted by later politicians of various political backgrounds. Initial research suggests that this also extended to Labour in the early 1920s when it acted as the main Dáil opposition in the absence of the abstentionist anti-Treaty Sinn Féin.¹⁵⁰ Although T. J. O'Connell had a familial link to the UIL, others in the party such as William Davin, Richard Corish and others also asked numerous constituency based questions.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁷ Correspondent from Nashville, Tennessee to Alfie Byrne, 18 July 1931, Little Museum of Dublin Alfie Byrne Papers AB/UI/1931/0009.

¹⁴⁸ For examples see of Cosgrave, see *Dáil Debates*, vol. 6, col. 284, 17 January 1924; vol. 6, col. 615, 25 January 1924; vol. 8, col. 2071, 24 July 1924; for Byrne, see *Dáil Éireann – General Index to Parliamentary Debates [Official Report] Vols. 1 -19 9 September 1922 – 20 May 1927*, pp. 82-9. Byrne and fellow ex-MP James Cosgrave were prominent in condemning the Government's moves to cut the old age pension, see *Dáil Debates*, vol. 5, cc. 885-888, 15 November 1923. Byrne also asked questions about civil servants who lost jobs for political reasons after 1916 showing he certainly did not in any sense limit his constituency to ex-Irish Party supporters.

¹⁴⁹ For an example of Galway deputy Cosgrave's questions affecting his own constituents (which often included ex-servicemen), see *Dáil Debates*, vol. 6, col. 1333, 22 February 1924.

¹⁵⁰ In a sample of parliamentary questions for 1926-7 available in the Oireachtas library, Labour TDs made up six of the eight most frequent questioners, *Index to Parliamentary Questions, 16 November 1926 – May 1927*, Oireachtas Library.

¹⁵¹ While McConnel identified the issues of land and welfare questions encouraging such behaviour in Home Rule MPs, the violence of the revolutionary period and Civil War, damage to property and imposition on citizens added to constituency-based queries in the early Dáil. 40.54% of the 148 of parliamentary questions in March 1923 were related to such matters. For examples of local questions from Corish see *Dáil Debates*, vol. 2, col. 2207, 9 March 1923; vol. 10, cc. 1064-6, 13 March 1925;

Conclusion

Assessing early elections in new democratic states, Gary Reich has argued that such contests are not ‘anomalous’ as often thought and that support for minor parties can often be quite durable. Instead, the more common pattern in Reich’s research is that the initial victor in the first election loses support at following elections therefore ‘suggesting the need to pay greater attention to those forces that shape the initial configuration of party blocs.’¹⁵²

Building on Reich’s suggestion, the formation of the party groupings in the Free State emerged (and re-emerged), containing smaller sectional and political groupings as well as the pro- and anti-Treaty camps. Labour and the Farmers’ developed as sectional parties while there remained residual former Irish Party and unionist support, particularly strong in certain constituencies. However, the influence of the IPP also helped to sustain and bolster other parties as the primacy of agrarian representation developed under the Irish Party persisted in the Farmers’ Party; the ITGWU grew from the ILLA in Munster and in the ways that Cumann na nGaedheal began to assimilate local (if not prominent national) Home Rule activists in the early 1920s.¹⁵³ While in contrast to the fate of the IPP in the 1918 ‘first-past-the-post’ election, the PR-STV system aided party fragmentation, the building blocks of the Irish Party structure were more than just a model for revolutionary Sinn Féin; they aided all parties in the Free State by providing ‘softer’ ex-Irish Party support. Independent former Home Rulers like Redmond, Cosgrave (and later AOH deputies) remained an additional element of fragmentation which would emerge more fully with the foundation of the National League party in 1926, discussed in Chapter Four.

Redmond’s prominence in the Dáil offered evidence of some persistent fascination with the old parliamentary tradition in the Free State. However, some of his concerns, such as the plight of vintners and town tenants, were significant issues facing the new Free State government. Both lobby groups appeared to have relatively few advocates and would provide potential support bases when Redmond

vol. 10, col. 1480, 26 March 1925. For Davin, see *Dáil Debates*, vol. 2, col. 2073, 7 March 1923; vol. 2, col. 2139, 8 March 1923; vol. 10, no. 583, 5 March 1925; vol. 10, col. 1467, 25 March 1925.

¹⁵² Reich, ‘The Evolution of New Party Systems’, p. 236.

¹⁵³ J.J. Lee has pointed to the factionalism of the Home Rule movement and its Healyite and O’Brienite wings as possible pointers to Free State party fragmentation, Lee, *Ireland*, p. 79.

attempted to form a new political movement in later years. Constituency brokerage lived on into the independent Ireland of the 1920s. While K.T. Hoppen has written about this as a long-standing tendency in Irish life, it offers weight to the observation that IPP MPs would recognise much of their own professional lives in the behaviour of TDs in independent Ireland.¹⁵⁴ The tendency to appeal to the local member of parliament had become part of an accepted way of interaction with the parliament and by extension politicians. This political sense was resurrected from the dawn of the Free State in 1922 even if post-independence dynamics reinforced many existing tendencies towards the ‘parish pump’ politicians. Perhaps, among both those from Home Rule and Sinn Féin backgrounds, it was another example of the continuity of Irish politics.¹⁵⁵

The diffusion of the Irish Party’s legacy into both old and new groupings and the question of how to harness old followers then ensconced in new movements ensured that the task of reuniting old parliamentarians would be an onerous one. As the old Nationalists re-emerged in the ‘settling’ period of the early 1920s, the patterns of legacy outlined here may have been mixed. Some individuals belonged to two or more of the old Nationalist associations as ex-IPP men jostled among such networks to influence the new politics. However, study of former Irish Party figures and organisations in these years sheds light on a neglected part of the political culture which managed to survive the years of revolution. It offers a tentative assessment of the question of where votes may have gone after the IPP’s demise and also provides a basis for estimating the effect the old party had on those who followed it. By 1922, the legacies of a political movement which had dominated Irish life for three decades

¹⁵⁴ K.T. Hoppen, *Elections, Politics and Society in Ireland: 1832-1885* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984). For a critique of Hoppen and an interesting account of the interplay of local, national and imperial concerns in early nineteenth-century election campaigns, see Douglas Kanter, ‘Was All Irish Politics Local? The Portarlington Election of 1832 and the Structure of Politics in 19th-Century Ireland’, *Parliamentary History* Vol. 33, No. 2 (2014), pp. 438-52. For a practical example of continuity between former MP John P. Boland and his son in law and Fianna Fáil TD, see McConnel, ‘The View from the Backbench’, p. 281. However, while Hoppen has shown that patterns of political localism were established before even the Home Rule party, the proliferation of family-run parliamentary seats had a companion as far back as seats in the old Irish House of Commons which were virtually passed from generation to generation in the absence of a representative electorate in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, J.L. McCracken, *The Irish Parliament in the Eighteenth Century* (Dundalk: Dundalgan Press, 1971); Mary Hayden and George A. Moonan, *A Short History of the Irish People* (Dublin: Educational Company of Ireland, n. d.), p. 377.

¹⁵⁵ In Brian Farrell’s summation, the events of Easter week 1916 ‘did not significantly alter the basic direction and values of Irish political culture’, Farrell, *The Founding of Dáil Éireann*, pp. 83-4.

were still to be felt and its influences, though perhaps sectional or regional at times, were very much becoming part of the emerging body politic.

Chapter 3

The Place of Home Rulers in the Early Free State: Memoir, Commemoration and Public Discourse, 1922-25

Was John Redmond right or wrong? The policy they preached was a policy of vindication of John Redmond. They were not there for a political purpose, but to perform an act of national duty, which they owed to him for the noble services he had rendered to Ireland, and in some sense a penance for the wrong that their country had inflicted upon him.

J.P. Gaynor of the Redmond Anniversary Committee quoted in *Evening Star*, 27 February 1924

Recourse to the historical Irish Party and the events of 1912-18 also occurred outside the sphere of representative politics. In his study of Stephen Gwynn, Colin Reid referred to a ‘collective amnesia’ about the old party in independent Ireland. In some ways, this may have been the case, certainly in comparison to the central role it played in the pre-1914 era. However, this should not obscure either the political activities of those from an IPP background or the proliferation of publications in the 1920s and 30s from ex-Irish Party members and followers.¹ Maume’s point about the Redmondite bias in the identity of those who put pen to paper notwithstanding, one of the ways to trace the legacy of the party in the new state leads us to the old preserve of the retired politician, the writings of one’s memoirs.²

Another way to trace the legacy is to consider the experiences of displacement undergone by former national politicians like John Dillon and William O’Brien. The Free State presented such men with new and strange circumstances. Marginalised though they were, their former status and their conception of themselves make their views and roles worthy of note and reveal insights about how the new state dealt with its parliamentary as well as its revolutionary heritage. Probing further than merely those who took their seats in the Dáil and Seanad also reveals a depleted, though persistent network of associations and clubs once associated with the Irish Party. The Ancient Order of Hibernians, particularly prevalent in the border areas, offers a more grassroots view of how former Irish Party supporters and activists felt in the early 1920s. Private members associations such as the National Club in Dublin

¹ Reid, *The Lost Ireland of Stephen Gwynn*, p. 206.

² Maume, *The Long Gestation*, p. 219.

offer dual insights – disclosing the opinions of former MPs, but also the re-establishment of old party networks which would provide an impetus for political organisation discussed in depth in Chapter Four.

Despite the feelings of dislocation evoked by the writings of Gwynn or Dillon, John Redmond and the Irish Party were far from forgotten in the early Free State. References to the IPP abounded in the press and public debates (whether positive or negative) and the number of former party followers in the state led to prominent displays of fidelity in commemorations of John and Willie Redmond in Wexford, Waterford and Ennis. While due scholarly attention has been devoted to Armistice Day events and Great War memorials (which by extension incorporated the legacy of the IPP and Redmond's Woodenbridge call), the explicitly Redmondite anniversaries highlighted the persistence of Irish Party support and evoked many questions about political allegiance and historical memory in the Irish Free State.

The view from the side-lines: former Irish Party figures in the Free State

By far the most prolific of such writers in the post-1918 period was the aforementioned Stephen Gwynn. Having failed in his attempts to put forward a constitutionalist 'middle way' at the height of the War of Independence with the Irish Centre Party and Irish Dominion League, Gwynn retired from politics once and for all. In doing so, he brought to an end what may seem in retrospect a highly unusual political life. Gwynn was a talented literary figure who despite his Anglo-Irish background was moved to aid the cause of Irish nationalism and enter the Irish Party in a mid-career swerve. From the early 1920s, he returned to his previous life as a writer often defending Redmond, the old party and the men who like himself fought in the Great War. This did not always mean overlooking the party's mistakes, but like others, he did reveal regret. In his poetry, perhaps most famously, in 'A Song of Victory', he celebrated the war sacrifice and Redmondite vision of reconciliation in the trenches along with mourning his friend Willie Redmond.³ His 1919 book on John Redmond was followed by historical and sociological works on Ireland which offered his view on the changes that engulfed Ireland from the 1910s onwards.

³ 'A Song of Victory' in Stephen Gwynn, *Collected Poems* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1924), pp. 41-8.

Gwynn admitted in discussing the third home rule crisis in his *History of Ireland* that the proposed 1912 Home Rule Bill offered a ‘very different kind of autonomy from that which Australia and Canada possessed’.⁴ Gwynn emphasised how the formation of the Volunteers outside the party’s control was crucial and also the fact that no-one foresaw the real length of the War in Europe. He also succinctly explained how Redmond’s support for war had given all his opponents ‘a rallying point’ around which they could organise and strengthen their forces.⁵ In spite of his own vigorous and continued support for the war effort, Gwynn also wrote that subsequent events had ‘justified’ the actions of the 1916 rebels and that as the country slipped from the Parliamentary Party’s control, the conscription crisis ‘was really the end of the constitutionalism’.⁶ Despite Gwynn’s regret at developments which he felt entrenched the hostility and distrust between northern unionists and southern nationalists, his book still offered a reasonably dispassionate account.⁷

Gwynn followed this work within twelve months in *Ireland*, a broad social, historical and geographical survey of the country. In this book, he mused on his own identity as one from a ‘Anglo-Irish’ background preferring to use the term ‘middle nation’ to define his class: an exposition of the way people from his class often straddled two nationalities without ever being fully accepted by all in either culture.⁸ This definition allowed Gwynn, apparently writing for the uninitiated reader, to argue that any unity in Ireland ‘must admit national diversity’.⁹ For Gwynn, the first real revolution in the country was that of the land ownership won by the IPP before the recent revolution, which he characterised as mostly Gaelic and ‘of the young’ against the party itself.¹⁰ However, by 1924, he remained optimistic for the Free

⁴ Stephen Gwynn, *The History of Ireland* (Dublin: Talbot Press, 1923), p. 499.

⁵ Gwynn, *The History of Ireland*, p. 510.

⁶ Gwynn, *The History of Ireland*, pp. 514, 518.

⁷ The review in *Studies* was positive and only really found fault in Gwynn’s treatment of Hugh O’Neill, M.T.H. ‘Review of Stephen Gwynn *The History of Ireland*’, *Studies*, vol. 13, no. 49, March 1924, pp. 161-163. However, the *Catholic Bulletin* and P.S. O’Hegarty were not impressed with Gwynn’s interpretations, Reid, *The Lost Ireland of Stephen Gwynn*, p. 210.

⁸ Gwynn, *Ireland*, p. 33. In *The History of Ireland*, he had reflected on the relations between England, Ireland and other home nations by declaring Ireland would always be a ‘parent state, one of the mother nations’, so her relations with Empire could never be the same as one of the dominions, Gwynn, *The History of Ireland*, p. 540.

⁹ Gwynn, *Ireland*, p. 13. ‘Y.S.’ reviewing the book for *Irish Truth* was a bit dubious of the ‘middle nation’ concept as defined by Gwynn, *Irish Truth*, 11 October 1924. Opinions on Gwynn in the same paper softened when he began writing occasional columns for *Irish Truth* from 1926.

¹⁰ Gwynn, *Ireland*, pp. 73-4, 118.

State at least and predicted that it would lead to ‘fusion’ among the classes.¹¹ This reflected his weekly columns in the *Observer* where Gwynn wrote that partition and lasting peace were ‘incompatible’. Accordingly, he felt satisfactory settlement would arrive although on the Civil War divide, Gwynn was less charitable and favoured strong government against anti-Treaty forces.¹² Gwynn remained out of Free State politics save for an endorsement of the independent candidate and former Unionist MP Major Bryan Cooper in the 1924 South Dublin by-election.¹³

Gwynn’s son, Denis, would later become an historian in his own right who would provide another neo-Redmondite perspective on recent history and contemporary politics. As a journalist and writer in the 1920s, Denis’s work was chiefly concerned with Irish politics and history; however, his interest in Catholic issues in France drew him to study and write about the *Action Française*. Although Gwynn junior could not be accused of actual support for a far right continental movement, his initial writings on Charles Maurras’s party in *Studies* in 1922 and 1923 appeared to agree implicitly with Maurras’s criticisms of the vagaries of liberal democracy as it currently operated and how it left states at the mercy of international finance.¹⁴ Even by the publication of his *The Condemnation of Action Française* in 1926, Gwynn still seemed quite aware of how and why French Catholics were drawn to the party. However, as a Catholic, his own interpretation was one of agreement with the Vatican and its condemnation of Maurras and his followers.

For many ex-IPP men, preoccupation with legacy and asserting the historical value of the party and its record of achievements was more important than any effort to re-enter a radically changed political arena. This tendency came to the fore in John Dillon’s post-1918 correspondence, particularly with T.P. O’Connor. Even as he apparently lost interest in ever re-entering politics, Dillon never tired of telling his friend to begin writing the history of the old party.¹⁵ For Dillon, this was the best

¹¹ He was less optimistic about Belfast and the northern counties, feeling partition had heightened difficulties, Gwynn, *Ireland*, p. 122. Perhaps intriguingly, Gwynn also felt the Free State had been more successful than the previous regime in restricting the power of the Catholic Church in the public sphere, using education as an example, Gwynn, *Ireland*, p. 161

¹² *Observer*, 22 July 1923; Reid, *The Lost Ireland of Stephen Gwynn*, p. 198.

¹³ Reid, *The Lost Ireland of Stephen Gwynn*, p. 207.

¹⁴ Denis Gwynn, ‘A Prophet of Reaction I’, *Studies*, vol. 11, no. 44, Dec., 1922, pp. 523-540; vol. 12, no. 45, March 1923, pp. 45-60.

¹⁵ Dillon to O’Connor, 17 June, 1924, 11 March, 1926, TCD John Dillon Papers, 6743/955, 989.

method of preserving the memory of the once great national movement. However, O'Connor's two-volume *Memoirs of an Old Parliamentarian* were not published until 1929 and only told the story of the party at Westminster up to the fall of Parnell.¹⁶ Dillon himself showed no inclination to write his memoirs. Another of his old confidantes, Patrick Hooper, the last editor of the *Freeman's Journal*, was working on a biography of Dillon at the time of his own death in 1931. The manuscript was never completed though it remained a source for subsequent historians, most famously for F.S.L. Lyons, as part of the Dillon collection in Trinity College Dublin.

This is not to state that Dillon and his family had no opinions on the political developments of the time and his correspondence with his sons reveals the reactions of a family, some of whom remained loyal to the old parliamentary party, to the currents of the new Free State.¹⁷ However, Dillon rarely emerged into the public view in his last years. Although he initially admired the Treatyite leaders, and Collins, in particular, he soon developed a strong dislike of Collins's successors. In his correspondence with O'Connor, he deplored the executions of the Civil War period and by early 1923 he upbraided O'Higgins for throwing names such as 'wild beasts [and] wild dogs' at men who 'were two years ago his comrades and the only difference between him and them is that he has always kept carefully clear of the firing line'.¹⁸ Dillon's views of political developments in the new state were a melancholy mixture of incomprehension and dismay.

Indeed, Dillon's correspondence with his son Theo formed its own commentary on the new politics. Theo, remaining in continental Europe from 1922 onwards seeking to ease his health problems, was in unison with his father in abhorrence of both sides in the Civil War strife. Although he clearly disliked the republicans, Theo actually condemned the Treatyites more for their violence and suppression in view of their

¹⁶ T.P. O'Connor, *Memoirs of an Old Parliamentarian* (London: E. Benn Ltd., 1929). See also James McConnel, 'The Irish Parliamentary Party in Victorian and Edwardian London', Peter Gray (ed.), *Victoria's Ireland? Irishness and Britishness, 1837-1901* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), pp. 37-50.

¹⁷ Shawn Dillon quickly became a supporter of the Free State, but John Dillon's other sons, Theo and James, in particular, were slower to change their allegiance, Theo Dillon to John Dillon 20 October, 1923, UCDA Theo Dillon Papers, P126/54; Manning, *James Dillon*, p. 34.

¹⁸ Dillon to O'Connor, 8 February, 1923, TCD John Dillon Papers, 6743/915.

position as ‘responsible Government’. Their ‘pose’ of being a constitutionalist party reminded Theo of the old ‘falseness’ of Sinn Féin.¹⁹ The issue of partition was a recurring theme in such letters with both father and son speculating how the Boundary question could be resolved ‘if there was any hope of statesmanlike attitude on either side’.²⁰ This, of course, had proved more difficult in practice for Dillon’s father and many others in previous years.

Although Dillon’s correspondence with his other son on the continent, Myles, was less concerned with political matters, the sense of dislocation from the political centre was still evident. In fact, it may be noted that in the aftermath of the IPP’s fall, Dillon senior seemed to admire what a leader with strong arm tactics like Mussolini could do for a nation even if he conceded many of his speeches had been ‘outrageous’.²¹ Myles was prepared to listen to his father’s view, but felt Mussolini a ‘demagogue’ and also wrote that Mussolini ‘lacked the dignity and wisdom fitting a dictator’.²²

When discussing desired political formation, Theo favoured the involvement of a kind of loosely held network of respectable men in just local politics at first over any thoughts of a national political party in the traditional sense.²³ The former Irish Party leader’s son opined that he would favour ‘scrupulously honest and efficient local administration - opposition to all political resolutions on principal - appointments on merit and after such obvious and desirable objects’ as he felt it was ‘perfectly vain to look for any way effective action through the Dáil.’²⁴ Perhaps ironically, Cumann na nGaedheal’s tendency not to contest local elections in the 1920s did offer such opportunities for candidates from older political traditions.²⁵

¹⁹ Theo Dillon to John Dillon, 6 September 1923, UCDA Theo Dillon Papers P126/46.

²⁰ Theo Dillon to John Dillon, 11 January 1924, UCDA Theo Dillon Papers, P126/60.

²¹ John Dillon to Myles Dillon, 22 May 1924 letter 126 in Joachim Fischer and John Dillon (eds), *The Correspondence of Myles Dillon 1922-1925: Irish-German Relations and Celtic Studies* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1999), p. 192.

²² Myles Dillon to John Dillon, 10 November 1923 letter 105 in *The Correspondence of Myles Dillon 1922-1925*, p. 163

²³ Theo Dillon to John Dillon, 30 March 1924, UCDA Theo Dillon Papers, P126/69.

²⁴ *ibid*

²⁵ Diarmaid Ferriter, *Lovers of Liberty? Local Government in Twentieth-Century Ireland* (Dublin: National Archives of Ireland, 2001), p. 45.

When John Dillon did enter the public arena, he tended to express his views quite fiercely, such as in his controversial letter to the Australian UIL on its dissolution or his speeches at the National Club and the 1924 John Redmond commemoration discussed later. Writing to Australia in 1923, a gloomy Dillon praised the Irish Party's achievements and wrote that had the 1914 home rule measure been allowed to stand, it 'would undoubtedly have united Ireland' and that it was, furthermore, 'a much better settlement than that acquired under the Treaty'. Dillon even added that the Treaty recognised 'permanent partition' and left Ireland with an 'impossible financial burden' while he likened relations between Catholics and Protestants in the aftermath of the revolution as akin to 1691. He finally told his Antipodean friends that he withdrew from politics to avoid more faction fighting, but that he still did not admit that the 1918 election was 'a free decision of the Irish people'. Dillon's Australian friends apparently agreed with the sentiments, but felt publishing the letter would be inconsistent with Dillon's neutral stance since 1918, which they had supported.²⁶ However, the letter later appeared in the Melbourne based newspaper, the *Argus*, in April 1923 and whether Dillon intended it or not, this letter found its way into the pages of the *Freeman's Journal* in May.²⁷

John Dillon's old parliamentary adversary William O'Brien was almost equally appalled at the Treaty split and Civil War. However, his perception of events from 1922 onwards differed sharply from that of both Dillon and Tim Healy, who supported the Treaty settlement and grew less tolerant of de Valera as the Civil War developed.²⁸ On a basic level, unlike Dillon, O'Brien was inclined to see 'good Irishmen' on both sides of the split even if there were 'shocking faults' on both sides too.²⁹ Although Healy told him a nomination to the Seanad was his 'for the asking', O'Brien was not minded to re-enter politics.³⁰ However, he privately told Maurice Moore he might be tempted to do something to heal the split and it seems such a development almost occurred; O'Brien's wife, Sophie, recorded that the anti-

²⁶ M.P. Jaguers to Dillon, 18 February 1923, TCD John Dillon Papers 6849/288.

²⁷ *Freeman's Journal*, 12 May 1923.

²⁸ Callanan, *T.M. Healy*, p. 606.

²⁹ William O'Brien to Fr Clancy, 23 December 1922, NLI O'Brien Papers Ms. 8506 (6).

³⁰ Healy to O'Brien, 11 December 1922, NLI O'Brien Papers Ms. 8556 (29).

Treatyites approached him for ideas after the 1923 general election.³¹ O'Brien's response (preserved in his papers in the National Library) ran to fifteen pages and featured a claim that republican TDs would seek their right to participate in the Dáil 'unfettered by any test, disability or condition'. O'Brien went on to argue for the narrowness of the Treatyite majority (excluding independents and others) and wrote that that to disqualify republicans on a condition imposed by the government itself was 'an act of revolutionary tyranny'. Reflecting on the 'magnificent victory' of the truce, O'Brien's document would then commit republican deputies to take their Dáil seats in a spirit of goodwill towards all sections on two conditions: that the oath of allegiance was abolished and that those republican prisoners elected as TDs in August 1923 would be released. In O'Brien's view, the perception that an oath was obligatory under the Treaty was 'false'. Sophie O'Brien wrote that Patrick Pearse's mother Margaret blocked the adoption of the document, which O'Brien then refused to publish in his own name.³²

O'Brien also published in these years; his *The Irish Revolution* appeared in 1923.³³ In the book, O'Brien was withering in his assessment of the IPP (or the Hibernian Party as he knew them), arguing it was the party and not parliamentary methods that had been discredited in 1918. In this sense, O'Brien defended the record of the Irish Party as it had been in his day, criticising those in Sinn Féin, with the exception of Griffith, as 'frondeurs' who failed to give adequate credit to the land war and local government legislation which 'threw open the road to every victory that has followed since'. O'Brien dubiously went on to argue his AFIL could have secured seats in 1918, but opted for 'self-effacement' to give the country a 'straight choice' and avoid the IPP gaining any extra seats. In this sense, O'Brien also doubted if the result of the 1918 election was a vote for a republic as he argued that AFIL voters who opted for Sinn Féin would not have done so on that basis. O'Brien also felt the AFIL was more dignified in folding before the election rather than threatening resurrection

³¹ O'Brien to Maurice Moore, 1 November 1923, NLI O'Brien Papers Ms. 8506 (7); 'Proposals suggested for the republicans in reply to urgent inquiries as to what had best be done after election 1923' NLI O'Brien Papers Ms. 8506 (12).

³² 'Proposals suggested for the republicans in reply to urgent inquiries as to what had best be done after election 1923', NLI O'Brien Papers Ms. 8506 (12).

³³ In Frank Callanan's view, the book had a 'negligible' impact compared with O'Brien's earlier works, Callanan, *T.M. Healy*, pp. 614-615. Arthur Clery, 'Review of William O'Brien, *The Irish Revolution*', *Studies*, vol. 12, no. 47 (Sept., 1923), pp. 501-506; O'Brien, *The Irish Revolution and how it came about*.

as the Irish Party had done. O'Brien felt his actions helped to ensure old rivalries were forgotten.³⁴

Already deeply unpopular in republican circles, especially since its reporting of the Treaty debates and the Civil War, the *Freeman's Journal* remained partly a publication of the old Nationalists until its final collapse in December 1924.³⁵ The *Freeman* detailed preparations for the Redmondite commemorations in Wexford and Ennis in these years with regular reports of the organising committees involved. Other former Home Rule journals in the regions also had to adapt in the following years. The *Cork Examiner* (owned by the Crosbie family) had slowly gravitated towards support for the Treaty and by extension Cumann na nGaedheal as did the *Connacht Tribune* in Galway. John F. O'Hanlon, beaten by Arthur Griffith in the 1918 by-election, edited the *Anglo-Celt* in Cavan and confined his editorials to agricultural concerns, supporting the Treaty, but remaining aloof from partisan nationalist politics. In Wexford, the *Free Press* was broadly pro-Treaty in its outlook while in Waterford, the *Munster Express* and *Waterford Star* retained local loyalty to Redmondism.³⁶ This element of the party's legacy will be probed further in examining the National League party in Chapter Four.

Former Parnellite MP Henry Harrison's absorption into Cumann na nGaedheal only came after he had founded his own weekly newspaper *Irish Truth* in August 1924. This weekly paper promoted use of the Treaty to gain Irish unity, defended the rights of Ex-British servicemen and favoured fiscal rectitude to preserve Ireland's credit on international markets (including qualified support for protectionism).³⁷ Although this journal was, at first, warm to the Government and praised its ministers, Harrison was essentially one of the last staunch Parnellite veterans left in Ireland by the 1920s. John Redmond had of course been a devoted follower of Parnell and this lineal

³⁴ O'Brien also poured scorn on the feeble attempts to maintain party organisation after 1918, scoffing at Capt. Redmond's plan to tour the country with Devlin as well as the failure of the Roscommon Home Rule Association, O'Brien *The Irish Revolution and how it came about*, pp. 116-120, 124-5, proof copy with manuscript notes and alterations by Tim Healy, NLI O'Brien Papers Ms. 8558.

³⁵ Macardle, *The Irish Republic*, p. 617. According to Macardle, the *Freeman's Journal's* report on de Valera's Treaty debate speech was declared 'infamous' by even de Valera's opponents. This was typical of the growing hostility between the newspaper and the republican side with anti-Treaty IRA destroying the *Freeman's* machinery on 29 March 1922.

³⁶ *Free Press*, 14 January 1922 for the paper's views on the Treaty debate.

³⁷ *Irish Truth*, 1 November 1924.

connection was part of the Irish Party legacy (visible when Harrison's paper lamented the passing of the *Freeman* in December 1924).³⁸ Nevertheless, Harrison, who had ceased to be a MP in 1892, was different. Whereas the rhetoric and policies of various old Nationalists in the early 1920s harked back to the party Redmond led, the reference point for Harrison was the older nationalist leader rather than Redmond. Allowing for Alvin Jackson's description of Parnellism as a 'brilliant, but artificial alliance' of various elements, Harrison's presentation of himself as an unreconstructed Parnellite saw him retain great bitterness at Parnell's betrayal yet still be sympathetic to a figure like William O'Brien who was *persona non grata* to those who fought against his All for Ireland League in the early part of the century.³⁹ St. John Ervine's book on Parnell published in 1925 was criticised in a review written personally by Harrison for its slurs on the former leader's character.⁴⁰

However, this did not mean that the memory of Redmond was not venerated in the paper.⁴¹ *Irish Truth* ran a competition for the most popular Irish patriots in 1924 which saw Redmond voted second only to Parnell with Michael Collins down in fifth just ahead of John Dillon and de Valera merely in thirteenth place.⁴² Indeed, unlike more latter day veterans of the Edwardian Irish Party, Harrison was also able to reconcile strident defence of Irishmen who, he insisted, fought for their country in the Great War with some admiration for those who had practised violence in the revolutionary years. Harrison's *Irish Truth* occasionally quibbled with the contention of some like Dan Breen that the IRA had defeated Britain militarily and forced them to terms in 1921; yet, any admiration at all for the fighting men was unusual among old Nationalists.⁴³ A native of Hollywood, Co. Down, Harrison attached much

³⁸ *Irish Truth*, 27 December 1924.

³⁹ Alvin Jackson, *Ireland 1798-1998*, p. 141. Harrison's regard for O'Brien was helped by the fact that O'Brien's book *The Parnell of Real Life* was more sympathetic than others published in these years. Harrison and *Truth* were committed to honouring the Chief's memory. Book reviews by 'Y.S.' on O'Brien's book on Edmund Burke included a barb on O'Brien's betrayal of Parnell, *Irish Truth*, 13 December 1924. However, the same reviewer was generally sympathetic towards O'Brien's book on Parnell the following year even if he felt that O'Brien was seeking to justify his part in the split, *Irish Truth*, 20 March 1926. 'Y.S.' was also positive in his review of the journalist Sir Alfred Robbins's work on Parnell, *Irish Truth*, 13 February 1926.

⁴⁰ *Irish Truth*, 4 July 1925.

⁴¹ *Irish Truth*, 14 March 1925. Another article in Harrison's newspaper also felt that the still extant AOH was unwelcome as a sectarian body which hastened the defeat of the IPP, *Irish Truth*, 28 March 1925.

⁴² This was referred to in *Freeman's Journal*, 30 August 1924.

⁴³ Book review *Irish Truth*, 16 August 1924. At the outset of the National League, Harrison also listed Griffith, Pearse and Tone along with Grattan, O'Connell, Parnell and Redmond when describing

weight to Article XII of the Anglo-Irish Treaty. This article, which allowed for the continued exclusion of the Northern Irish state and the setting up of a Boundary Commission to determine the border, was interpreted by Harrison as meaning that Northern Ireland could only proceed to self-government with the consent of the Free State administration.⁴⁴ The Boundary Commission debacle and the settlement which followed shattered this view and clearly marked a point of departure in Harrison's support for Cumann na nGaedheal. His dissatisfaction with Finance Minister Ernest Blythe's taxation policy (which Harrison believed stymied industry and commerce) turned to outright condemnation. Harrison, who had previously been on the Treatyite standing committee and had dismissed the idea of the idea of a reformation of Irish Party forces, moved his newspaper clearly away from the Government.⁴⁵

While Harrison's Dublin weekly offered defence of Parnell, the memory of the Irish Party received little favour from the major national daily newspaper as antagonism between the old Irish Party and the *Irish Independent* persisted. Disputes over the formation of the Boundary Commission in June 1924 saw the paper condemn Joe Devlin and declare the IPP 'more responsible than any others for the canker of partition'. The editorial concluded that the events of the previous ten years had proved the *Independent* right in its condemnations of the Irish Party.⁴⁶ Such criticism did not go unanswered and former MP William Doris took it upon himself to reply to 'the vitriolic venom of the unscrupulous vendetta' still being waged against Redmond and his party. Claiming the IPP 'never proposed partition, never suggested partition, never put forward partition, never defended partition', Doris lamented that not only had the *Independent* succeeded in destroying the old Irish Party, but was now attempting to sabotage the nationalists in the North by belittling the efforts of Devlin. Doris concluded that partition sprung from the Irish Party's defeat and the 1920 Government of Ireland Act. Although Doris was able to draw upon a recent statement from Tim Healy, who argued that Redmond and Dillon had refused to purchase home rule for the price of partition at Buckingham Palace in 1914, the

exponents of true nationalism and argued Sinn Féin was an offshoot of the 'parent stem' of Irish nationalism, *Irish Truth*, 11 September 1926.

⁴⁴ *Irish Truth*, 20 September 1924.

⁴⁵ *Irish Truth*, 6 December 1924 for slightly disparaging reference to deputies reforming the IPP. John Dillon's speech criticising the Government was also heavily criticised by Harrison's paper, *Irish Truth*, 17 January 1925.

⁴⁶ *Irish Independent*, 21 June 1924.

Independent was insistent that Doris's was a 'hopeless defence'. The newspaper's editorial reminded Doris that people long remembered the 'bungling and mismanagement' of the Irish Party who 'bent the knee by accepting partition'.⁴⁷

The arrangements for the 1924 John Redmond anniversary saw another ex-MP, Arthur Lynch, firmly blame Redmond for partition dating back to the pre-war negotiations of 1914.⁴⁸ Though Lynch was then resident in London, the affair saw him engaged in arguments with old IPP followers across the pages of Irish newspapers. Lynch argued that the fact that Sinn Féin 'afterwards accepted both partition and subjection' did not invalidate his criticism of Redmond.⁴⁹ Indeed, arguments over whether the IPP was to blame for partition or not was an intermittent feature of correspondence to newspapers in these years. Similarly, many republicans attacked the Treatyites by pointing out that Redmond could 'have got a partitioned Ireland any time he liked, but he would not take it'.⁵⁰

Amid this criticism, some other old Nationalists still pined for a reorganisation of forces. One spoiled vote in the 1924 Limerick by-election was reported to have read 'God rest your soul John Redmond, your memory is dear to us still. No cursed doles, no cursed taxes for the working man'.⁵¹ The fact that another ballot in the same poll wished for an Irish Mussolini may cast the former sentiment in a less auspicious light. Nevertheless, by December 1924, one correspondent to the *Freeman* even referenced the possibility of reviving the Irish Party. Although a supporter of the Government, the writer pointed out the 'apathetic support' of many old Nationalists towards the new administration.⁵²

Persistent Home Rule networks in the Free State

One of the keys to tracing the legacy of the Irish Party in the post 1922 period is to track the groupings around which old party members and followers tend to coalesce.

⁴⁷ *Irish Independent*, 24 June 1924.

⁴⁸ Lynch letter to editor, *Irish Independent*, 4 February 1924. Lynch disputed the 'circular sent to former members of the Irish Party, among others' which stated: "John Redmond always stood for a united Ireland".

⁴⁹ J. O'Sullivan letter to editor *Irish Independent*, 5 February 1924. Lynch reply, *Irish Independent*, 8 February 1924.

⁵⁰ *Irish Independent*, 21 May 1924.

⁵¹ *Clare Champion*, 7 June 1924.

⁵² *Freeman's Journal*, 2 December 1924.

Such figures were found in divisions of the still active though reduced Ancient Order of Hibernians, the National Club based in O'Connell Street, the Town Tenants' League, the Legion of Ex-Servicemen, the Irish National Foresters and committees convened to organise Redmond anniversary events.⁵³

Former supporters recur frequently in such organisations, often as members of more than one group. William Field, ex-MP and Town Tenants' League officer, spoke on the railways issue at the National Club in October 1923.⁵⁴ Similarly, former MP Thomas O'Donnell, though not as deeply involved in the AOH, spoke at Hibernian gatherings, the National Club as well as Redmondite commemorations. In fact, the Dublin Committee of the John Redmond Anniversary Committee often met in the National Club premises on 39 Upper O'Connell Street and committee members included TDs Patrick McKenna, James Cosgrave, Alfie Byrne and John Conlan, and ex-MPs such as John Dillon Nugent (AOH National Secretary), William Doris, John P. Hayden, David Sheehy, J.J. Clancy and Dillon as well as John Redmond's old secretary T.J. Hanna.⁵⁵

The National Club was essentially a small social club consisting of middle class professional men and was not particularly newsworthy in and of itself. However, the overlap in membership with the AOH and other ex-party networks meant it received attention in the *Hibernian Journal*.⁵⁶ The issues raised at the National Club, such as taxation, a particular preoccupation of O'Donnell, later found their way into the policy of the National League party that he and Capt. Redmond would found in 1926.

⁵³ Although they cropped up at some Redmondite commemorations, the Irish National Foresters had always had fewer members than the AOH and had only a slight presence in the Free State. Interestingly, Cosgrave did reach out by addressing their annual convention and international congress along with Joe Devlin, *Free Press*, 11 August 1922.

⁵⁴ *Hibernian Journal*, April 1923, p. 39. Gaynor was listed as Dublin County President of the AOH. See also *Evening Star*, 1 December 1923, 10 March 1924.

⁵⁵ *Hibernian Journal*, December 1923, p. 131; January 1924, p. 2. Letters at various Committee meetings of late 1923 also came from W. G Fallon, George Moonan, P. J Brady, J.P. MacCabe, Chair of Blackrock Urban District Council, and former Lord Mayor of Dublin Lorcan Sherlock.

⁵⁶ Glackin, 'Home Rulers in a Free State', p. 8. The name 'National Club' was shared by a persistent members club in Galway. Former Irish Party supporters in that city also met for a period after the IPP's 1918 defeat, information from Conor McNamara.

The extent of overlap between these clubs and societies is underlined by the *Hibernian Journal*'s coverage of the opening of the National Club in May 1923. The 'large attendance' reported included John Dillon, O'Donnell, Field and Joe Devlin with President of the Club Committee, H.J. Maloney, outlining the Club's aims. (Maloney was also on the board of the AOH's Irish Life and General Assurance Company).⁵⁷ Maloney outlined the aims of the National Club:

... to foster and promote friendly intercourse and frank discussion amongst Irishmen of all creeds and classes, who desire to see Ireland free, united, and at peace within herself; to afford them an opportunity of discussing the means best calculated to achieve these ends; and to assist in the improvement of social, economic and political conditions in Ireland.⁵⁸

In practice, it appears to have been a club for old Nationalists and Dillon and Devlin were made the Club's President and Vice-President on the night. Complaints on the state of the country (borne of the depressed economic conditions) were made at lectures in the Club and Hibernian rallies particularly where O'Donnell spoke. Addressing the National Club in October 1923, O'Donnell condemned the rate of taxes which were he said 'slowly bleeding the country' and the cost of the Army.⁵⁹ Such remarks were soon followed up by former Land League activist, Irish Party member and current Farmers' Party TD Patrick McKenna, who feared for 'national bankruptcy'.

The National Club lectures were perhaps most famous for the Dillon speech and O'Donnell lecture of 9 January 1925. This lengthy address was reprinted in almost its entirety in the *Hibernian Journal*. O'Donnell condemned the state's expenditure and taxation regime; he portrayed the Free State administration in a bad light in comparison to the days of British rule where the IPP and most nationalists had famously complained that Ireland, as small and relatively poor country, was overtaxed in comparison with Britain.⁶⁰ This lecture was followed by the somewhat

⁵⁷ *Hibernian Journal*, November 1923, p. 114. Other board members included Devlin as Chairman, John D. Nugent, his brother James A. Nugent and John D. Bergin.

⁵⁸ *Hibernian Journal*, May 1923, p. 51.

⁵⁹ *Hibernian Journal*, November 1923, p. 118.

⁶⁰ *Hibernian Journal*, February 1925, p. 13.

infamous vote of thanks by John Dillon where he virulently criticised the Treaty, the Government, its economic policies and some of its actions in the Civil War and afterwards when executions were doled out to opponents. Though Dillon would later write that he had no idea that his comments would be made public, the words reached the national press and created something of a sensation, certainly overshadowing the content of O'Donnell's actual lecture.⁶¹ Interestingly, Harrison's *Irish Truth* supported O'Donnell's claim for economic salvation, but decried Dillon's defeatism.⁶² O'Donnell's speech, negative in tone as it was, tapped into emerging discontent at perceived government extravagance and a copy of it appears in the archive of the Irish Farmers' Union.⁶³

The AOH

Once entitled the Irish Party's 'Belfast stormtroopers', the AOH had been closely centred around their President Joe Devlin in Belfast.⁶⁴ However, the fall of the IPP and partition did not remove them from the religious, social and even political life of the Free State, especially in border areas. The Order had never penetrated Connacht at any great extent even at its height and by the 1920s, it had very little presence in the province.⁶⁵ In Munster, the decline was also pronounced though there remained a core of membership, particularly in Cork city. Dublin city also retained a body of Hibernians too, but it was in the border counties that the Order retained its greatest strength outside of the Northern state. Louth, Monaghan, Cavan and Donegal maintained a strong Hibernian presence throughout the period considered in this study.

⁶¹ Dillon recalled 'I had not the faintest idea that reporters were present'. The speech 'was largely an explanation to my friends of the reasons which caused me to abstain for the present from speaking in public.' John Dillon to O'Connor, 16 February, 1925, TCD John Dillon Papers, 6743/974. Even though he felt his father was a little harsh on Blythe who he felt was 'brave' and 'honest', Theo thought the rest of the speech 'admirable' and 'badly needed saying'. However, by early 1925, Theo had moved to the position where he claimed he would 'almost' become a Free Stater such was his contempt for the republicans. Theo Dillon to John Dillon (n. d.) UCDA Theo Dillon Papers P126/93 (we can safely assume this was written in early 1925. Although the letter was undated, it reacted to John Dillon's speech of 9 January and his father wrote on it that he replied 19 January 1925).

⁶² *Irish Truth*, 17 January 1925. Dillon's speech was seized upon by sections of the British press such as the *Daily Mail* too.

⁶³ 'The Economic Position in Ireland by Mr Thomas O'Donnell, B. L.', NLI IFU Papers Ms. 19021.

⁶⁴ Jackson, *Home Rule*, p. 100.

⁶⁵ The Order had only really spread to Connacht after the introduction of the 1911 National Insurance Act, Hepburn, 'Catholic Ulster and Irish Politics: The Ancient Order of Hibernians, 1905-14', pp. 165-8. Areas in Connacht and the midlands were already being grouped together as their power base shrank; *Hibernian Journal*, May 1923, p. 46.

Table 3.1 AOH membership in the Free State to 31 March 1925

	Male Divisions	Members	Ladies' Divisions	Members
Donegal	29	425		
Monaghan	19	240		
Cavan	16	260		
Louth	10	721	1	63
Meath	4	132		
Longford	1	10		
Queens	1	60		
Wicklow	3	80		
Dublin	18	1114	5	171
Wexford	5	80		
Kilkenny	1	29		
Tipperary	2	24		
Waterford	1	20		
Cork	10	677		
Kerry	1	60		
Limerick	5	37		
Galway	1	10		
Roscommon	1	24		
Mayo	1	45		
Leitrim	3	50		
Total	132	4498	6	234

Source: National Secretary's Report, AOH Biennial Convention 21 July 1925, NAI – LOU 13/1/3 (a).⁶⁶

The Order had remained steadfast behind the Irish Party at all times. Such an explicit alliance with a political party embodying the Order's Catholic nationalist vision made their position a difficult one in the Free State. Although, as noted, some members defected to Sinn Féin between 1916 and 1918, the determination of the AOH to stand by the IPP meant that such defectors left the Order too. For those who remained and certainly for those at official level, Sinn Féin had been anathema to their vision of gaining self-government; the persistence of Hibernian branches in northern counties through the War of Independence and Civil War demonstrated as

⁶⁶ The figures for Cork in the Board of Erin archives differ somewhat from those of the Cork AOH. Although the discrepancies in membership are not significant, there is a difference in the number of divisions e.g. the National Board reported 600 members and nine divisions in Cork at the end of December 1925 while in February 1926, the Cork County Convention recorded 543 and just three divisions. AOH Cork County Annual Convention Report, 14 February 1926, CCCA, AOH files u389a/25; Borgonovo, *The Dynamics of War and Revolution*, p. 118.

much. In the view of National secretary John Dillon Nugent, ‘sensible, conscientious people fail to see what all the “Civil War” is about, and have come to regard it as arising from personal hatred and jealousy rather than from honest difference of opinion’.⁶⁷

The AOH in the Free State thus faced an uncertain future, beset by organisational challenges caused by the legacy of violence and intimidation against the Order during the revolution. Membership declined and partition forced realignments in its insurance section into separate societies for the Free State, Northern Ireland and Britain.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, the end of the Civil War and a return to peace in the country provided the AOH with opportunities to re-organise. The insurance section sustained Hibernian membership, particularly in border areas. However, some Hibernians also wished to move the Order towards the path of a purely Catholic organisation – the AOH printed alarmist pamphlets concerning Freemasonry while Hibernians and members of the Catholic Young Men’s Association protected clergy from republicans at the Catholic Truth Society of Ireland’s conference in 1922.⁶⁹ In border areas, the Order also arranged dances and gatherings for members, but although the AOH’s association with politics altered over time, it did not disappear. One of the continued sources of Hibernian discontent was the presence of the border with Northern Ireland. Partition and the progress of the Boundary Commission were understandably regular themes at AOH rallies in the six counties, yet the Order remained a thirty-two county organisation with members crossing both sides of the border to attend rallies.⁷⁰ Tom O’Donnell spoke at Hibernian events in Armagh in August 1923 and Toomebridge, Co Antrim, a year later where he advised Nationalist MPs to enter the Northern parliament.⁷¹

⁶⁷ *Hibernian Journal*, March 1923, p. 25.

⁶⁸ The Order set up a new company in the Free State – Irish Life and General Assurance with Devlin as its Chairman, National Secretary’s Report to Convention, Belfast, 21 July 1925, NAI AOH collection, LOU 13/1/3 (a).

⁶⁹ Maurice Curtis, *A Challenge to Democracy: Militant Catholicism in Modern Ireland* (Dublin: History Press, 2010), pp. 58, 205.

⁷⁰ The issue of southern Hibernians crossing the border with banners and bands often made the Northern authorities uneasy, Gilfillan to Secretary for Minister for Home Affairs, 5 May 1923, PRONI Reports on Meetings of the Ancient Order of Hibernians HA/32/1/321.

⁷¹ District Inspector Gilfillan to Secretary to the Minister for Home Affairs, 12 May 1923, PRONI Ancient Order of Hibernians Police reports CAB/9/B/182; J. Woolley for Inspector General to Secretary to Minister for Home Affairs, 18 August 1924, PRONI Reports on Meetings of the Ancient Order of Hibernians. HA/32/1/321.

1923 saw the Order hold its first national convention since 1919 owing to the disorder in the country. Addressing the concerns of members, Nugent declared that in the absence of any convention being held, the Board could not advocate any policy as such a move was the preserve of the convention. Nugent defended the view of the last such convention that violence could not succeed and he argued that the Hibernians had been ‘vindicated’ by the ‘trouble and tribulations’ wrought on the country.⁷² Along with maintaining its strongly Catholic ethos, Nugent and other Hibernians condemned the violent methods of the revolution and were vocal in their criticism of the bloodshed of the Civil War in the state’s initial months.⁷³ Statements of this nature allowed the AOH continue to deplore the violence that old Irish Party supporters saw as being introduced into Irish political life by those who deposed the IPP.

As to how Hibernian members should actually vote in the absence of an Irish Party, the Board of Erin remained continually evasive. The body’s journal contained implausible claims not to have ever been political and in the months preceding the 1923 general election, Nugent promised to look into the matter and offer the ‘best advice available’ to members in local areas.⁷⁴ The results ‘settled nothing’ according to Nugent, who reflected on the low turnout while praising the lack of violence and disorder such as had marked previous polls.⁷⁵

The *Hibernian Journal* regularly carried partisan accounts of Ireland’s recent history which gloried in the Irish Party’s record of achievements.⁷⁶ One writer, ‘Hibernicus’, was particularly vociferous in defending the record of the old Parliamentary Party. The era of parliamentarianism was heralded as one of peace, progress and unity compared to the factionalism of the present day with ‘Hibernicus’ describing ‘patriots and statesmen who had lifted Ireland out of the slough of despond and

⁷² *Hibernian Journal*, February 1923, p. 9.

⁷³ *Hibernian Journal*, January 1923, pp. 1-2.

⁷⁴ *Hibernian Journal*, August 1923, p. 77. In March 1923, an article on the body called the ‘indictment’ that the AOH was a political organisation a ‘false charge’ as they had ‘never put forward a candidate for Parliament either in Ireland or Great Britain’, *Hibernian Journal* March 1923, pp. 29-30.

⁷⁵ *Hibernian Journal*, September 1923, p. 89.

⁷⁶ ‘For Land and People’ the story of the Land League by David Sheehy would be an early example. *Hibernian Journal*, April 1920, pp. 191-195.

brought her to the gates of the promised land'.⁷⁷ Indeed such articles which regurgitated old accounts of the key events of 1912-18 were a common occurrence with the desire to exculpate the IPP from the establishment of partition a major feature.⁷⁸ Such articles often went alongside statements of the enduring vitality of the Order itself.⁷⁹ Referencing Dillon's letter to the Australian UIL, 'Hibernicus' also continued the theme of vindication of the IPP leaders and furthermore predicted resurgence of the older nationalist forces. Similarly, the Order produced pamphlets defending the record of the IPP including 'The Canker of Partition' which summarised the June 1924 arguments between the *Irish Independent* and William Doris seeking to highlight how the party had not been to blame for partition.⁸⁰

Unsurprisingly, given the continued association between Hibernian membership and old IPP members, Redmond anniversaries were regularly featured in the journal.⁸¹ Although Armistice Day events were sometimes reported, the coverage and attention was clearly less than that afforded the Redmond events.⁸² Though assemblies and public gatherings certainly continued (especially the Lady Day events of 15 August each year), they tended to be held in the six counties of the new Northern state or in the border counties where the AOH remained vigorous.⁸³ The *Hibernian Journal* also featured attacks on the new Free State administration particularly the perceived spendthrift nature of the Cumann na nGaedheal government and calls for lower taxation to ease the burden on farmers and industrialists.⁸⁴ However, the sense that this posited the Order as right-wing conservatives was countered somewhat by the

⁷⁷ *Hibernian Journal*, May 1923, p. 64.

⁷⁸ *Hibernian Journal*, September 1923, pp. 96-99; November 1923, p. 110.

⁷⁹ *Hibernian Journal*, January 1925, p. 1.

⁸⁰ Joseph P. O'Kane, *The Canker of Partition* (Belfast, 1924), NAI Ancient Order of Hibernians pamphlet collection BRS LOU 12/1/4/58A. John P. Hayden used the same heading when supporting Doris's arguments, *Westmeath Examiner*, 5 July 1924.

⁸¹ For Dillon's letter, see *Hibernian Journal*, April 1924, pp. 29-30. In the same month the *Journal* also featured reports on local Redmond events in Cavan, Monaghan and Louth paying tribute to Redmond which featured local AOH branches as well as votes of praise on the Wexford event by Carrickmacross UDC, *Hibernian Journal*, April 1924, p. 34. The Monaghan meeting was also carried in the *Irish Independent*, 19 March 1924.

⁸² *Hibernian Journal*, December 1924, p. 96. The AOH had supported Redmond's call in 1914 which made sense in terms of their Catholic faith because of the German attack on Belgian churches. However, prior to this, members of the police, army or navy were not even allowed to be Hibernians, Foy, 'The Ancient Order of Hibernians', p. 146.

⁸³ Examples include the Lady Day Rally at Dundalk, *Hibernian Journal*, September 1924, pp. 70-71.

⁸⁴ The journal cited Capt. Redmond on the creation of new ministries, *Hibernian Journal*, December 1923, p. 130. At times Hibernian comment even went as far as comparing the economic situation of the country unfavourably to that of 1918 under British rule when the IPP was still strong, e.g. Nugent in *Hibernian Journal*, May 1924, p. 37; June 1924, p. 45; January 1925, p. 1.

enigmatic ‘Hibernicus’ again who wrote on the rights of labour from a perspective of social Catholicism.⁸⁵ Other Hibernians mocked the constitutionalism of the former revolutionaries in *Cumann na nGaedheal*, fitting in as it did with the sense that the AOH’s old policies had been vindicated.⁸⁶ Other members simply felt that there was ‘no alternative to the Free State, but further destruction and slaughter’.⁸⁷ According to Nugent, the duty of Hibernians was to ‘go forward’ and make the best of the Treaty settlement in the hope of unity of the ‘Fatherland’ in the future.⁸⁸

Nugent’s writings in the *Hibernian Journal* were clearly aimed at maintaining morale among membership. In 1925, he reflected on the first local elections held since the Treaty which had, he wrote, ‘given, perhaps, the best indication that those who were submerged in 1918, have with the first breath of liberty, come to the surface again.’⁸⁹ Such remarks seemed to cast in a triumphant light the remnants of the old Parliamentary Party, including the Hibernians who had, declared their national secretary, remained ‘passive because we had no alternative’.⁹⁰ However, whatever successes old Nationalists may have enjoyed, were achieved under diffuse political banners.

Although a police report on an AOH meeting in Lurgan in 1923 claimed that Joe Devlin proposed the establishment of a ‘Central Party’ for old Nationalists in the Free State, there was little trace of any such plans south of the border.⁹¹ There was no central party for the AOH to cling onto and this was reflected in their advice to members for the Seanad elections later that same year. Nugent urged Hibernians to vote for men who ‘have interested themselves in the work of the Order’ and listed R.A. Butler, George Crosbie, Patrick Hooper and J.J. Horgan among those worthy of

⁸⁵ *Hibernian Journal*, March 1915, p. 25.

⁸⁶ Patrick Boyle, President of the Donegal AOH said ‘you would almost believe’ listening to Government speeches last year ‘that you were listening to speeches in support of the Constitutional candidate in 1918’, *Hibernian Journal*, April 1924, p. 23.

⁸⁷ *Hibernian Journal*, April 1924, p. 34.

⁸⁸ *Hibernian Journal*, May 1924, p. 37.

⁸⁹ *Hibernian Journal*, September 1925, p. 79.

⁹⁰ *Hibernian Journal*, September 1925, p. 81.

⁹¹ Report on Lurgan meeting, 23 January 1923, PRONI Reports on Meetings of the Ancient Order of Hibernians HA/32/1/321.

support.⁹² However, any Hibernian strategy ‘failed miserably’, according to Nugent, as for example Cork Hibernians voted in greater numbers for external AOH candidates than the locally based Crosbie and Horgan.⁹³

The *Hibernian Journal* nevertheless took pleasure in reporting the fiasco of low turnout in the poll for the second chamber and commented on the fact that the ‘loyalty and enthusiasm with which the British Ex-Servicemen stood to their Chief, Major-General Hickie’ while ‘prominent Gaelic Leaguers’ like Douglas Hyde and S.P. McEnri were defeated.⁹⁴ Such critiques were soon passed over with the emergence of the Boundary Commission report which Nugent called ‘most disappointing and unfortunate’. However, the secretary went on to welcome de Valera’s statement against division in the country and Nugent called for loyalty among his brother Hibernians to constitutional methods in giving the Government ‘every possible assistance in extricating itself and the country from the present muddle’.⁹⁵ Quite how they might do this or whether Treatyites would have any interest in their assistance was a different matter and were questions which went to the heart of the Order’s quest for identity and relevance in the new state.

Remembrance Day and ex-servicemen in the Free State

The scale and success of Armistice Day events in the early years of the Free State serve to prove that the neglect of Ireland’s Great War dead did not settle in immediately.⁹⁶ Such extensive and large-scale commemorations could be seen as expressions of unity and solidarity for those Redmondites who enlisted in the Great War; nevertheless, it would be remiss not to point out the difficulties of using these particular anniversary events as barometers of old Irish Party support or sympathy in the Free State. As discussed in Chapter One, many within the party had not been as

⁹² *Hibernian Journal*, September 1925, pp. 83-84. Although P.J. Brady was not a Hibernian, Nugent added that he was a ‘valued and able candidate of John Redmond’ and ‘should not be forgotten or ignored either’.

⁹³ National Secretary’s Report, Meeting of National Board, 5 August 1926, NAI – LOU 13/1/3 (a).

⁹⁴ *Hibernian Journal*, November 1925, p. 91.

⁹⁵ *Hibernian Journal*, December 1925, p. 94.

⁹⁶ Examples of this can be seen in the photography of W.D. Hogan Photograph collection, NLI, HOG 131, accessed online at: <http://catalogue.nli.ie/Record/vtls000206920> 14 January, 2014. Keith Jeffery has disputed that there was a sense of amnesia in the 1920s arguing there was ‘widespread and active commemoration’, see Jeffery, ‘Irish Varieties of Great War Commemoration’, John Horne and Edward Madigan (eds), *Towards Commemoration: Ireland in War and Revolution, 1912-1923*, (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2013), p. 117.

wholly enthusiastic about the war as Redmond and did not enlist or encourage many men to do so.⁹⁷ Great War participation, much as Irish enlistment in the British Army had always been, was a complex multi-causal process and many who joined up may have been poor working class men, apolitical or unionist in politics.⁹⁸ Accordingly, despite Stephen Gwynn's contention that 'the nationalist element in Ireland which did not like Sinn Féin or Sinn Féin's methods tends to find a rallying-point in the organisation of the ex-servicemen', no demonstration of ex-servicemen can be transposed into a showing of old Irish Party supporters.⁹⁹ In fact, there may be more in Fearghal McGarry's argument that it was republican protests at Great War commemorations that provided a rally call – sustaining those who opposed both Redmondite and former unionist viewpoints. Such protests were, in McGarry's view, rooted in 'not only a rejection of the historical reality that nationalist Ireland had supported Redmond in 1914, but a refusal to accept that a minority of the Irish people adhered to a British identity as well as - instead - of an Irish one.'¹⁰⁰

Although Captain Redmond was Vice-President of the Legion of Ex-Servicemen in Ireland, many within the Legion were old southern unionists.¹⁰¹ Similarly, while an ex-Irish Party activist like W.G. Fallon worked to aid veterans from as early as 1922 and moves were made to erect a memorial to Major Willie Redmond for his part in the Great War, the Armistice Day celebrations were still as likely to carry Imperial political symbols if they carried any political message at all.¹⁰² Indeed, the singing of 'God Save the King' and the presence of Union Jacks often led to clashes with republicans and were part of the process of growing hostility to Irish Great War

⁹⁷ McConnel, 'Recruiting Sergeants for John Bull?', pp. 408-428.

⁹⁸ Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War*; Dungan, *They Shall Not Grow Old* for coverage of these issues.

⁹⁹ *Observer*, 8 November 1923. Some independent ex-servicemen groups emerged too, such as the Cork Independent Ex-Servicemen's Club, representing 500 of the 5,000 servicemen who paraded in Cork city in 1925, *Irish Independent*, 17 November 1925. Some ex-servicemen who had actually had Volunteers or republicans act as stewards prior to 1922 ended up clashing with British soldiers during the War of Independence, William Sheehan, *A Hard Local War: The British Army and the Guerilla War in Cork 1919-21* (Dublin: The History Press, 2011), pp. 26-30.

¹⁰⁰ McGarry "Too Damned Tolerant", p. 81.

¹⁰¹ *Evening Star*, 13 June 1923.

¹⁰² Fallon petitioned Eamonn Duggan and Laurence O'Neill on the matter of British War pensions, O'Neill to Fallon, 11 January, 1922; Fallon to Duggan, 16 February 1922; Alick E. Hamilton to Fallon, 31 January 1924, NLI Fallon Papers, Ms. 22,581. James S. Ashe as honorary secretary of the Dublin branch of the Willie Redmond memorial committee reported by June 1922 that over £3,000 had been raised and given to Wexford committee, *Irish Independent*, 14 June 1922, 15 September 1924. See also Terence Denman, *A Lonely Grave: The Life and Death of Willie Redmond* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1995), pp. 130-132, 134.

veterans in the Free State as violence began to mar the annual events each November.

That said, the 1923 Remembrance Day parades were reported to have achieved successful sales of Flanders' poppies in Dublin with 150,000 said to have been imported.¹⁰³ In addition, there were also memorial masses attended by representatives from the Army and European diplomats. The *Freeman* reported that the Legion joined together with Irish Guards and veterans' clubs and Trinity College students who marched with a Union Jack through Westmoreland Street and O'Connell Street before returning and singing 'God Save the King' outside the College. Although this was by far the biggest event, similar events for Armistice Day or Remembrance Sunday were held around the country wherever branches of the Legion of Ex-Servicemen existed.¹⁰⁴

The following year saw the unveiling of a Memorial Cross in College Green and events where upwards of 15,000 ex-servicemen participated.¹⁰⁵ However, the commentary of the London daily, the *Morning Post* on the 1924 Armistice Day celebrations drew the ire of the *Freeman's* editorial on 17 November 1924. The *Freeman* wanted to convey its own perception of recent history, no doubt shaped in varying measures by its Home Rule heritage and its contemporary commitment to the Cumann na nGaedheal administration. In its view, 'a free people paid its tribute to men who offered their lives as a sacrifice for its freedom'. They died for small national democracy while the British who enlisted them 'imposed a militant tyranny [on Ireland] as ruthless as that under which Germany sought to crush Belgium'. The attempt of the *Morning Post* to lament the 'trampling down' of Redmond's memory was thus seen as disingenuous.¹⁰⁶

On 21 May 1924, the *Freeman* ran a story on a 23-foot high Celtic cross in the hands of the Legion of Irish Ex-Servicemen, Cork, which would commemorate all the Munster men who died in battle. The plan was to erect it in the Ypres Salient

¹⁰³ *Freeman's Journal*, 12 November 1923.

¹⁰⁴ *Evening Star*, 10 November 1924.

¹⁰⁵ *Freeman's Journal*, 12 November 1924.

¹⁰⁶ *Freeman's Journal*, 17 November 1924

‘probably adjacent to the grave of Willie Redmond’.¹⁰⁷ In July 1924, the *Freeman* followed up on a large party of ex-servicemen leaving on a ‘pilgrimage to the battlefields of France’ organised by the Cork branch as a tribute to the Munstermen who died in the War. During the visit they were to tour Ypres and Loche and lay a wreath at Willie Redmond’s grave. Count O’Kelly, the Free State representative in Brussels, was reported to be attending one of the functions.¹⁰⁸ In December 1924, another piece appeared in the *Freeman* informing readers of plans to move the only official Irish War memorial from Ginchy back to Ireland and erect a proper memorial cross of Irish granite. The article was looking for funds, but the writer already had ‘no doubt as to the response to this appeal, even detailing how the Rev. Mother at Loche would receive the funds if subscriptions exceeded the necessary which the author added was ‘almost certain’ that they would.’¹⁰⁹

By 1925, the Armistice Day celebrations, then held in St. Stephen’s Green, were subjected to disturbances.¹¹⁰ In the morning, the veteran women’s suffrage and republican campaigner Maud Gonne led a small group of republican women down Grafton Street in protest. Gonne was also involved later in the morning as a separate Armistice Day gathering of Trinity College students within the gates of the university precipitated minor scuffles on College Green sparking a police intervention. In the afternoon, just after General William Hickie of the Legion of Ex-Servicemen unveiled the Cenotaph, a smoke bomb was thrown from the corner of Earlsford Terrace and Lower Leeson Street. Although the response from the crowd was defiant with silence observed before a woman started a rendition of ‘God Save the King’, another smoke bomb was also released while later that night shots were fired on Middle Abbey Street where an ex-servicemen’s dinner was taking place.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ *Freeman’s Journal*, 21 May 1924; *Irish Times*, 16 June 1924.

¹⁰⁸ *Freeman’s Journal*, 5 July 1924. Jason Myers claims it was 7 July. Myers has also written that O’Kelly actually ‘opposed’ the trip and ‘only participated in the ceremony because he had to’, see Myers, ‘A Land Fit for Heroes?’, p. 134. Cork Hibernians and ex-servicemen laid wreaths on Major Willie Redmond’s grave in Loche in 1924 too, *Irish Independent*, 15 September 1924.

¹⁰⁹ *Freeman’s Journal*, 4 December 1923.

¹¹⁰ Brian Hanley, ‘Poppy Day in Dublin in the ‘20s and ‘30s’, *History Ireland*, vol. 7, no. 1 (Spring 1999), pp. 5-6.

¹¹¹ *Free Press*, 14 November 1925; *Irish Times*, 12 November 1925. Strangely, this was not picked up by all local newspapers with the *Evening News* in Waterford reporting there were ‘no untoward incidents’ in Dublin. *Evening News*, 11 November 1925.

Such tensions also occurred elsewhere such as the unsuccessful bomb attempt at Gillabbey Rock commemorating the Boer War in Cork in November 1925.¹¹²

However, some war commemorations can certainly be attributed to a more peculiarly Redmondite or at least, constitutionalist nationalist agenda. In Cork, the multiplicity of ex-servicemen's associations meant a 'lack of a single, unified commemorative exercise prior to 1925'.¹¹³ When a memorial was unveiled on the city's South Mall on St. Patrick's day that year, the funds had been collected and the memorial prepared by the Cork Independent Ex-Servicemen's Club, an organisation separate from the Legion. Although Jason R. Myers has argued that the simple inscription 'lest we forget' suggested that there was little political significance beyond merely remembering the fallen, he has also drawn attention to the references to the constitutional nationalist tradition made by two of the speakers: Michael Egan and John Horgan.¹¹⁴ The Cork example which was well attended and featured Catholic and Protestant clergy was therefore a commemoration and memorial which had an explicitly Redmondite and O'Brienite (in Egan's case) motif. This meant a real challenge to the 'Republican version of public memory' in Myers's view while in a similar vein to the *Freeman's* protest at the *Morning Post*, it also entailed distancing remembrance of the Redmondite sacrifice from any British imperialist appropriation.¹¹⁵

Redmondite commemorations

There were, however, commemorations with distinct Irish Party connections in the early years of the Free State which offer arguably greater insights into the legacy of the party in the Free State. Ever since the passing of Parnell on 6 October 1891, commemorations to mark 'Ivy Day' at it became known, were held in Dublin, usually on the first Sunday after the anniversary of his death.¹¹⁶ From 1911, the Parnell monument at the end of O'Connell Street unveiled in that year by John Redmond, was the usual starting point before a procession to the 'Uncrowned

¹¹² *Irish Independent*, 17 November 1925. Such tensions had appeared intermittently. See for example the robbery of Flanders' poppies from a priest, *Clare Champion*, 20 November 1926.

¹¹³ Myers, "A Land Fit For Heroes"?, p. 103.

¹¹⁴ Myers, "A Land Fit For Heroes"?, pp. 105-106.

¹¹⁵ Myers, "A Land Fit For Heroes"?, p. 107.

¹¹⁶ Donal McCartney and Pauric Travers (eds), *The Ivy Leaf: The Parnells Remembered* (Dublin: UCD Press, 2006).

King's resting place at Glasnevin cemetery. Such events persisted into the Free State maintained by former MP William Field in his role as Chairman of the Parnell Commemoration Association.¹¹⁷ Given Parnell's mystique and the varied contenders for his legacy from Griffith to Redmond, it was not surprising that Ivy Day events retained vitality even amid the major political changes that took place between 1912 and 1923.¹¹⁸ In fact, Foster and Jackson have argued, that after the Civil War, 'Parnell now stood, rather ironically, for a lost unity among nationalists'.¹¹⁹ However, while Parnell was certainly an easier figure to occupy that role than the vanquished Redmond, commemorative events to honour him were actually far smaller than those organised for the much maligned Redmond in the early Free State.

There is little doubting the significance of Redmondite anniversaries in these years, the biggest of which was the John Redmond anniversary events in Wexford in 1924 and 1925. What is perhaps surprising is that such events grew as peace returned to the state rather than shrinking further as the defeat of the 1918 general election receded from view. At first largely confined to the south-east Redmondite strongholds, these events developed, offering the advantages of reuniting the elements of Irish Party support which departed from the political stage since 1918 and also the opportunity to restore the memory of John Redmond. The John Redmond events in Waterford and Wexford as well as the commemorations for Major Willie Redmond in Ennis, Co. Clare, thus offered self-declared non-political environments in which to pay tribute to the party's historical achievements. However, they would also provide a platform both for those who had left politics behind and those who now sought to enter politics in the new state.

As mentioned in Chapter One, memorial events to John Redmond began a year after his death in March 1919 as a significant tribute was paid at St. John's cemetery, Wexford town where Joe Devlin was invited to deliver an oration.¹²⁰ This event set the scene for future commemorations where the IPP was staunchly defended, with partisan evaluation of past events usually absolving Redmond of any blame for

¹¹⁷ Maume, *The Long Gestation*, p. 228.

¹¹⁸ *Irish Independent*, 13 October 1924; 12 October 1925. The 1928 Parnell commemoration attracted a crowd of 250 people, *Irish Independent*, 8 October 1928.

¹¹⁹ Foster and Jackson, 'Men for All Seasons?', p. 421.

¹²⁰ *Irish Independent*, 15 March 1919.

partition and speculating on what might have been achieved had he remained undisputed leader of Irish nationalism. Although commemorations were merely local affairs during the War of Independence and Civil War eras, these events received generous coverage in the local press as well as the *Hibernian Journal*.¹²¹ The 1922 celebrations remained mostly local with a Waterford celebration on the first Sunday in March followed by the Wexford event a week later. However, followers from Wexford were beginning to attend the Waterford event and vice-versa.¹²² By 1923, the events had grown with the passing of five years since Redmond's death and the demise of the Irish Parliamentary Party. Along with bands and servicemen marching in these processions, portraits of Redmond begin to be included along with banners such as 'Faithful Waterford Mourns Ireland's Dead Leader' while masses were being held in areas of the country such as Belfast and Blackrock, Co. Dublin.¹²³

As violence in the country subsided, arrangements for the next John Redmond anniversary in Wexford became a much bigger operation. A committee was established in Dublin in November 1923; John Dillon was made chairman and numerous ex-MPs and party activists liaised between this body, the local committee in Wexford and other committees around the country. The anniversary event set for 9 March 1924 was envisaged as a national event and intensive preparations were undertaken.¹²⁴ The Dublin committee organised trains from the city to Wexford while excursion trains were also organised from the midlands, Cork, Limerick, Tipperary and even Belfast (which necessitated a 7.15am start for travellers). Local organisers worked with hotels and restaurants to cater for the crowds as visitors came from other counties such as Cavan, Louth and Clare too.¹²⁵

¹²¹ For the Treatyite *Waterford Standard*, the defence of peaceful constitutional government offered by the anniversaries was tied in with the law and order ethos of the Government, *Waterford Standard*, 7 March 1923.

¹²² *Waterford Standard*, 8 March 1922. The 1922 Waterford event went ahead despite the recent passing of Redmond's son-in-law Mr. Max Green.

¹²³ *Irish Independent*, 12 March 1923. *Hibernian Journal*, April 1923, p. 41. Among the bodies involved in the procession were Wexford Legion, Mechanics' Institute, Hibernian Social Club, Pierce Institute St. Patricks boys band, the Anniversary committee, Major Willie Redmond memorial committee, INF in regalia, YMCA and, Gorey AOH, Bridgetown AOH, reps from Duncormack, the Ballagh, Gorey, Waterford Pig Buyers Association.

¹²⁴ This can be easily attested by the committee meetings in Wexford and Dublin as well as the committees established in other centres such as Cork, Carlow, *Evening Star*, 1 September, 1 December 1923, 1 March 1924.

¹²⁵ A special train also ran from Ennis stopping at Tipperary, Cahir, Limerick and Clonmel on the way. Over 200 were estimated to have travelled from Willie Redmond's own constituency of Ennis alone, *Clare Champion*, 1, 22 March 1924.

Newspaper reports of the 1924 events are instructive for the groups present and the old networks involved. The *Independent* described it as a ‘remarkable revelation of the depth of affection’ which still existed for Redmond while the *Times* felt the total crowd numbered 20,000.¹²⁶ Indeed, the old unionist organ added that the vast demonstration ‘seemed to warrant the assumption that one was watching the renewal of a pledge of faith in the political beliefs and methods discarded by the electorate only a few years before’.¹²⁷ The anniversaries were attended by local politicians such as Wexford Labour TD Richard Corish, but also ex-MPs and TDs with Home Rule roots. Others participating included over thirty bands (many associated with Redmondism in the south-east for years), but also local AOH branches, the Irish National Foresters, the Legion of Ex-Servicemen, craft workmen’s groups and members of the National Club as well as local groups like the Ballybricken Pig-Buyers’ Association and the Women’s Nationalist Association from Waterford city.¹²⁸ The celebrations themselves were reported as consisting of Masses in the various Wexford churches in the morning followed by a procession including the bands and the playing of the ‘Dead March’ and the ‘Last Post’ before returning to the John Redmond monument for orations.¹²⁹ The symbolism even extended to the organising committee recommending the wearing of John Redmond’s favourite flower the violet as Parnell commemorators often wore ivy.¹³⁰

The orations of 1924 were a little controversial as John Dillon not only defended Redmond’s memory, but again criticised the current Government for its violent past and Civil War repression.¹³¹ Dillon claimed the people now realised the mistake they had made disposing of Redmond and referenced how ‘even Parnell’ failed to win

¹²⁶ *Irish Independent*, 10 March 1924; *Irish Times*, 15 March 1924.

¹²⁷ *Irish Times*, 10 March 1924.

¹²⁸ *Freeman’s Journal*, 12 March 1923; Alice McDermott, ‘John Redmond: A Man of His Community: An Analysis of the factors that influenced the creation and development of Redmondism and Redmondites in Waterford city from 1891 to 1918’, unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Limerick, 1998, p. 52. Organisations involved included the Legions of Ex-Servicemen (indeed the paper contained some allusions to Armistice Day memorials), various local Urban Councils, some Dáil deputies like Patrick McKenna, the Pierce Institute, the Irish National Foresters and the National Club and the local Hibernian Club, YMCA and the Mechanics’ Institute. These events often saw the carrying of a huge oil painting of the former IPP leader as well.

¹²⁹ For more on those participating and the symbolism and ritual involved, see O’Donoghue, “‘The Renewal of a Pledge of Faith’”, pp. 38-41.

¹³⁰ In addition to this, violets were sold in Dublin on 6 March, the Friday before the rally, *Freeman’s Journal*, 8 February 1924.

¹³¹ *Irish Independent*, 10 March 1924; *Irish Times*, 15 March 1924; *Freeman’s Journal*, 10 March 1924.

self-government: the very reason Redmond was condemned.¹³² Though changes were relatively few through the various drafts extant in his private papers, it is interesting that, at first, Dillon intended opening his address with a statement honouring Redmond and ‘placing on record’ the people’s appreciation of him and his achievements. However, on the day, he opened with a condemnation for those who attacked Redmond both then and since. In later drafts, Dillon declared Redmond was ‘assailed by a tempest of calumny and misrepresentation from countrymen of his own such as few National leaders have had to endure; and even since his death the malignant tongue of slander has not been silenced.’ This stronger tone was present throughout the speech where he criticised the Treaty and the slow progress of the Boundary Commission as well as the performance of the new Government which, excluded he said, ‘a large section of the Nation’s representatives from the National Parliament’. Dillon even declared that ‘so far as I can see his [Redmond] Imperialism was faint compared with the Imperialism of the men who are at present in control’.¹³³

For Theo Dillon, his father’s speech and the success of the 1924 event generally were sources of great delight and he relished the reaction of the IPP’s opponents to this apparent resurrection of the old party.¹³⁴ He hoped the event and the speech might lead to a new political formation, but he morosely noted ‘I feel you have probably as large a following as any other party in Ireland – if not larger – but also I am afraid – helpless against the IRB and the gunmen. If only they could exterminate each other- without dragging down Ireland in ruins around them.’¹³⁵ However, even in correspondence between the party’s last leader and his son, any mention of this was soon side-lined by the outbreak of the Army Mutiny Crisis shortly afterwards.

From subsequent correspondence in the national papers, Dillon’s oration would seem to have jarred somewhat with those who had moved to support the Free State.¹³⁶ One wrote that the ‘old Nationalists’ ‘have nevertheless the greatest admiration for the

¹³² Dillon’s speech at Wexford, TCD John Dillon Papers, 6749/711.

¹³³ Dillon’s speech at Wexford TCD John Dillon Papers, 6749/712-716. See also the report of his speech, *Irish Independent*, 10 March 1924.

¹³⁴ Theo Dillon to John Dillon, 13 March, 1924, UCDA Theo Dillon Papers P126/67.

¹³⁵ Theo Dillon to John Dillon, 22 March, 1924, UCDA Theo Dillon Papers P126/68.

¹³⁶ Waterford’s *Evening News*, as a republican paper, used Redmondite events to attack Cumann na nGaedheal by comparison, *Evening News*, 8, 10 March 1924.

patriotism, conscientiousness, ability and courage which they (Cumann na nGaedheal) have shown in the conduct of the country's affairs since the Treaty, and approve of the policy they have followed in saving the nation from the tyranny of the Irregulars'.¹³⁷ On the other hand, Dillon's speech was admired by other former supporters; one Hibernian in Donegal wrote to Dillon to praise him hoping it was a signal that he would re-organise the UIL. Such a move would be better than 'the present scattered opinions which is constantly going to a disgusting, usual shake of the head when you meet, former supporters of the UIL and AOH.'¹³⁸

Captain Redmond's speech in Wexford was less forthright in its criticism of the Government though it contained much Redmondite rhetoric. He disputed the claim that John Redmond had 'failed' and argued he had secured 'as good and workable a measure of self-government as they had today'. If failure meant 'failure to betray his country, selling a portion of it for a name, or accepting a truncated Ireland', then only by those standards had he failed.¹³⁹

Although smaller than events in the south-east, the commemorations for Willie Redmond, held in Ennis, seemed to grow from the success of the John Redmond anniversaries. The Clare commemoration began in 1924 with 'premier place' reserved for the Wexford and Waterford contingents.¹⁴⁰ Such a tribute obviously also helped to touch on the Great War aspect of the Irish Party's legacy and in many ways the brother of the party's leader came to be seen as a kind of martyr for the constitutionalist cause. Reports of the 1924 event highlighted Joe Devlin's pride at the number of young people present while Capt. Redmond also spoke at the event.¹⁴¹ He said the memorial was about paying tribute 'not so much to Willie Redmond, but to the kind of man he was', the loyal soldier both in politics and on the battlefield

¹³⁷ *Freeman's Journal*, 15 March 1924.

¹³⁸ P.J. Brennan, secretary Ardara AOH Division 107, to Dillon 23 March 1924, TCD John Dillon Papers 6786/2000. An old Redmondite in Wicklow was of a similar mind, Edmond C. Walsh to Dillon, 17 March 1924, TCD John Dillon Papers 6773/753.

¹³⁹ *Freeman's Journal*, 9, 10 March, 1924; *Irish Times*, 10 March 1924.

¹⁴⁰ The Irish Party had held a mock funeral through the streets of Ennis after Redmond's death in 1917, Denman, *A Lonely Grave*, pp. 133-4. *Clare Champion*, 31 May 1924. Special train contingents were also reported from Cork, Limerick, Dublin, Tipperary, Galway and Athenry, *Irish Independent*, 9 June 1924.

¹⁴¹ *Freeman's Journal*; *Irish Times*, 9 June 1924.

and he referenced the 50,000 Irishmen listed by the Irish National War Memorial as having died in the war.¹⁴²

The success of the 1924 events seemed to surprise many of the old Irish Party followers and committees from Dublin and Louth called for the 1925 John Redmond memorial to be held in the capital. However, the unanimous decision of the local committee, abided by Redmond followers all over the Free State was to remain in Wexford.¹⁴³ Nonetheless, 1925 commemorations hinted at larger developments even though it remained outside the capital. Emphasis in 1924 was on the non-political nature of events; it was rather cast as a ‘duty of faith’ to the memory of Redmond.¹⁴⁴ Many had seemingly been satisfied to lend support, in some form or other, to the law and order ethos of the Cumann na nGaedheal-led Free State.

However, there was a subtle change in tone in 1925. Addressing the event on 8 March, Captain Redmond told the crowd that, were his father able to speak to them, the late IPP leader would tell them to ‘carry and close up the ranks’. Furthermore, Redmond claimed it was part of his inheritance to take part in the government of the country and called on constitutionalists present to join him.¹⁴⁵ Perhaps of more significance might be the change in the outlook of one J. McNamara, chairman of Ennis Urban Council who welcomed people to the Willie Redmond celebrations in both years. In 1924, he clearly stated that it was a tribute to Willie Redmond and not political. In 1925, he alluded to a new ‘orientation in national thought’.¹⁴⁶ In 1925, former MP Tom O’Donnell called on attendees to live lives according to how the late Major had done. The growth of these events undoubtedly reflected an atmosphere where a resurgence of the ‘old nationalism’ might prove possible. These celebrations had provided the backdrop for such thinking as they fulfilled a number of roles for these ex-Irish Party followers.

¹⁴² *Freeman’s Journal*, 9 June 1924. This figure was quoted from Harrison’s list.

¹⁴³ *Munster Express*, 30 January, 6 February 1925.

¹⁴⁴ *Free Press*, 8 March 1924.

¹⁴⁵ *Irish Independent*, 9 March 1925; *Hibernian Journal*, April 1925, pp. 39-44.

¹⁴⁶ *Irish Independent*, 8 June 1925. AOH National secretary John Dillon Nugent was among the speakers while Conor Hogan TD, William Duffy, T.J. Condon, Michael Joyce and B.C. Hackett were also present in 1925, *Hibernian Journal*, July 1925, p. 73; *Munster Express*, 5 June 1925.

Redmond anniversaries are valuable in determining the different evolutions of Irish Party supporters in Free State politics encompassing as they did unreconstructed Redmondites, those who wanted to reform the UIL or Irish Party and others who may have moved on politically, but still wanted to honour the historical memory of the Redmonds. On a very basic level, these events served a social function. There was a network of different bodies of which many former party supporters were members, but the committees for organising the Redmond anniversaries had a universal character above even the AOH, National Club, Ex-Servicemen Legion or Town Tenants' bodies. In this sense, they allowed for the reunion of old friends. Having done this, they were meeting of minds and allowed those of similar opinions to defend their political tradition. These events also show that for many in the country, Great War enlistment and Redmond's Woodenbridge call were not necessarily cast as dark stains on the national character. In the 1920s, there were many people prepared to defend the actions taken by the Redmonds in 1914 or at the very least, like John Dillon, still prepared to defend their memory. The numbers who attended in Wexford, Waterford and Ennis helped to demonstrate this. The occasions were sources of some comfort for these Party veterans as they saw the memory of the Irish Party resuscitated and the 'calumny and misrepresentation' removed.

Conclusion

While it has been argued that Free State politicians revelled in the achievement of self-government 'without acknowledging the groundwork laid by constitutional nationalism, since the days of Isaac Butt', the same could not be said of the thousands who congregated in Wexford and Ennis in the early 1920s.¹⁴⁷ The success of such events jars with perceptions that Redmond and the Irish Party were either neglected or excoriated in the Free State. In fact the anniversaries exceeded commemorations for Redmond's parliamentary idol Parnell while other prominent commemorations held at the time had the advantage of honouring figures who were seemingly easier subjects of tribute in the post-revolutionary independent state. W.T. Cosgrave delivered the oration at the 1924 event for 1798 republican Wolfe Tone which included a military demonstration by the Free State army while commemorations of the youthful founding fathers of the Free State Collins and

¹⁴⁷ Reid, *The Lost Ireland of Stephen Gwynn*, p. 203.

Griffith in front of Leinster House were understandably major ceremonial events with official endorsement.¹⁴⁸ The Redmond events, however, demonstrated a strong show of vernacular memory underlining the impact which the Redmonds had made on Irish political life, but also with potential to challenge historical narratives that may have suited parties with Sinn Féin derivations.¹⁴⁹

Of course, even less than a decade after the IPP's demise, the question could be asked to what extent the remnants of the movement were in any way homogenous. Henry Harrison had left politics after Parnell; William O'Brien and John Dillon had long since parted ways while Stephen Gwynn has become estranged from the party after John Redmond's death. While many others did agree on matters (such as Dillon and his old ally O'Connor), the variegated nature of the former Home Rule movement made for fragmentation similar to that demonstrated in early Free State party politics. Old organisations betrayed uncertainty as to how to proceed in the settling period of the early 1920s even if the AOH would later re-establish some stability and regain part of its old significance in border counties.

However, the organisation of the anniversaries gave a central purpose to those who had been left bereft by the fall of the Irish Party. While there were interlocking connections among members of the AOH, Town Tenants' League and the National Club, the 'pilgrimages' to Wexford or Ennis provided a unity of purpose for disillusioned former Redmondites. Such succour was clearly needed in what were trying circumstances for former Irish Party politicians. Tom O'Donnell and John Dillon demonstrated much bitterness in their speeches on the progress of the Free State. Such denunciations frustrated those in the Government like Kevin O'Higgins; yet, this reluctance to find easy accommodation with the Free State was a companion

¹⁴⁸ *Irish Independent*, 23 June, 18 August 1924; it has been argued that the Tone commemoration also gained popularity due to easy access to the Bodenstown location and its occurrence at the height of summer, C.J. Woods, 'Pilgrimages to Tone's Grave at Bodenstown, 1873–1922: Time, Place, Popularity', *History Ireland*, vol. 23, no. 3 (May-June 2015), pp. 36-9.

¹⁴⁹ Myers had noted the importance of vernacular memory in remembering the Great War in Ireland, Myers, "'A Land Fit for Heroes'?", introduction, *passim*; John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

to the reluctance of former Home Rule politicians who supported the Treaty to join Cumann na nGaedheal discussed in Chapter Two.¹⁵⁰

The various activities of the old Party figures clearly reveal a return to prominence of the 'old guard'. In one way, given the class and professions of many of old Party members, it might be argued they had remained prominent citizens even if they slipped from the political consciousness. However, whether it was through public lectures in the National Club, the organisation of rallies to express continued loyalty to the Redmond family, the AOH or Ireland's Great War dead, the increasing stability of the new state was offering greater opportunities for the deposed forces which had once coalesced around the Irish Party. The question facing such figures as 1925 closed with a deadly blow struck against any chance of reunion and differing problems afflicting both sides of the Civil War divide was whether the old Nationalist forces could once again assume a leading role in the political life of the country.

¹⁵⁰ For O'Higgins's frustrations at Dillon's National Club speech, see 'Some Personal Reminiscences of Kevin Christopher O'Higgins' by Thomas Bodkin (Governor of the National Gallery), *The Clongownian* (1928), pp. 17-20.

Chapter 4

‘Seeking inspiration in the great traditions of past Nationalist successes’¹: the National League, 1926-7

It is a new Ireland and you would not know where you were in it

John Dillon to T.P. O’Connor, 6 September 1926.²

The time had come for them to take their place in the constitutional Government of their country – they who had always been a Constitutional Party. There were people calling themselves constitutionalists now who had not always been constitutionalists.

Captain Redmond at John Redmond Anniversary celebrations, Wexford, March 1925

Bolstered by the success of the Redmondite anniversaries and encouraged by political flux and dissatisfaction with Government policies, former Home Rule politicians began to contemplate reprising the old Nationalist organisation. Amid an increasingly crowded political field, ex-MPs Captain Redmond and Thomas O’Donnell launched the Irish National League party in Waterford on 13 September 1926, drawing on the scattered strands of old Irish Party support visible in the Free State. This chapter examines their efforts in order to estimate the dimensions and the extent of persistent Irish Party support in the Free State. The League’s origins, emergence and period in the political limelight help to shed light on the attitudes of former Home Rulers to contemporary politics; however, much can also be learned from the reactions of other parties to the League and how perceptions of the IPP were manipulated and abused during the election campaigns which took place in 1927. The year in question, the only one to feature two general elections prior to 1982, has often been seen as crucial in the development of Free State politics and the National League made its electoral bow amidst continued political fragmentation and the appearance of a number of new parties, including Fianna Fáil – a party which would overshadow the others and come to dominate Irish politics. However, the National League held a peculiarly significant if brief position in politics in 1927 as it stood on the edge of forming a unique coalition government with Labour and the support of Fianna Fáil just nine years after the defeat of the IPP. For this reason

¹ Capt. Redmond to John Dillon, 13 April 1927, TCD John Dillon Papers 6759/1515a.

² Dillon to O’Connor, 6 September 1926, TCD John Dillon Papers 6744/991.

alone, the party is worthy of study; its role in the development and assimilation of old Irish Party political activism in the Free State was significant too.

Redmond and O'Donnell sought to reach out to the various groupings with Home Rule associations discussed in the previous chapter such as the AOH, Ex-Servicemen and Town Tenants' League. However, although the League enjoyed initial success, it soon found itself at the mercy of political developments outside its immediate control as Kevin O'Higgins was assassinated and Fianna Fáil was forced to overcome its opposition to the oath of allegiance and enter Dáil Éireann. The League's attempts to react to the changed political circumstances of the late summer of 1927 would decide the fate of a party 'seeking inspiration in the great traditions of past nationalist successes'.

The National League had disparate roots and was dismissed by the contemporary political commentator Warner Moss as a collection of 'malcontents' with little in common.³ More recently, John M. Regan labelled it 'a disparate coalition cobbled together out of the licensed trade, Hibernians, ex-servicemen and political opportunists'.⁴ However, as this chapter demonstrates, the League's disparate roots were only as diverse as the elements of the old Irish Parliamentary Party which the new League drew upon. Although it has been argued with some cause that the League has remained 'a largely forgotten political entity', historians of Cumann na nGaedheal have identified some of the reasons for the League's emergence and the particular groups it attracted.⁵ More recently, the party has been labelled as a 'mobilising party' which sought to arise from 'a new policy dimension, or from a new position in respect of the existing one'.⁶ This chapter will examine this categorisation, arguing that the National League was a mobilising party, albeit not one necessarily offering a new political agenda. Rather, it will be seen that the League was a rejection of the Civil War political duopoly and an attempt to appeal to

³ Warner Moss, *Political Parties in the Irish Free State* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1933), p. 27.

⁴ Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution*, p. 265.

⁵ Neil Glackin, 'Home Rulers in a Free State', p. 4. Cumann na nGaedheal scholars, in particular, have discussed the League's role and the problems it created for the Government party; see Ciara Meehan, *The Cosgrave Party*, pp. 73-5, 77-9, 81-6; Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution*, pp. 264-72; Farrell, 'Few Supporters and No Organisation?' *passim*.

⁶ Coakley, 'The Rise and Fall of Minor Parties in Ireland, 1922-2011', Clark and Weeks (eds), *Radical or Redundant?*, pp. 51, 54.

the older school of nationalism associated with the Irish Parliamentary Party. This is explored through scrutiny of its personnel, organisation and symbolism. The League could in fact be termed a ‘legacy party’ representing the remnants of the older party’s political culture. By examining the ways in which the League drew on the varying traces of the Irish Party, it is argued that, despite the League’s dramatic and rapid collapse, its very existence helped to make the IPP’s legacy visible in the Free State.

The origins of the National League

Any efforts to mobilise the constituency of opinion once loyal to the Irish Party inevitably looked towards Captain William Archer Redmond. A sitting TD hugely popular in his Waterford constituency, he was the clearest symbol of the old parliamentary tradition in the new state. His early entry into Free State politics and his increasingly ambitious rhetoric at anniversary events for his father and uncle seemed to indicate an appetite to assume such a role. Having escaped almost miraculously unscathed from a motor car accident in the late summer of 1925, he had emerged as a prominent if sometimes controversial figure in the Dáil.⁷

At the 1925 Redmond anniversary celebrations, Capt. Redmond clearly told the crowd that he felt it was time that he and they made their contribution to the new politics. On the one hand, such events were non-political (nominally at least) and nothing immediately sprang from his words. However, by the time of the Willie Redmond Anniversary in Ennis in June 1926, Redmond had adopted a stronger tone calling on the crowd to ‘come with me and we will fight as we fought before’.⁸ Such a declaration seemed to shock John Dillon who wrote to O’Donnell that Redmond’s ‘rather remarkable’ speech seemed to show he was resolved to founding a new party.⁹

In reality, Dillon knew this was precisely what Redmond was considering. Although he remained in aloof retirement, his old parliamentary colleague, William Doris, kept

⁷ *Irish Independent*, 27 July 1925.

⁸ *Waterford Star*, 18 June 1926; *Clare Champion*, 19 June 1926.

⁹ John Dillon to O’Donnell, 17 June 1926, NLI O’Donnell Papers Ms. 14,561 (1).

him briefed on meetings among old MPs.¹⁰ Meetings of such figures crystallised around the National Club and by May, Tom O'Donnell had already conducted informal consultations with former Irish Party activists prior to the event in Ennis.¹¹ Dillon had even been involved in efforts to bring Richard Hazleton home from England to speak at Ennis. Both he and Doris were particularly keen that Hazleton, one of the few young stars of the pre-1918 party, would be coaxed back into Irish public life. It may be that Dillon felt the return of someone like Hazleton to Irish politics was a great benefit in any case.¹² For others, it was clear they hoped the Willie Redmond event would be a stepping stone for the former North Galway MP to become involved in the new party the old Nationalists were considering. Hazleton refused, apparently thinking any acceptance would indicate re-entry into Irish political life. However, he privately admitted his attitude may have been different if he had known Dillon was involved.¹³

Even without Hazleton, a meeting was called for 10 June in Dublin to form an organisation with a view to securing representation 'in the public life of the country'.¹⁴ Invites were extended to many old Irish Party members and followers including Doris, David Sheehy and Dan McMenemy. Although John Dillon was invited, he opted not to attend.¹⁵ In any case, he could rely on Doris to relay events to him. Doris's report told Dillon that there were about forty at this meeting with a further twenty (including Hazleton) sending letters of apology. Although Doris's account was certainly not negative, he remarked on the lack of enthusiasm and long silences between speakers.¹⁶

¹⁰ B.C. Hackett to Dillon, 17 July 1926, TCD John Dillon Papers 6786/2018.

¹¹ Doris to Dillon, 8 May 1926, TCD John Dillon Papers 6753/366.

¹² Doris to Dillon, 4 June 1926, TCD John Dillon Papers 6753/371. The Anniversary Committee in Clare was also extremely keen to have Hazleton deliver the oration, Doris to Dillon, 5 June 1926, John Dillon Papers 6753/372.

¹³ Hazleton to Dillon, 31 May 1926; Doris to Dillon, 30 May 1926, TCD John Dillon Papers 6755/696; 6753/368.

¹⁴ O'Donnell to Dillon, 4 June 1926, TCD John Dillon Papers 6759/1424.

¹⁵ Dillon later told O'Donnell that he did not feel the time was right for such a move though he supported them and wrote that he would not discourage his old friends, O'Donnell and Redmond, Dillon to O'Donnell, 4 July 1926, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms. 14,461 (1). Dillon had also missed the Ennis Anniversary as bizarrely, he 'did not feel free to accept the invitation to attend as he had for some time decided not to attend any public demonstrations' just two years after he delivered the oration at the John Redmond Anniversary, *Dundalk Democrat*, 19 June 1926.

¹⁶ Doris to Dillon, 11 June 1926, TCD John Dillon Papers 6753/376.

Privately, Dillon had expressed grave doubts as to the leaders' abilities to navigate the difficult course ahead.¹⁷ He felt the new party had an enormous task resurrecting the old constitutionalists amid the violence which had transpired, yet he felt it would 'sweep the country' if it had 'a competent leader, candidates and money'.¹⁸ Similarly, T.P. O'Connor wrote to his old confidante asking 'what hope can there be for any party with such leaders?' even if he hoped the very fact that such a party could be founded was perhaps a 'more hopeful' sign.¹⁹

The League won back an old activist from Cumann na nGaedheal as Henry Harrison, disillusioned by the collapse of the Boundary Commission, abandoned the Government.²⁰ However, while the implications of the Boundary Commission debacle were obvious for nationalists in Northern Ireland, Harrison was far from being the only disgruntled voice in the Free State either.²¹ Dissatisfied individuals in Cumann na nGaedheal formed a new party, Clann Éireann, on 25 January 1926; this was led principally by former Government TD William Magennis and others including Maurice Moore and War of Independence veterans Dan Breen and Padraic Ó Máille. The party condemned the Boundary Commission, argued for the removal of the oath of allegiance, lower taxation and protectionism (a policy closely identified with Arthur Griffith). However, by far the most significant new party was Fianna Fáil, formed on 23 March 1926. Led by Éamon de Valera, this grouping split from their anti-Treaty colleagues in Sinn Féin after the defeat of a motion calling on TDs to take their seats in the Dáil in the event of the oath being removed. It soon set out for the upcoming general election on 9 June 1927, fundraising both at home and in the United States and tapping into the extant roots of old IRA and Sinn Féin networks around the Free State.²² Although Fianna Fáil still refused to take the oath of allegiance, the party campaigned on the basis that it would use the power of referendum enshrined in the Constitution to remove the oath thereby allowing

¹⁷ Dillon to T.P. O'Connor, 17 September 1926, TCD John Dillon Papers 6744/992.

¹⁸ Dillon to O'Connor, 17 September 1926, TCD John Dillon Papers, 6744/992.

¹⁹ O'Connor to Dillon, 20 September 1926, TCD John Dillon Papers 6744/993.

²⁰ Harrison would stand for the League in the Dublin County constituency.

²¹ Hepburn, *Catholic Belfast and Nationalist Ireland*, pp. 259-260.

²² Richard Dunphy, *The Making of Fianna Fáil Power in Ireland 1923-1948* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 70-71, 75.

republicans to take their seats. Robbed of most of its talent by Fianna Fáil, Sinn Féin had little funding and few members facing into the June contest.²³

The League's policies and symbolism

So how could the former Home Rulers distinguish themselves in a crowded and rapidly evolving political landscape? Neil Glackin has commented on the vagueness of many speeches from Redmond and O'Donnell and argued that 'certainly, the new party did not appear to represent anything new in Irish politics'.²⁴ One of the reasons why some contemporaries, like Moss, agreed with this sentiment was the League's failure to create a distinct image. In John Coakley's view, 'its main political plank was its stated desire to move the Irish people away from Civil War politics, and to offer itself as an alternative to the sterility of the Fianna Fáil-Cumann na nGaedheal confrontation.'²⁵ However, the League had to establish where it intended to lead people; they promised a break from the Civil War division, but what was their alternative? The third Home Rule Bill and the invocations of Parnell and Redmond apparently offered little guidance to the post-Treaty Free State.

The League's identity issues revolved around an inherent contradiction surrounding an ostensibly 'new party' as the leadership often asserted versus the tendency of even O'Donnell and others to refer to it as the National Party or themselves as the Nationalists. Such monikers surely cast minds back to the IPP. O'Donnell seemed to feel the need to consult Dillon on almost all things, even postponing a decision on naming the party until he heard from him.²⁶ The name eventually adopted for the new party, 'Irish National League', itself called to mind Parnell's National League of the 1880s. This inclination to look back was obvious as the League's launch in Waterford was clearly reminiscent of the Anniversary events held for John and Willie Redmond in previous years. Organising Secretary B.C. Hackett and O'Donnell specifically ordered trains from Dublin calling at the major centres along the south-east coast and many of the same individuals who manned the local

²³ Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland*, p. 443.

²⁴ Glackin, 'Home Rulers in a Free State', p. 10.

²⁵ Coakley, 'Minor Parties in Irish Political Life', p. 289.

²⁶ Doris to Dillon, 18 June 1926, TCD John Dillon Papers 6753/379. Interestingly, the name 'United Ireland Association' seemed to be favoured at first. O'Donnell to Dillon, 13 July 1926 and 15 March 1927, TCD John Dillon Papers 6759/1428, 1433 for examples of O'Donnell seeking advice.

Anniversary organising committees were once again involved.²⁷ Older nationalist symbols such as the green flag with the gold harp were prominent and the tricolour missing while the meeting also saw bands and processions along much the same lines as previous years.²⁸

Handbills and notices for the party also invoked Parnell and John Redmond, and often concluded with the legend 'GOD SAVE IRELAND' at the bottom, a slogan on Home Rule ephemera dating back to the 1880s. Membership cards for the League were also the same green cards which previously been used for the UIL in the days of the old Party.²⁹ In some ways, the whole movement could be rather Edwardian in its worldview. Waterford supporter and editor of the *Munster Express* Edward Walsh wrote in September 1926 that the League had alienated Tom Kettle's widow Mary at an early stage by not involving women.³⁰ Although none of the post-1922 parties was particularly strong on female representation, it could be argued the spectre of an exclusively male cadre of old party veterans added to the sense of continuity with an older movement rather than the dawn of a new one.

The League's constitution (influenced in part at least by Dillon) articulated a belief that 'a very large section' of Irish people had 'no voice' and had taken 'no part' in the running of the country for the past six years.³¹ The party declared it would not go into the reasons, but in order to move on from the troubles of the past, the leaders of the League had now to come forward. The counter to the claim that the League was merely reaching further back in history to the Irish Party was made in the constitution's first point: the party was open to 'all Irishmen who believe in the

²⁷ Redmondites at local level threw themselves into such work enthusiastically; see *Waterford Star*, 13, 20 & 27 August 1926.

²⁸ *Irish Truth*, 18 September 1926. The Barrack Street band which had been loyal to Redmond events had actually been attacked at a gathering in Waterford in 1922 when republican followers sang 'The Soldier's song' in reaction to the IPP anthem 'A Nation Once Again'. The band had previously refused to play under the tricolour, *Evening News*, 6 June 1922; *Waterford Standard*, 10 June 1922.

²⁹ Thomas White to B.C. Hackett, 23 November 1926, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms. 15,461 (5).

³⁰ Edward Walsh to B.C. Hackett, 3 September 1926, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms. 15,461 (3).

However, Mary Kettle was also apparently approached to chair the first National League meeting in Rathmines but did not take part, see Meeting of Dublin Organising Committee of the National League, 11 March 1927, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms. 16,186.

³¹ Irish National League Constitution and Rules, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms. 15,460 (5). Dillon had hinted that he himself fell into this category when he remarked that he was actually voting in the 1925 Seanad election for Patrick Hooper, Dillon to O'Connor, 17 September 1925, TCD John Dillon Papers 6744/981.

National right of Ireland'.³² It called on people to 'unite on a common platform' to serve the country. The document went on to advocate reunion with the north by setting an example of good governance in the south rather than coercion. Help for agriculture was mentioned though there was an avoidance of any divide between wealthier and poorer farmers with the focus on easing the farmer's tax burden and improving education. The party also included a claim to 'promote the dignity and rights of labour, to establish better relations and more cordial recognition of each other's rights and duties between employer and employed'. This point was absent from the first draft of the party's constitution and seemed to be a clear attempt to win votes from the Labour Party. In this sense, the League was adopting the populist catch-all pose of the IPP and the residue of working class support the old party had retained even as late as 1918 was presumably thought to be worth plundering.³³

Only after the above policies did the party refer to the issue of taxation being excessive before mentioning improvements in education, legislation for town tenants, encouragement of the Irish language, and the unification of road, rail and canal transport. On education, the League stressed teaching the young skills needed for industry and agriculture which would have practical benefit in later life. The Irish language was to be promoted according to the wishes of the people and the significance of aiding the Gaeltacht regions financially was prioritised though the League would soon oppose compulsory Irish. The constitution was completed by a call to

... take up and preserve the best traditions of Irish nationalism. To secure the unity and the prosperity of the nation by inculcating a spirit of fellowship and of national self-respect among all classes, to welcome all Irishmen into the service of Ireland, teaching that peace, industry and thrift are the basis of, and can alone secure national prosperity and greatness.³⁴

³² Irish National League Constitution and Rules, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms. 15,460 (5).

³³ Brian Hanley in *History Ireland* hedge school podcast refers to this point. Recording available at <http://www.historyireland.com/podcasts-channel/home-rule-lost-opportunity-or-sell-out/> accessed: 10 September 2014.

³⁴ Irish National League Constitution and Rules, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms. 15,460 (5).

In spite of this, most platform speeches, especially from O'Donnell, could be reduced to the national question, high taxation and government expenditure and, if so desired, attacks on Cumann na nGaedheal for being ex-revolutionaries masquerading as a law and order party. Although O'Donnell initially sought to stick to the new party's pledge not to rake up past enmities, allusions to the violence of the years 1916-23 and the contempt of many Irish Party followers for it were clearly just beneath the surface in such attacks on the Government party's law and order credentials. The League sought to position itself as a constitutional nationalist party very much in the vein of the previous IPP, which was remembered for parliamentary methods, the Fenian-Parnellite nexus and Redmond's 1914 strategy notwithstanding. However, Cumann na nGaedheal (a part of the Sinn Féin movement which had defeated the old IPP and advocated political violence) was now claiming the very ground the old Nationalists wished to cultivate. Establishing a clear image was clearly vital for the nascent nationalist party, yet the League was to muddle its way through this issue.

Redmond and O'Donnell had entered the fray faced not just with other new parties, but with Cumann na nGaedheal already established as a Government party, anti-Treaty Sinn Féin or Fianna Fáil defending a considerable body of voters and even Dáil seats (though they refused to take them). Labour and Farmers' parties were the ostensible defenders of sectional interests, including old Home Rule supporters. The unifying national movement of the Irish Party no longer existed and was going to be virtually impossible to recreate.³⁵ Although the League made a distinctive policy stand in opposing compulsory Irish, the sense to which this policy could be used to present the League as against the language entirely (despite O'Donnell's history of supporting Irish) made some supporters uneasy initially.³⁶ With self-government now achieved and a choice of parties, the new League faced a difficult task in appeasing its various support networks and still producing a compelling manifesto.³⁷

³⁵ Glackin, 'Home Rulers in a Free State', p. 41.

³⁶ Such unease extended to the prominent Hibernian priest in Donegal, Rev. John McCafferty (McCafferty would later succeed Joe Devlin as AOH President in 1934), McCafferty to Tom O'Donnell, December 1926; Tom O'Donnell to Vincent McMullin, 12 April 1927, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms. 15,461 (6); 15,463 (5). O'Donnell had been a staunch advocate of the Irish language, giving his first speech in the Commons in Irish and supporting Irish as a compulsory subject for matriculation to the National University in 1908.

³⁷ Others to criticise the League's language policy included *The Leader* which claimed Redmond had 'no outstanding ability' and was 'trading on his father's name', *The Leader*, 16 April 1927.

The National League and its support networks

The National League began life in the National Club among old MPs and activists; however, the extent to which the party drew on old networks actually extended far beyond this. Repeated claims that it was a new party and that restarting the Irish Party would be the work of ‘lunatics’ appeared to convince nobody.³⁸ While research on many smaller parties, in varying periods, has highlighted their reliance on major personalities and a lack of strong branch organisation, efforts to build up the National League began with attempts to draw on the legacy of the old party and its supporting bodies.³⁹ Lists of names for every county are evident in the O’Donnell papers as a guide to organisation while there was also a disparate remnant of unreconciled Irish Party men at local government level. As early as September 1926, individuals like T.F. McGahon, Ald. John Magennis, John P. McCabe and the Waterford Redmondite councillors were able to meet at a conference of the Association of Municipal Authorities, discuss the League and give each other posters for the upcoming launch of the new party in Waterford.⁴⁰ However, as Regan has observed, ‘the old Irish parliamentary party network, such as had survived, had limitations by 1927’.⁴¹

While the mainstay of grassroots organisation, the United Irish League had long since withered away, the Ancient Order of Hibernians persisted, especially in border areas. Although attention has been drawn to AOH support for the National League, the relationship between the two was a curious one and bears further exploration.⁴² The AOH retained vitality for Devlin and other Nationalist politicians north of the border and certain branches or individuals in the Order were clearly keen to reorganise the old forces in the south too.⁴³ In March 1926, the Cavan County Board of the Order had passed a resolution calling for a national (32 county) demonstration of the old Nationalist forces suggesting commemoration of John or Willie Redmond as a suitable focus for such an event. Copies of this resolution were sent to Dillon,

³⁸ *Waterford Star*, 18 March 1927. See also *Waterford News*, 13 August 1926.

³⁹ Coakley, ‘The Rise and Fall of Minor Parties in Ireland’, pp. 46-78. Glackin has attributed this strategy to the League’s lack of funds, Glackin, ‘Home Rulers in a Free State’, p. 11.

⁴⁰ Edward Walsh to B.C. Hackett, 3 September 1926, NLI O’Donnell Papers Ms. 15,461 (3).

⁴¹ Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution*, p. 265.

⁴² *Ibid*; Gaughan, *A Political Odyssey*, p. 164.

⁴³ AOH membership in the North increased in early 1926, Hepburn, *Catholic Belfast and Nationalist Ireland*, p. 260.

Capt. Redmond, Alfie Byrne, Joe Devlin, John Dillon Nugent, Cllr John P McCabe (Chair of the AOH Dublin County Board) and others involved with Redmond anniversaries. Devlin appears to have ignored this resolution. Nugent felt the demonstration could not be contemplated unless there was ‘some definite object in view’; he considered this object might be a policy such as abolishing the oath or ending partition rather than a new party and decided to postpone a definite decision on the matter.⁴⁴

Clearly, this proposition was envisaged in an all-Ireland context and therefore sought to mirror the unified national approach the AOH had always associated with the Irish Party. On the other hand, Redmond and O’Donnell’s new League was to be a Free State venture. There were other difficulties. Firstly, the association with the AOH, always strongest around Devlin’s Belfast fiefdom was a discouraging venture for some potential followers. Tom Kettle’s brother Laurence felt it was a mistake and that Parnell should clearly have been the starting point for a new party with designs on success.⁴⁵ Similarly, W.G. Fallon, in trying to organise the new party in Cork, was told by local solicitor Jasper Wolfe that the association of Hibernians in the new movement had made people fear an unwelcome ‘resurrection of the old Mollies’.⁴⁶ Official League literature and propaganda then stressed linkages to Parnell rather than the AOH.

Nugent had remained steadfast in his belief that the AOH should remain detached from the Treaty dispute and told a meeting of the Board of Erin in August 1926 that ‘without a daily newspaper a new National Organisation, however sorely needed and earnestly called for, would be considerably handicapped’.⁴⁷ Nugent instead opined that members should join Cumann na nGaedheal, Labour, the Farmers’ Party or independents and try to exercise influence selection of candidates in that way. Although Nugent welcomed the launch of the National League in the *Hibernian*

⁴⁴ Nugent to John Dillon, 1 March 1926, TCD John Dillon Papers 6758/1349.

⁴⁵ Laurence Kettle to Fallon, 14 December 1926, NLI Fallon Papers Ms. 22,582. Even Clann Éireann invoked Parnell’s ‘march of a nation’ speech; see Outline of Clann Éireann’s policy and aims, 22 January 1926, UCC William O’Brien Papers AU/2.

⁴⁶ Jasper Wolfe to Fallon, 26 October 1926, NLI Fallon Papers Ms. 22,583.

⁴⁷ National Secretary’s Report, Meeting of National Board, 21 January 1926; National Secretary’s report, Meeting of National Board 5 August 1926, Ancient Order of Hibernian Collections NAI – LOU 13/1/3 (a).

Journal in October 1926, the next Board of Erin meeting the following March reveals a different picture.⁴⁸

Nugent dismissed the idea of some members that the AOH should become a political party. The abstention policy of the republicans was ‘absurd’ in Nugent’s view, even if he felt that they shared the AOH’s opposition to the Government. He doubted that merely sectional organisations like the Farmers’ Party and Labour could ever attract mass support, particularly as ‘a party led by an Englishman like Mr Thomas Johnson is never likely to appeal to Irish electors.’⁴⁹ Turning to the National League, he praised the party, but noted that ‘their fears of being branded or associated with the Hibernians’ saw the League state among their aims the desire ‘to create it [the party] free from all the entanglements with past controversies, and from any control from previously existing organisation’. In Nugent’s view, this ‘could not be interpreted in any other way than an attack on the Hibernians’. Nugent thus insisted that the time had not yet come for the Order to renounce its political neutrality.⁵⁰ In June, Nugent in the *Hibernian Journal*, advised readers to vote for Hibernians, or those friendly to the Order, and where ‘there was no other claim upon them, to give preference to the National League candidates’.⁵¹ In the aftermath of the election, he expressed satisfaction with this strategy.⁵²

In spite of this however, in the Order’s border heartland, members easily slotted into the League’s organisation. Many of the Hibernian branches in border areas were sustained in their non-political purposes as benefit societies offering social support to its members; nonetheless, many members were still naturally sympathetic to the old Irish Party. Although Hibernian Michael Oge McFadden stood for Cumann na nGaedheal in Donegal, the National League benefited from AOH organisation and Daniel McMenamin (Donegal) and James Coburn (Louth) stood for the party while AOH members also canvassed for former MP Jeremiah McVeagh in Monaghan.⁵³

⁴⁸ *Hibernian Journal*, October 1926, pp. 150-151.

⁴⁹ Meeting of Free State National Board, 3 March 1927, NAI – LOU 13/1/3 (a).

⁵⁰ Meeting of Free State National Board, 3 March 1927, NAI – LOU 13/1/3 (a).

⁵¹ *Hibernian Journal*, June 1927, p. 27.

⁵² Secretary’s preliminary report, AOH Biennial Convention, 19 July 1927, NAI – LOU 13/1/3 (a).

⁵³ *Dundalk Democrat* editor and Hibernian T.F. McGahon was approached to run in Louth. He declined, but was able to recommend Coburn. Sometimes referred to “the Duker”, Coburn was in the tradition of the ‘Labour-Nationalist’, according to McGahon, and his support for the working class in the Louth area seemed to chime with McGahon’s point that the best hope for winning votes from the

However, another prominent Hibernian, Cavan's John F. O'Hanlon was elusive in his dealings with O'Donnell and eventually decided to run as an Independent. This was despite the fact that in later years he spoke at Hibernian rallies in Cavan and Monaghan, defending John Redmond and John Dillon and criticising the Government and partition. Perhaps even more puzzling was the fact that O'Hanlon had seconded the motion of the Cavan County Board of the AOH calling for a national demonstration in March 1926.⁵⁴ O'Hanlon's refusal was a major blow to the National League as he had polled well at the 1925 by-election and was the most prominent Hibernian in Cavan. O'Donnell prevailed upon fellow brother T. M. Farrelly to stand instead, but he felt it unwise to oppose O'Hanlon in the circumstances.⁵⁵

While the AOH tried to remain aloof from 'sectional' movements, the National League sought to draw on lobby groups that may have been traditionally warm to the IPP. P. Conway of the Licensed Vintners group attended the first private meeting in Jury's Hotel in June and vintners were increasingly disillusioned by Kevin O'Higgins's repressive legislation.⁵⁶ A new and rather small party like the League also needed funds. While this proved little problem to de Valera's Fianna Fáil, it became a serious issue for the National League. Many of the organisations and supporters that the League relied upon did not have the necessary cash flow or benefactors to allow for expensive canvassing techniques. The League got some backing from merchants and manufacturers and the Licensed Grocers and Vintners' Protection Association also formally endorsed the party in June.⁵⁷ However, the

Government was to exploit the levels of poverty in the country. *Hibernian Journal*, March 1941, p. 10; McGahon to Fallon, 23 August 1926, NLI Fallon Papers Ms. 22,583. Coburn had apparently intended running for Labour in Louth in 1923, but, having lost out at the party convention ran as an independent labour candidate in Monaghan. Interestingly, the man who proposed his opponent, Cathal O'Shannon, for Labour was a Hibernian, *Dundalk Democrat*, 18 August 1923.

⁵⁴ Resolution of Cavan County Board of the AOH signed Thomas Lynch County Secretary 22 March 1926, TCD John Dillon Papers 6758/1349.

⁵⁵ O'Hanlon's position was a little unusual. After meeting with him, O'Donnell felt he was 'thoroughly friendly' to the National League, yet he would not stand for them, see O'Donnell to T.M. Farrelly, 28 March 1927, NLI O'Donnell Papers. Ms. 15,462 (10). In 1932, local Fianna Fáil TD Paddy Smith claimed Cavan Hibernians had wanted O'Hanlon to stand for the National League, *Irish Independent*, 8 January 1932.

⁵⁶ Doris to Dillon, 11 June 1926, TCD John Dillon Papers 6753/376.

⁵⁷ Musgrave (of Musgrave Brothers) to O'Donnell, 5 April 1927, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms. 15,463 (3). The party also had to deny claims that the League received funding to the tune of £10,000 from the Licensed Vintners, *Free Press*, 2 July 1927; Draft resolution of Licensed Grocers and Vintners' Protection Association, June 1927, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms. 15,465 (1). Harrison's *Irish Truth* also

League denied substantial backing from the vintners, and the backing of such businesses does not appear to have been significant in any financial sense.

Capt. Redmond's main preoccupation as an independent TD, legislation for the town tenants, was also quickly adopted as a National League policy. From Redmond's perspective, this was an obvious alliance for the League as again it drew on lines of continuity with his father's party and the redoubtable town tenants' organiser, Coghlan Briscoe. The competing town tenants' organisations around the country had been agitating for another bill since the defeat of Redmond's 1924 proposals and in January 1927, Redmond and James Cosgrave led a National League measure on the issue in the Dáil.⁵⁸ This measure, again unsuccessful, was broadly on the same lines as Redmond's previous initiative except the saleable interest now only applied to business tenants and there was still no compulsory purchase feature.⁵⁹ However, its defeat did not preclude Coghlan Briscoe's movement from supporting the League and Redmond spoke at the Town Tenants' Convention on 24 March, claiming that if Parnell's movement had been solely reliant on farmers, it would not have been the success that it was. O'Donnell also told delegates they were not Bolshevik, but wanted only fair play.⁶⁰

Like any political party, the National League would have liked a favourable press to aid its progress; in this way, the provincial newspaper editors once loyal to the Irish Party might have been expected to promote the League. As Marie-Louise Legg has shown, the role of the press (both national and provincial) became increasingly important in the nineteenth century, aiding the political movements of O'Connell and Parnell as well as social movements like Fr Mathew's temperance initiative.⁶¹ Politicians who had worked for home rule were thus accustomed to the support of newspapers and were well aware of their value. With the *Freeman's Journal* no more, the National League was without a natural ally among the major national

defended the vintners in the early months of 1927 as O'Higgins's legislation passed through the Dáil, see *Irish Truth*, 26 February 1927; 12 March 1927.

⁵⁸ *Waterford Star*, 22 January 1926. Another Town Tenants Association had been established in 1926 with close links to Labour Party TD Daniel Morrissey, *Waterford Standard*, 23 June 1926.

⁵⁹ *Waterford Star* 28 January 1927. *Dáil Debates* vol. 18 cc. 173-183, 26 January 1927.

⁶⁰ Report of All Ireland Town Tenants Convention, 24 March 1927, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms. 15,462 (10).

⁶¹ Marie-Louise Legg, *Newspapers and Nationalism: The Irish Provincial Press, 1850-1892* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1999), p. 12.

newspapers. Once Henry Harrison joined the League, it could depend on favourable coverage from his weekly publication *Irish Truth*. However, whereas Fianna Fáil would receive little support in regional newspapers, it was soon clear that the provincial press provided a legacy of Irish Party support that the National League could try to harness to compensate for the lack of a national organ.⁶² Major regional publications still in the hands of men loyal to the Irish Party or support bodies like the AOH included William Corcoran's *Free Press* in Wexford; Walsh's *Munster Express*; the *Waterford Star*; the *Dundalk Democrat* edited by T.F. McGahon; the *Roscommon Messenger* and *Westmeath Examiner* both edited by ex-MP John P Hayden, and the *Anglo-Celt* (Cavan and Monaghan) edited by John F. O'Hanlon.⁶³ Such publications tended to cover League rallies and give the party publicity to greater or lesser extents.⁶⁴ However, even this was an imperfect network. As mentioned earlier, the *Anglo-Celt* had adopted a neutral stance defending farming interests since 1922 while others had moved closer to the Government. The *Cork Examiner* was not hostile to the National League, but remained firmly a Government paper in 1926 while the *Connacht Tribune* in Galway was clear that transferring allegiance from Cumann na nGaedheal back to the neo-Redmondites would be a retrograde step.⁶⁵

Problems with the old networks

Nevertheless, National League rhetoric remained optimistic. Some newspapers perhaps overestimated the potential of the new party too. It might be argued that this indicated an awareness in the Free State of a strong element of old Nationalist

⁶² While Fianna Fáil meetings received little coverage during the election campaign, the party instead used its funds to purchase advertising space in the provincial press. For quotes offered to the party, see telegrams from various local newspapers including *Westport News*, *Western People* and *Clare Champion* to Fianna Fáil, 28 May 1927, NLI Frank Gallagher Papers Ms. 18,358 (1).

⁶³ A further weakness here was the unwillingness of any of those editors to run for election. Hayden felt that there was no grounds to give him hope in Roscommon. Corcoran felt he could not run as he held Government contracts for Stationary Office printing and ran government advertisements in the *Free Press*. He even asked Redmond to seek the advice of the Attorney General on this matter. See Hayden to Lawler, 27 January 1927, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms. 15,462 (3) and Corcoran to Redmond, 19 March 1927, O'Donnell Papers Ms. 15,462 (9).

⁶⁴ For example, *Dundalk Democrat*, 11 December 1926, 2 April 1927, *Westmeath Examiner*, 19 March 1927; *Anglo-Celt*, 19 March 1927. Farrell has pointed out that in the midlands, the *Longford Leader*, *Westmeath Independent* and *Westmeath Examiner* all switched from being Irish Party papers to Free State papers over time, Farrell, 'Few Supporters and No Organisation?', p. 134.

⁶⁵ The *Connacht Tribune* wished former MPs James Cosgrave and William Duffy well, but reminded readers it was no longer 1914 and the country had to look forward, *Connacht Tribune*, 28 May 1927.

support, yet it was also a time of general political uncertainty.⁶⁶ The issues with the AOH and John F. O’Hanlon’s decision to remain independent were not the only problems the League faced trying to reassemble the IPP’s coalition of interests. While some old supporters welcomed the League and told O’Donnell and Hackett of their relief that ‘the old Irish Party were coming to the rescue’, the drawbacks to building a new party from the ashes of another were quickly exposed.⁶⁷ Some local organisers wrote to the League’s central branch in Dublin of the need to recruit candidates who, though they may have supported the IPP in the past, would not be automatically associated with the party like a former MP or councillor.⁶⁸

In an echo of the late Irish Party’s difficulties in 1918, problems also persisted in coaxing old supporters to join the League or stand for election.⁶⁹ Numerous correspondents answered League requests for assistance with declarations they had left politics for good.⁷⁰ Former MP John Lymbrick Esmonde asked for his name to be removed from any National League events. Esmonde stated he would have been happy to take an active part if he agreed with the League’s programme, but he felt this was not the case.⁷¹ Stephen Gwynn was equally ‘ambiguous’ and showed little inclination to join the League.⁷² Although it was clear there was a substantial branch of recalcitrant Irish Party followers in the country, some had either detached themselves from politics or gravitated slowly towards newer parties. Referring to a request to join the League from William Fallon, one former Irish Party supporter in Cork replied that ‘as regards this political wild goose chase I wouldn’t touch it with a forty foot barge pole nor with a rotten egg for that matter’.⁷³ Popular Dublin TD Alfie Byrne joined Jasper Wolfe in remaining independent. Wolfe, a former Protestant Home Ruler, was approached to run for the League by Lawler on 13 April

⁶⁶ Along with rumours of John Dillon and Devlin running, some reporters speculated any new party could win up to 30 seats. *Free Press*, 14 August 1926; *Waterford News*, 1 October 1926 and *Irish Times*, 7 August 1926.

⁶⁷ D. O’Sullivan to O’Donnell, undated (1926), NLI O’Donnell Papers Ms. 15,461 (1).

⁶⁸ For example, Michael Ronan to the National League undated (1926), NLI O’Donnell Papers, Ms. 15,460.

⁶⁹ Glackin, ‘Home Rulers in a Free State’, p. 12. Former Limerick MP Michael Joyce, who stood down in 1918 due to intimidation, was initially too disillusioned to stand in 1927. However, he was eventually persuaded to represent the League, Michael Joyce to Tom O’Donnell, 16 August 1926 NLI O’Donnell Papers Ms. 15,461 (1).

⁷⁰ For example P.J. Skehan to Tom O’Donnell, 28 January 1926, NLI O’Donnell Papers Ms. 15,461 (1).

⁷¹ Esmonde to Hackett, 7 September 1926, NLI O’Donnell Papers Ms. 15,461 (3).

⁷² Reid, *The Lost Ireland of Stephen Gwynn*, p. 214.

⁷³ McCarthy O’Hea to Fallon, 2 August 1926, NLI Fallon Papers Ms. 22,583.

1927.⁷⁴ Wolfe replied that he felt he would gain few votes by adopting the League banner and would actually lose many votes by doing so. He went on to claim that he would win many old Redmondite votes as an independent.⁷⁵

Prominent old Irish Party followers like J.J. Horgan and George Crosbie, editor of the *Cork Examiner* and a former IPP candidate, but now aligned with Cumann na nGaedheal, also declined to join. Similarly, the lack of faith in the party's new leadership, expressed privately by T.P. O'Connor and John Dillon, would see the latter's son James eschew the opportunity to stand for the League. James Dillon had been underwhelmed by Capt. Redmond and the remnants of the IPP at Westminster while visiting with his father in the early 1920s though he would still canvass for the League at the June election.⁷⁶ Not all these misgivings can be explained away by aversion to a particular element of the League's milieu, such as was the case with Laurence Kettle and the AOH; Horgan remained a Hibernian all his life while Dillon junior was to become prominent in the Order and later its National President.

Further problems arose from supporters who wanted either Joe Devlin (resolved to confine himself to politics in Northern Ireland) or the aged John Dillon actively involved in the party.⁷⁷ Many local activists insisted that either Redmond or O'Donnell speak at every meeting. Where this was not possible, principal speakers included former MPs Tom Condon, Henry Harrison and former IPP candidates William Fallon and Daniel McMenamin along with ex-Nationalist councillors. O'Donnell's biographer, J. Anthony Gaughan, has thus credited O'Donnell with the main organisational work in promoting the League and it is true that Redmond suffered from various illnesses which prevented him canvassing as actively as his colleague.⁷⁸ Even the phalanx of old support lobbies was troubled by the presence of

⁷⁴ Lawler to Jasper Wolfe, 13 April 1927, NLI O'Donnell Papers 15,463 (5). Others who attended some meetings, but showed no inclination to run for election included David Sheehy and J.P. Nanetti (son of the former MP).

⁷⁵ Wolfe to Lawler, 16 April 1927, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms. 15,463 (6). He added he would subscribe to their programme if elected. He also said Sheehy of the UDC and editor of the *Skibbereen Eagle* was writing about the part. The *Eagle* ultimately supported Wolfe in the election; see *Irish Truth*, 30 April 1927.

⁷⁶ Manning, *James Dillon*, p. 32.

⁷⁷ For example, Denis O'Carroll to Capt. Redmond, 11 January 1927, NLI O'Donnell Papers. Ms. 15,462 (1).

⁷⁸ For example, *Waterford Standard*, 11 December 1926. Gaughan, *A Political Odyssey*, pp. 156-7. This was felt when a meeting to launch the League in Cork had to be cancelled in December 1926 as

old Irish Party candidates in other parties. Patrick McKenna was still a Farmers' Party deputy in June 1927, yet he told John Dillon that he had the support of the vintners and ex-servicemen in Longford-Westmeath. This was hardly helpful to the National League candidate Richard Cleary and highlighted how other parties were now gaining from the legacies of Irish Party support in various parts of the Free State.⁷⁹

'The land for the people, not for the bullocks'? The National League and the Farmers' Party

The fact that McKenna was still a Farmers' Party TD by 1927 leads us to another legacy of the old Irish Party: the Land League. However, the legacy this period bequeathed to the Free State was both mixed and unresolved. Although Cumann na nGaedheal had made serious efforts to rectify the situation with the 1923 Land Act, agrarian concerns continued to impact on the politics of independent Ireland for decades.⁸⁰

As discussed in Chapter Two, the Farmers' Party had recorded some success in 1922 and 1923, including the election of some candidates that had been part of the wider Home Rule movement. However, it hardly bore comparison with the successful marriage of agrarian and party political organisation achieved under Parnell.⁸¹ The Irish Farmers' Union organisation had been maintained throughout the country and although this was not the same as a structure of party branches, it gave them a clear advantage over newer parties like the National League. Nevertheless, the Farmers continued to suffer from perceptions that it was only an organisation for larger farmers or ranchers. By the mid-1920s, it seemed as though the National League might have to make a choice to defend either larger or smaller landholders. Yet this was difficult for a party trying to harness the spirit of the old IPP as it had

Cork Nationalists insisted Redmond must be present. The rescheduled launch did not then take place until February 1927. See J. Cronin to Lawler, 13 January 1927, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms. 15,462 (2).

⁷⁹ Patrick McKenna to Dillon, 5 May 1927, TCD John Dillon Papers 6757/1142, see poster from Martin O'Byrne, secretary of the Licensed Grocers' and Vintners' Protection Association of Ireland 29 April 1927, NLI O'Donnell Papers, Ms. 15,464 (8).

⁸⁰ Dooley, *The Land for the People*, p. 55.

⁸¹ Tony Varley, "'The Class that Goes to the Wall': Colonel George O'Callaghan-Westropp, Class Politics and Identity in Cumann na nGaedheal Ireland', John Cunningham and Niall Ó Ciosáin (eds), *Culture and Society in Ireland since 1750: Essays in Honour of Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2015), p. 225.

traditionally sought the support of all farmers.⁸² William Doris was insistent that any new ‘Redmondite’ party would have to go back to its farming roots and run with his suggested motto: ‘the land for the people not for the bullocks’.⁸³ However, O’Donnell and others were unenthused by this idea and feared alienating the Farmers’ Union.⁸⁴ O’Donnell instead envisaged absorbing, or at least forming an alliance with the Farmers as a consolidation of the Land League legacy.⁸⁵

The National League wish to form some compact with the Farmers was reflected in the enthusiasm for such a move among some local activists and one renegade farmers group in Wexford did vote to support the League.⁸⁶ In the eyes of Henry Harrison, such an alliance would mirror that of Parnell and the Land League as he claimed Sinn Féin had only taken its agricultural policy from the old Nationalists.⁸⁷ The National League had competition in wooing the Farmers; Cumann na nGaedheal also sought to absorb the agrarian party and seemingly had more to offer than the emerging National League.⁸⁸

As it was, the Farmers’ Party was clearly split among old Nationalists, Cumann na nGaedheal, those who opposed the Treaty and former unionists.⁸⁹ Accordingly, efforts at National League-Farmers co-operation in late 1926 failed. Patrick McKenna was prominent in such efforts and was pressed to do all he could by O’Donnell, but this proved to be of no avail.⁹⁰ Although many activists wrote to Redmond and O’Donnell that a merger with the Farmers was best for both parties, it

⁸² *Hibernian Journal*, July 1926, p. 130.

⁸³ Doris to Dillon, 16 June 1926, TCD John Dillon Papers 6753/368. This was another take on the famous invocation of Laurence Ginnell ‘the land for the people and the road for the bullock’.

⁸⁴ Doris to Dillon, 18 June 1926, TCD John Dillon Papers 6753/379; O’Donnell to Dillon 13 July 1926, TCD John Dillon Papers 6759/1428; Dillon to O’Donnell, 14 July 1926, NLI O’Donnell Papers, Ms. 15,461 (1). Dillon suggested a compromise between O’Donnell’s draft on the issue which he felt ‘too vague’ and Doris’s proposal which O’Donnell had rejected. Dillon’s suggested line of action was a cautious approach of making a general statement advocating breaking up of ranches.

⁸⁵ Although Peadar O’Donnell and others on the left were beginning to agitate on the land annuities issue, John Dillon was insistent that the League should not broach the annuities issue as the moves of Maurice Moore and George Gavan Duffy was ‘a most dishonest agitation’, Dillon to O’Donnell, 26 January 1927, NLI O’Donnell Papers Ms. 15,462 (3).

⁸⁶ Patrick White to Capt. Redmond, 26 February 1927, NLI O’Donnell Papers Ms. 15,462 (7). *Free Press and Enniscorthy Echo*, 12 February 1927.

⁸⁷ *Irish Truth*, 8 January 1927.

⁸⁸ Farrell, ‘Few Supporters and No Organisation?’, p. 101.

⁸⁹ McKenna felt in his own constituency most old IPP voters were by then in the Farmers’ Union, McKenna to Dillon, 5 May 1927, TCD John Dillon Papers 6757/1142.

⁹⁰ O’Donnell to McKenna, undated (January 1927), NLI O’Donnell Papers Ms. 15,462 (1).

seems the majority of the Farmers were closest in sympathy with the Government. Despite this, the party voted in April to remain independent though they would be broadly supportive of the Government.⁹¹

Historical debates and the memory of the Irish Party

The legacy of the Great War and the place of ex-servicemen also featured in the League's election campaign. The work of the Tom Kettle memorial committee set up to erect a monument to the former MP had continued through the 1920s, though at a frustrating pace, and became an election issue. Originally set up on 30 October 1916, the committee included Joe Devlin and W. G Fallon as well as other prominent Dublin figures like Denis Coffey and Oliver St. John Gogarty.⁹² By early 1917, sufficient funds had either been subscribed or promised and St. Stephen's Green was chosen as a site for a memorial bust of Kettle. However, the first delay came that year after a meeting with the Commissioner of Public Works, when it was decided it would not be wise to erect the memorial until after the War. The subsequent War of Independence and Civil War delayed events still further. The Office of Public Works consented to the construction, but felt time should be allowed to pass before it was erected in the Green and the bust, once completed, remained in the National Gallery 'on loan and for safety'.⁹³ After the making of the pedestal was also delayed by a quarry workers' strike, the Committee set 25 March 1927 as the date for unveiling and Joe Devlin was invited to speak at the opening.⁹⁴ However, at this point, the OPW objected to the inscription and mention of the fact that Kettle died in France, and although they withdrew the objection a year later, it took another decade before the Kettle memorial took its current position in the centre of the Green.⁹⁵ The correspondence between Fallon and the OPW highlights that the upcoming election was another reason that the unveiling was cancelled and *Irish Truth* conceded as

⁹¹ *Irish Times* 23 April 1927. Also for example Joseph Cooney to Lawler, 28 March 1927, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms. 15,462 (10). The difficulties this created contributed to McKenna's defeat in June of that year and the Farmers' leader Denis Gorey actually defected to Cumann na nGaedheal.

⁹² T.M. Kettle Memorial Committee Report of Committee and Abstract of Accounts, July 1938, NLI Fallon Papers Ms. 22,598 (1).

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Irish Press*, September 16 1937. T.M. Kettle Memorial Committee Report of Committee and Abstract of Accounts, July 1938, NLI Fallon Papers. Ms. 22,598. Kettle's widow apparently would not consent to the unveiling while Cumann na nGaedheal were in power after the 1917 postponement. See Fallon to Joe Devlin, 14 March, 1930; Fallon to Mary Kettle, 14 March 1930, NLI Fallon Papers Ms. 22,598 (3). It was to be disturbed in the 1960s, see also *Evening Herald*, January 13, 1960 and Pašeta, 'Ireland's Last Home Rule Generation', pp. 27-9.

much, though the paper claimed that republicans would have respected the monument even if they disagreed with it.⁹⁶

Such a tale reveals the delicate cultural politics of remembrance in the new state, not least the difficulty faced by those from an Irish Party tradition who wished to commemorate their Great War dead.⁹⁷ If the reluctance of some old Party figures to re-enter politics denoted caution, the care with which the OPW viewed every step in the Kettle memorial process showed the sensitivities involved in even a symbolic foray into the public sphere. As well as being former MPs or candidates, many of those involved in the National League were also members of the groups and networks associated with the IPP or the Great War. In 1923, Capt. Redmond had been made vice-president of the Legion in the Free State and he was vocal on the foundation of a war memorial in Merrion Square while calls for its establishment were also prominent in Harrison's *Irish Truth*.⁹⁸ On 13 November 1926, the paper warned ex-servicemen in the state of 'a widely-flung net of conspiracy to rob you of your right to honour in your own country and to deprive your dead'.⁹⁹ According to the paper, acknowledging what Ireland 'really did' in war was being obscured due to two diverging elements of opinion: the strongly nationalist opinion who decried Irish war participation and, on the other hand, those who had an 'anti-Irish prejudice'.¹⁰⁰ Any suggestion that the money set aside for the memorial would instead be spent on veterans' relief was dismissed as a 'base and mean manoeuvre'.

Although leading former unionist figures in the British Legion in Ireland such as William Hickie and Bryan Cooper were actually unenthusiastic about the prospect of a large memorial in the square, *Irish Truth* claimed that few residents opposed the

⁹⁶ Fallon commented on the 'proximity of the General Election, and nobody wishes to make use of the ceremony of unveiling for propaganda purposes', see Fallon to Devlin; Fallon to Mary Kettle, 6 April 1927, NLI Fallon Papers Ms. 22,598 (4). Political concerns were always apparently paramount in the eyes of the OPW, T. Cassidy to Fallon, 4 March 1927, NLI Fallon Papers, Ms. 22,598 (4) and *Irish Truth*, 11 June 1927.

⁹⁷ Each year the Legion of Ex-Servicemen asked members of Free State government to lay wreath on Armistice Day. Each year the Government declined, but consented that a wreath be placed in its name, Myers, "'A Land Fit For Heroes'?" p. 43.

⁹⁸ *Evening Star*, 13 June 1923. Francis Cruise O'Brien wrote to *Irish Truth* praising the newspaper's contribution to the debate. *Irish Truth*, November 6, 1925.

⁹⁹ *Irish Truth*, 13 November 1926.

¹⁰⁰ *Irish Truth*, 13 November 1926.

scheme and that it just needed Oireachtas approval.¹⁰¹ The Irish National War Memorial Committee had indeed collected the £20,000, but it needed an act of parliament to complete the purchase from the Commissioners of the Square. This was not enough to satisfy Justice Minister Kevin O’Higgins. In spite of his own familial losses in the Great War, the Minister told the Dáil that to place a Great War memorial in Merrion Square would ‘give a wrong twist, as it were, a wrong suggestion, to the origins of this State.’ O’Higgins added:

No one denies the sacrifice, and no one denies the patriotic motives which induced the vast majority of those men to join the British Army to take part in the Great War, and, yet it is not on their sacrifice that this state is based, and I have no desire to see it suggested that it is.¹⁰²

The speech and the Government decision to oppose the scheme was denounced by those in the National League such as Redmond and Harrison, meaning the legacy of the Great War remained very much a part of contemporary political debate.

The sense to which the National League was effectively a legacy organisation of old Irish Party was further illustrated by the prevalence of historical debates and controversies on the campaign trail in June 1927. At the League’s Waterford launch, Redmond had claimed his role was not to revive the old dichotomies of Irish nationalism from Grattan versus the United Irishmen to the IPP against Sinn Féin.¹⁰³ However, the League consistently referenced its parliamentary antecedents and Redmond declared that the League was ‘going into the Dáil just as Parnell went into Westminster’.¹⁰⁴ In spite of imprecision over whether the League was going to be strong enough to form a government or not, this statement appeared to present Redmond’s new party with a formula for action, implying that the former party was

¹⁰¹ *Irish Truth*, 12 February, 2 April 1927. Cooper wanted a memorial costing £3,000 in Phoenix Park with the rest of the money contributed to ex-servicemen and their families. Neither his nor Hickie’s viewpoints got any sympathy from *Irish Truth*, 5 March 1927, 26 March 1927.

¹⁰² *Dáil Debates*, vol.19, cc. 400-402, 29 March 1927 and *Irish Times*, 30 March 1927.

¹⁰³ *Free Press*, 18 September 1926

¹⁰⁴ *Irish Independent*, 4 June 1927.

an example of what a minority parliamentary party could achieve.¹⁰⁵ However, such historical reference points could be turned against the League too.

William O'Brien had never forgiven the old Party and the AOH (one and the same thing in his eyes) for the 1909 Baton Convention and its aftermath. The first rumours of a new 'National' Party were given to him by Tim Healy, who had heard that John Dillon would lead any such party. Such an idea was treated with derision in the correspondence of Dillon's two old parliamentary enemies.¹⁰⁶ O'Brien was never a republican, but his desire to see the IPP defeated led to an affinity for Sinn Féin and de Valera which seemed to develop as the years passed and by 1927, he was increasingly sympathetic to Fianna Fáil.¹⁰⁷ In October 1926, O'Brien wrote an open letter to the *Irish Independent* endorsing de Valera's new party. Fianna Fáil was not shy about using this and the party subsequently published this letter as a handbill.¹⁰⁸ Such material was obviously seen to have some political capital and the Cork North West Fianna Fáil cumann passed a motion calling for his name to be put forward for convention in May 1927. O'Brien replied in the negative, citing his advanced age, but called on people to 'vote for Fianna Fáil candidates' in a 'life-or-death struggle between the nationality of Ireland and her perversion to the ideals of British Imperialism'.¹⁰⁹ O'Brien wrote again to the *Independent* condemning any effort at merger between the League and the Farmers pointing to how the old IPP denied farmers benefit that could have been gained from the old Wyndham Land Act.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ For example, *Free Press*, 28 May 1927. Redmond had made this analogy while canvassing in Clare too, *Irish Independent*, 16 May 1927.

¹⁰⁶ Healy to O'Brien, 26 February 1927; O'Brien to Healy, 27 February 1927, NLI O'Brien Papers Ms. 8566 (31).

¹⁰⁷ O'Brien originally feared for de Valera and the country when Sinn Féin voted against him at the 1926 convention. He felt de Valera was bound to win a majority at one of the next elections if the party had stayed together. O'Brien to Donnelly, 25 February 1927, NLI O'Brien Papers Ms. 8506 (9). O'Brien was in touch with de Valera during 1926 and sent him a copy of his *Parnell of Real Life*, de Valera to O'Brien, 22 February 1926, UCC O'Brien Papers AU. 10.

¹⁰⁸ Open letter from Mr William O'Brien, UCDA Fianna Fáil Papers P176/827; cf. *Dundalk Democrat*, 16 October 1926.

¹⁰⁹ 'Mr William O'Brien on the forthcoming Elections', P176/827 UCDA Fianna Fáil Papers. See also *Irish Independent*, 8 March 1927.

¹¹⁰ *Irish Independent*, 8 January 1927. O'Brien claimed he would not have intervened in public if Redmond's initial promises that he would not mention partition and that the League was not a revival of the IPP had held true, *Waterford News*, 22 April 1927. O'Brien had played an important role in the 1902 Land Conference between tenant representatives and landlords which led to the Wyndham Act the following year. O'Brien always saw this legislation as a triumph for his policy of conciliation as it saw the British Government facilitate voluntary land purchase, Philip Bull, 'O'Brien, William', in James McGuire and James Quinn (eds),

Henry Harrison also became involved in arguments with Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington who took exception to criticisms of de Valera in *Irish Truth*. Harrison published a letter to the editor from his own pen in his newspaper in October 1926, stating he had not been personally involved in John Redmond's party, but clearly arguing that it had not been to blame for permanent partition.¹¹¹

If as Boyce has suggested, there was 'no lack of ghosts' in the public memory of the Free State, the spectre of John Redmond certainly stalked the June election campaign.¹¹² All sides played a game of 'pass the parcel' when it came to the issue of partition. The collapse of the Boundary Commission offered an easy target for National League attacks on the Government which, in turn, led back to earlier events. The National League vigorously argued that Redmond and Dillon could have got 26 or 28 county settlement if they had agreed to permanent partition before the First World War. Cumann na nGaedheal responded by pointing to the 1914 Buckingham Palace negotiations which broke down over unionist and nationalist claims to Fermanagh and Tyrone and to the additions made to the suspensory Home Rule Bill. Kevin O'Higgins's assertion that the IPP had done a deal to partition the country at a conference of northern nationalists on 23 June 1916 (where Redmond, Devlin and others convinced delegates to vote for an agreement providing for temporary partition, which Edward Carson had understood to be permanent) prompted Capt. Redmond to leap to his father's defence and accuse the Minister of telling 'an infamous lie'.¹¹³ The League also produced handbills contrasting Blythe's 1914 criticisms of partition with his defence of the Government in the aftermath of

Dictionary of Irish Biography. (Cambridge, 2009).

(<http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a6503>) accessed 23 May 2016.

¹¹¹ *Irish Truth*, 16 October 1926. Harrison also become embroiled in similar public debates with Valentine Grace in the letters page of newspapers, *Irish Times*, 25 October 1926; *Irish Independent*, 26 October 1926.

¹¹² D. George Boyce, "'No lack of ghosts'? Memory, Commemoration and the State in Ireland', Ian McBride (ed.), *History and Memory in Modern Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 254-272.

¹¹³ *Irish Independent* 28, 30 May, 1927. On the 1916 meeting, see Harris, *The Catholic Church and the Foundation of the Northern Irish State*, pp. 51-6, Denis Gwynn, *The History of Partition 1912-1925* (Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1950), pp. 150-157. Redmond had, however, contemplated offering indefinite partition to the Unionists on the eve of World War I, Meleady, *John Redmond: The National Leader*, p. 284. O'Donnell had earlier tried to ask Devlin about claims by Patrick Hogan that there was a resolution backing partition passed in Devlin's name at St. Mary's Hall, Belfast in 1913, O'Donnell to Devlin, 4 April 1927, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms. 15,463 (3).

the Boundary Commission settlement as well as O'Higgins's new found affinity with former opponents such as Lord Birkenhead.¹¹⁴

For Redmond, the 1920 Government of Ireland Act was the 'real root of partition', an argument which allowed him to blame Sinn Féin abstentionism for the division of the country. Fianna Fáil adopted a similar line on occasion; Seán T. O'Kelly told a crowd in the Hibernian heartland of Bailieboro that it was the Free State which introduced partition and not John Redmond.¹¹⁵ In September 1927, a Fianna Fáil candidate would go further; Monaghan's Conn Ward actually welcomed old Redmondites into the party, claiming 'they differed only in the ways and means of attaining Irish freedom'.¹¹⁶

Although, like the National League, Government speakers often expressed a wish not to rake up the past, reference to the Great War was the perfect antidote to the National League's espousals of peaceful constitutionalism over Sinn Féin revolution. Desmond FitzGerald was quick to remind voters that John Redmond's party had 'failed disastrously and tragically' with its war 'gamble' in 1914.¹¹⁷ O'Higgins echoed this, terming Redmond's call in 1914 as the 'gambler's throw of the politician'. He opined that there were three parties to blame for bringing the gun into Irish politics: firstly, Edward Carson, then the IPP and only after those two Sinn Féin. O'Higgins went on to accuse Capt. Redmond of trailing his father's name across a new political situation 'in a country that has grown up around Deputy Redmond that he does not understand'.¹¹⁸

Cumann na nGaedheal also sought to draw distinctions between the old Irish Party and new League to their own advantage. M.J. Hennessy and Dermot 'Gun' O'Mahony (son of a Nationalist MP) remarked how little of John Redmond they saw in Capt. Redmond. Similarly, Patrick Hogan attacked the League, but still referred to

¹¹⁴ National League handbills 1927, NLI Fallon Papers Ms. 22,583.

¹¹⁵ *Irish Independent*, 17 May 1927.

¹¹⁶ *Irish Independent*, 13 September 1927.

¹¹⁷ *Irish Independent*, 26 March 1927. Mel Farrell has argued that such speeches demonstrated both Cumann na nGaedheal's 'separatist roots' and also the reason it had not been able to assimilate old home rule support completely, Farrell, 'Few Supporters and No Organisation?', p. 103.

¹¹⁸ *Irish Independent*, 19 March 1927. O'Donnell, in particular, found himself in the midst of many vigorous arguments over the history of the Home Rule party, Gaughan, *A Political Odyssey*, pp. 174-5.

the ‘big performance’ needed by Redmond and Dillon to get the Home Rule Act on the statute book in 1914. Hogan went so far as to admit ‘I am not at all sure that they had any alternative to accepting partition’ and called for the League to defend the record of the Irish Party as it was.¹¹⁹ However, other figures in the Government could not hide their frustrations at the persistence of Irish Party support; Richard Mulcahy condemned people in Waterford for choosing a name (Redmond) over a policy.¹²⁰

The June election

Amidst such public disputes over the IPP’s memory and the proliferation of parties in 1927, the League’s new policy agenda outside the Civil War divide felt all too familiar; association with a defeated political entity would not suffice.¹²¹ Speeches often took up the point that they stood for the ‘silent majority’, those who had been absent from the political scene since 1918.¹²² The National League argued that it was entering now because it had to, exploring the issues of partition and the state’s parlous fiscal position. Complaints about government extravagance included the cost of Tim Healy in the Vice-Regal Lodge.¹²³ In campaigning, the party was generally warm to the Farmers’ Party (though bitter at the decision not to merge with the League), less so to the Labour Party, but not overtly hostile and even talked of forming coalition government with that party, the Farmers and independent deputies (some of whom they obviously assumed to be warm to the old IPP). Indeed, speakers often talked up the value of coalitions as a form of government.¹²⁴

Despite the clear links between the historical IPP and the National League, there were some new faces among their candidates such as Vincent Rice in Dublin South, Capt. Rupert Trench in Kildare and Alan Patten in Wicklow. Patten and Trench were prominent ex-servicemen from unionist backgrounds and in Wicklow, the League

¹¹⁹ *Connacht Tribune*, 9 April 1927.

¹²⁰ *Irish Independent*, 19 May, 6 June 1927. Mulcahy was even harsher in the second election campaign of September 1927 as he dismissed Johnson and Redmond as an ‘English socialist and an English Imperialist’, *Irish Independent*, 6 September 1927.

¹²¹ Coakley further categorised the League as a ‘nationalist’ party rather than one explicitly identifying as left or right, Coakley, ‘The Rise and Fall of Minor Parties’, pp. 54-6.

¹²² See editorial, *Free Press*, 19 March 1927.

¹²³ *Cork Examiner*, 22 November 1926. Staunch Parnellite Henry Harrison in *Irish Truth* went as far as to look for Healy’s resignation, *Irish Truth*, 27 November 1926.

¹²⁴ *Irish Independent*, 28 May 1927.

made a concerted effort to attract the old unionist vote under the umbrella of an ex-serviceman vote.¹²⁵ This was then subtly different from merely invoking the men who followed Redmond's call. This also meant that the League appealed to unionists in Wicklow while running Hibernian candidates in Donegal. Such a concurrence only highlighted the dysfunctional nature of a party seeking to resurrect the disparate elements of the Irish Party's political culture.

Essentially, leaning on the legacy of the populist Irish Party, the League also lacked a clearly-defined policy on the issue of tariffs. This had been a source of considerable dispute within the Government as splits developed between those who espoused Arthur Griffith's old ideas of protectionism and those who more inclined towards free trade.¹²⁶ Additionally, the League's complaints about government expenditure were little different from those expressed by the Farmers' Party while its anti-partitionist sentiments were largely shared by all parties.¹²⁷

Although mobilising on a platform outside of the Civil War duopoly, the League created confusion by not defining whether they were campaigning to be a pro-Treaty opposition party or whether they intended to lead a new government.¹²⁸ At points where the League claimed to aim for government, Cumann na nGaedheal was a natural target.¹²⁹ The party was a more promising source of voters than the republicans. Some speakers were a little ambiguous in their attitude to Fianna Fáil. Although old Nationalists could have abhorred the 1927 abstentionists as much as the IPP had decried Sinn Féin, some League speakers were less than hostile and even

¹²⁵ Daniel O'Leary to Lawler, 23 February 1927, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms. 15,462 (7).

¹²⁶ Meehan, *The Cosgrave Party*, pp. 128-38. Cumann na nGaedheal's policy on tariffs was one of the principal reasons for the resignation of Minister for Posts and Telegraphs J.J. Walsh before the September election.

¹²⁷ Jason Knirck, "'A Regime of Squandermania': The Irish Farmers' Party, Agriculture and Democracy, 1922-27", Farrell, Knirck and Meehan (eds), *A Formative Decade*, pp. 177-196; Glackin, 'Home Rulers in a Free State', p. 10.

¹²⁸ At one point, Redmond was forced to clarify his position by rejecting the accusations of Patrick Hogan that the League had been advocating the removal of the oath, *Irish Independent*, 2 June 1927. O'Donnell's biographer has pointed out how the lack of clear policy positions made the League look decidedly reactionary and simply a party 'indulging in indiscriminate attacks on the government', Gaughan, *A Political Odyssey*, p. 176.

¹²⁹ Some of the bitterest rivalry at a local level could occur between those old Irish Party supporters working for the National League against those who had now found homes in Cumann na nGaedheal e.g. the remarks of Joseph Cooney about P.W. Shaw, Cooney to Lawler, 12 April 1927, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms. 15,463 (5). In one sense, these rivalries were actually a repetition of the kind of internecine battles fought out among Irish Party factions at local level prior to 1918.

suggested de Valera enter the Dáil and become a ‘constitutional republican’.¹³⁰ While the League liked to portray itself as a new party, this pose allowed them to claim that they could then rise above old disputes and call for the inclusion of Fianna Fáil without aligning with them.

While the projected alliance with the Farmers had failed, Cumann na nGaedheal gladly took some old Irish Party figures away from the League. In fact, it appears that the creation of the National League made the old Irish Party and the issue of Home Rulers in the Free State a more important political issue than it had been previously. It thus seems to have accelerated the wider process of the assimilation of former Home Rulers into representative politics. Local activists had in some cases transferred to Cumann na nGaedheal; these included James Naughton in Roscommon, who in 1919 had wanted Dillon to maintain the UIL.¹³¹ Ex-MP Pierce O’Mahony’s son, Dermot ‘Gun’ O’Mahony, stood for Cumann na nGaedheal in Wicklow while his father wrote to the press declaring his support for the Government, as did fellow ex-MP William O’Malley.¹³² Galway councillor Martin McDonogh had supported Redmond’s father, but he stood for Cumann na nGaedheal in 1927. Such moves complemented the sympathetic references to the memory of John Redmond by ministers such as Patrick Hogan.¹³³ Others such as P.J. Egan had already been elected TDs for Cumann na nGaedheal and showed no inclination to switch back.¹³⁴

¹³⁰ *Meath Chronicle*, 4 June 1927.

¹³¹ James Naughton to Lawler, 6 May 1927, NLI O’Donnell Papers Ms. 15,463 (3). Naughton was by then secretary of Cumann na nGaedheal in the county. Beaten 1917 IPP candidate Thomas Devine also sought the Treatyite nomination for the Dáil in 1927, but was unsuccessful. Naughton appropriated the kind of description one could apply to a percentage of IPP candidates when he described how two of the candidates were ‘large and practical farmers’ and was also withering in his assessment that Redmondism would be no more popular in 1927 than it was in 1917.

¹³² For O’Mahony, see *Irish Independent*, 21 September 1926; 14 May 1927 and O’Malley, *Connacht Tribune*, 21 May, 10 September 1927. Former Kildare MP Sidney Minch was considered by some League supporters, but he declined and recommended another man instead. Minch ended up winning a seat for Cumann na nGaedheal in 1932, Michael Malone to B.C. Hackett, 16 April 1927; Minch to Redmond, 27 April 1927, NLI O’Donnell Papers Ms. 15,463 (6), (10).

¹³³ Age was also a factor in former MPs and followers standing aloof e.g. Peter Ffrench was 83 years old in 1927, Ffrench to Lawler, 14 March 1927, NLI O’Donnell Papers Ms. 15,462 (9).

¹³⁴ In fact as late as February Lawler asked James Redington if McDonogh would give approval to his candidature in Galway as he presumed McDonogh would not stand himself, Lawler to Redington, 19 February 1927, NLI O’Donnell Papers Ms. 15,462 (6).

The election on 9 June proved to be a difficult one for the Government as it lost thirteen seats and smaller parties gained at its expense. However, nine TDs elected for Cumann na nGaedheal were either ex-Home Rule MPs or councillors or guardians along with two relations of former MPs. While McKenna was unsuccessful, the Farmers' Party still returned eleven deputies, of whom four were ex-councillors (O'Gorman, Carter, Garahan and Doyle) while even among the other Farmer TDs were those with Redmondite roots (Thomas Falvey had been a Redmondite while T.J. O'Donovan attended Redmondite Anniversaries).¹³⁵ The Home Rule tinge to Fianna Fáil was not as pronounced though Patrick Little had once been a Young Ireland Branch member and another TD had formerly been a county council clerk.¹³⁶

Table 4.1 Individuals from Home Rule backgrounds in Fifth Dáil

June 1927	Former MPs	Former IPP candidates	Former Councillors/Guardians	Relations of former MPs
National League (8)	2	1	3	0
Cumann na nGaedheal (47)	1	0	10	3
Fianna Fáil (44)	0	0	1	0
Farmers' Party (11)	0	1	3	0
Independent (16)	1	1	3	0
Labour (22)	0	0	0	0
Sinn Féin (5)	0	0	0	0
Total	4	3	20	3

The League itself recorded modest success in the election winning eight seats. The personnel elected displayed the lines of continuity with the old IPP. Of the eight TDs elected, the League included two ex-MPs, one former IPP candidate and three ex-councillors. Indeed, the League fielded thirty candidates in total with nine former MPs and twelve former councillors or guardians.

Table 4.2 IPP backgrounds of National League candidates, 9 June 1927

National League Candidates	Ex-MPs	Ex-Councillors/Guardians	Ex-IPP candidates	Relation of MPs
30	9	12	2	0

¹³⁵ McKenna would leave the Farmers' Party ahead of the September election over his misgivings about the independence of the party from the Government, *Free Press*, 3 September 1927.

¹³⁶ Maume, *The Long Gestation*, p. 219.

**Table 4.3 National League first preference vote by constituency, June 1927
(constituencies where the League won a seat are in bold)**

Constituency (seats to be filled)	National League first preference June 1927
Louth (3)	26.37%
Waterford (4)	24.34%
Wexford (5)	15.16%
Monaghan (3)	14.43%
Meath (3)	13.37%
Dublin South (7)	12.42%
Cork Borough (5)	11.44%
Donegal (8)	11.29%
Mayo North (4)	11.17%
Galway (9)	10.83%
Wicklow (3)	9.11%
Clare (5)	7.34%
Mayo South (5)	6.62%
Longford-Westmeath (5)	6.43%
Kildare (3)	6.38%
Dublin County (8)	5.48%
Limerick (7)	5.32%
Tipperary (7)	5.18%
Carlow-Kilkenny (5)	4.96%
Leitrim-Sligo (7)	4.5%
Dublin North (8)	4.24%
Mean	10.38%

Source: Gallagher, *Irish Elections 1922-44*

As Glackin has pointed out, the League profited generally (though not exclusively) in areas where the IPP had retained support in 1918. It gained seats in the Hibernian heartlands of Donegal and Louth; it returned a candidate in Wexford; Redmond topped the poll in Waterford and John Horgan was victorious in Cork borough.¹³⁷ However, the vagaries of multi-seat constituencies and proportional representation also influenced the League's results. The party polled well in Monaghan and Meath three-seaters, but failed to return a TD in either county while the nine-seat Galway constituency and Sligo seven-seater allowed William Duffy (one of four League candidates) and John Jinks to gain election with relatively poor first preference

¹³⁷ Glackin, 'Home Rulers in a Free State', p. 16.

votes. Although League candidates tended to transfer heavily towards Cumann na nGaedheal in many areas, the reverse was not true. The League gained some transfers from independents and smaller parties, but failed to garner huge numbers of transfers in many constituencies.¹³⁸

The League's performance in the June election was, perhaps, less than impressive given its boasts that it would be able to form a Government with Farmers, Labour or Independents. Nonetheless, the accumulation of eight seats and a national vote share of over seven per cent must still be reckoned a success. The bitterness of Civil War was still new and had rooted a certain number of ex-Sinn Féin voters in two camps while the Labour and Farmers' parties had emerged to represent sectional interests which the IPP once had a free path to represent. In fact, the election actually suggested that Civil War bitterness had disenchanted electors as 'Civil War' parties attained the lowest vote they were to receive at any general election in the first six decades of the state.¹³⁹

As more and more politicians from Home Rule backgrounds entered Free State politics in June 1927, it is tempting to argue that this supports the League's claims that Irish Party supporters had held aloof from post-1918 politics. However, the picture is somewhat more complicated. It is true that voter turnout was very low in 1922 and 1923 and that it rose considerably in June 1927. Nevertheless, in Donegal where the League returned McMenamin and Cumann na nGaedheal also elected an AOH member, turnout remained low and only rose by 2.86% between 1923 and 1927 to 57.23%. The AOH, which had failed to mobilise efficiently enough to return candidates in 1923 or in the 1925 Seanad elections, had thus recorded considerable success without any apparent major increase in 'new' voters. In Waterford, where turnout was far higher in 1923, marginally fewer voters went to the polls in June 1927 when Redmond's votes increased by 1,246 votes.¹⁴⁰ Turnout nationally increased from 59.05% to 66.26% between 1923 and 1927, but turnout also increased in areas where no National League candidate stood while, as discussed

¹³⁸ Michael Gallagher (ed.), *Irish Elections 1922-44: Results and Analysis* (Limerick: PSAI Press, 1993), pp. 56-76, 88; Moss, *Political Parties in the Irish Free State*, p. 157 claimed that Cumann na nGaedheal transferred heavily to Tom O'Donnell in Clare, but this is not borne out in the figures.

¹³⁹ Peter Mair, *The Changing Irish Party System: Organization, Ideology and Electoral Competition* (London: Pinter, 1987), pp. 48-9.

¹⁴⁰ Gallagher *Irish Elections 1922-44*, pp. 30, 42, 60, 74.

earlier, individuals from Home Rule backgrounds had been creeping into Free State politics prior to 1927.¹⁴¹ Voter turnout also continued to increase in September 1927 when the League was greatly reduced. It rose further in 1932 and 1933 when no specifically neo-Redmondite party existed and politics centred on a battle between the two Civil War parties, peaking at 80.41% in 1933.¹⁴²

Unquestionably, the relative stability achieved by the Free State in 1927 was more conducive to a high turnout than the uncertainty and violence prevalent in 1922 and 1923. The passage of time and the return to peace clearly allowed more easily for political participation. This aided the integration of those from Home Rule backgrounds and the number of Cumann na nGaedheal TDs with Irish Party heritage also increased. However, universal franchise was still new. The electorate which had voted IPP prior to 1918 on the old franchise was now only a small fraction of the available pool of electors. The notion that the increase in turnout in 1927 was thus exclusively drawn from a pool of former Irish Party supporters casting their votes for the first time remains dubious.

‘Judas Iscariot Jinks’? The coalition that never was

The state of the parties after the June election left Cumann na nGaedheal in a shaky position to form a Government with just 47 seats. Fianna Fáil remained outside the parliament, but had won 44 seats and was set to embark on a campaign to force a referendum on the abolition of the oath. In this situation, William O’Brien put forward proposals for a union between Cumann na nGaedheal and Fianna Fáil. However, Tim Healy refused to pass on O’Brien’s ideas to Cosgrave, who was duly re-elected by the Dáil in any case.¹⁴³ In spite of the differing statements on the campaign trail, the National League soon stated itself an opposition party and abstained as a group on the election of Cosgrave as President. Differences of opinion between O’Donnell (who had failed to win a seat in Clare) and Redmond showed early cracks in the League’s Dáil policies. O’Donnell wanted vigorous opposition to the Government while Redmond was more inclined to support or at least give

¹⁴¹ This occurred in Cork West, Cork North, Cork East, Kerry, Laois-Offaly and Roscommon, Gallagher, *Irish Elections 1922-44*, pp. 28-9, 34-5, 40, 57-9, 65-6, 72.

¹⁴² Gallagher, *Irish Elections 1922-44*, pp. 115, 147, 176; Mair, *The Changing Irish Party System*, p. 48.

¹⁴³ O’Brien to Healy, 18 June 1927, NLI O’Brien Papers Ms. 8566 (31).

constructive opposition.¹⁴⁴ Gaughan possibly overstates the case in presenting the dichotomy between O'Donnell as a strongly nationalist Dillonite versus Redmond as an imperialist Anglophile 'almost inseparable' from Harrison.¹⁴⁵ Unquestionably, both men came from differing elements of the Irish Party tradition; however, John Dillon was far from impressed with everything O'Donnell did while Harrison was also disposed to protective tariffs, so in that respect he was closer to O'Donnell than Redmond.¹⁴⁶

Developments were to overtake such internal League strife and the country was soon shocked by the assassination of Justice Minister and Vice-President of the Executive Council Kevin O'Higgins by members of the IRA on 10 July. Such an event brought back memories of the Civil War and provoked strong reactions across the political spectrum as all leaders including de Valera condemned the killing. The crisis also moved the Government to introduce three new pieces of legislation which altered the political picture. While the Public Safety Act targeted the IRA, the Electoral Amendment Act required candidates to swear an oath at time of nomination that they would take seats if elected while the Constitutional Amendment Act limited the right of petition to members who had taken their seats in parliament, thereby ending Fianna Fáil's hopes of having the oath removed by petition.¹⁴⁷ Although the National League was ostensibly in conflict with the Labour Party on many policy issues, Redmond and O'Donnell shared Thomas Johnson's uneasiness at the draconian measures proposed by the Government. In Labour and Fianna Fáil circles, the idea floated of circumventing the new laws by the formation of a Labour Government with de Valera's party a silent partner. The parliamentary arithmetic produced by the June election meant that if Fianna Fáil entered parliament, Cumann na nGaedheal would no longer possess a majority. On 9 August, Fianna Fáil gave Redmond and

¹⁴⁴ John Dillon advised O'Donnell to be 'frank' with Redmond and tell him his attitude would kill the movement, Dillon to O'Donnell, 19 July 1927, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms. 15,465 (5). Dillon seemed to advocate a position for the National League closer to Fianna Fáil than Cumann na nGaedheal, see also Gaughan, *A Political Odyssey*, pp. 177-8.

¹⁴⁵ Gaughan, *A Political Odyssey*, p. 156; Glackin has disputed Gaughan's view, arguing that Redmond did not display overt imperialism in his public utterances as leader, Glackin, 'Home Rulers in a Free State', p. 14.

¹⁴⁶ *Irish Truth* was vigorous in its support for the introduction of protective tariffs in certain areas.

¹⁴⁷ Úna Newell, *The West Must Wait: County Galway and the Irish Free State 1922-32* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), p. 158.

Henry Harrison a draft of proposals which they had already sent to Labour a day earlier.¹⁴⁸

Curiously, Fianna Fáil's entry into the Dáil would leave the League in a position of holding the balance of power. Although the circumstances were very different, this had an echo of the IPP at Westminster. How would such an idea be approached by the keepers of the old constitutionalist flame in the Free State? Redmond's response was not inhospitable, provided that Fianna Fáil was definitely cast as a mere silent partner and had no role in the government (Fianna Fáil had passed a motion on 26 July promising not to push the Treaty issue to the point of overthrowing any coalition government).¹⁴⁹ Furthermore, Redmond sought guarantees that no policy not in accord with the League be included in any manifesto.¹⁵⁰

Such plans were, however, to end in failure and farce. Bertie Smyllie, the *Irish Times* journalist and later editor, encountered Johnson and fellow senior Labour Party figures, R.J.P. Mortishead and William O'Brien coming from a meeting to discuss the proposed new government in an Enniskerry hotel. After this chance meeting at a bus stop, Smyllie returned to the hotel and piecing together the evidence of a waste paper basket uncovered the possible cabinet of such an administration.¹⁵¹ Running with the story the next day, the *Times* sent shockwaves through Labour plans and helped convey the sense of political opportunism at play in such an unlikely move for power.¹⁵² However, if we reflect on the planned government for a moment, a picture emerges of how quickly the rehabilitated remnants of the IPP could have returned to political power and prominence within a decade of the party's 1918 defeat.

¹⁴⁸ Gaughan, *A Political Odyssey*, pp. 184-6. For Fianna Fáil negotiations with Labour see Gerard Boland to Tom Johnson, 1, 3 August 1927, NLI Johnson Papers Ms. 17,168.

¹⁴⁹ Fianna Fáil meeting, 26 July 1927, minute books of parliamentary party, UCDA Fianna Fáil archives P176/442.

¹⁵⁰ Redmond to Johnson, 12 August 1927, NLI Johnson Papers Ms. 17,165.

¹⁵¹ Gaughan, *Thomas Johnson, 1872-1963: First Leader of the Labour Party in Dáil Éireann* (Dublin: Kingdom Books, 1980), p. 310.

¹⁵² In spite of such rumours, Johnson had assured Redmond no guarantees or plans of a cabinet had been made and that the report was 'ingenuous guessing and has no inspiration from me', Johnson to Redmond, 15 August 1927, NLI Johnson Papers Ms. 17,165.

Captain Redmond was apparently to be made Vice-President of the Executive Council and given the senior role of Minister for External Affairs. Would the old Redmondite vision of his father and cooperation within the empire have obtained in the 1920s? Redmond's electoral proclamations hardly provided a clear answer. Complaints about past events and the extravagance of the Free State administration failed to demonstrate that an older tradition of constitutional nationalism would have meant a different approach and way of thinking from the newer brand espoused by Cumann na nGaedheal, which had sought increased power for dominions within the commonwealth structure. Elsewhere in the cabinet, the League's former MP William J. Duffy was included as a possible Minister for Posts and Telegraphs while Independent deputy John F. O'Hanlon was to be entrusted with the key position of Minister for Agriculture. In many ways, the whole affair carried an air of unreality encapsulated by O'Hanlon's eventual refusal to even support the no confidence motion in the Government. O'Hanlon did not want an Englishman leader of the Free State and was not prepared to unseat the Treatyite administration for the alternative, even if a Redmond was prominent in it.¹⁵³

However, the motion before the Dáil on 16 August should still have succeeded. The National League's Vincent Rice had not signed the party pledge and along with a number of independents signalled his intention to support Cosgrave, but it was still supposed the motion would carry until it was found the League's John Jinks was not present at the division, resulting in a tie.¹⁵⁴ The Ceann Comhairle, Michael Hayes of Cumann na nGaedheal, then had the casting vote which he used to defeat Johnson's motion.

Jinks's case has been the recipient of numerous comic and memorable tales, the most famous version speculating that Cumann na nGaedheal deputies spirited him away to the Dáil bar for afternoon drinks and then sent him back on the train to Sligo.¹⁵⁵ However, there may be more to it than such a farcical affair. Jinks, a doughty political competitor, had a career of political service stretching back to the height of

¹⁵³ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 20, cc. 1699-1700, 16 August 1927.

¹⁵⁴ Lawler to Redmond, 8 August 1927, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms. 15,465 (6). See also Glackin, 'Home Rulers in a Free State', p. 22.

¹⁵⁵ David McCullagh, *The Reluctant Taoiseach: A Biography of John A. Costello* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2010), p. 64. McCullagh cites a handwritten note from the Ernest Blythe papers apparently predicting that Jinks would be present at the vote, making it a tie.

the Home Rule movement. A county councillor in Sligo who had been a prominent figure in the UIL in the area, he had succeeded in preserving a career in local politics even after the collapse of the Irish Party in the county.¹⁵⁶ As Gaughan has shown, such a tendency for political survival over any other instincts appears to be at play in Jinks's behaviour in 1927 too and it seems likely he feared the potential reaction among his own supporters.¹⁵⁷ Like many League supporters, he was expressing concerns about the coalition proposal despite the fact he had seconded the original motion supporting the idea at a National League party meeting on 12 August.¹⁵⁸ The League had therefore been confident that he would be in the chamber and willing to cast his vote.¹⁵⁹

September 1927 – The defence of a new Redmondism?

The National League faced a difficult task recovering from the excruciating embarrassment of the Jinks affair. The League was also now part of an entirely different Dáil. Although Cumann na nGaedheal was still in power, it no longer held a majority. By taking their seats in the parliament, Fianna Fáil TDs had altered the parliamentary arithmetic and indeed the complexion of Free State politics generally. Convinced that his precarious parliamentary advantage was not sustainable and looking to capitalise on public confusion and disillusionment with elements of the Opposition over the no confidence motion, Cosgrave called another general election within weeks.¹⁶⁰ The expense of this alone was a strain for smaller parties, but especially so for the National League which had financial problems from the outset. In 1926, the League had struggled to come up with the money needed to pay for the

¹⁵⁶ Jinks was a leading figure in the Sligo UIL and was adept at getting Labour-Nationalist vote in Sligo, Farry, *The Irish Revolution, 1912-23, Sligo*, pp. 31-5; Wheatley, *Nationalism and the Irish Party*, pp. 144-5.

¹⁵⁷ Jinks certainly claimed afterwards that 'seventy five per cent' of his constituents opposed the National League-Fianna Fáil alliance and urged him not to support the motion. *Irish Times*, 18 August 1927. Gaughan, *A Political Odyssey*, pp. 191-2.

¹⁵⁸ Meeting of Irish National League, 12 August 1927, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms.15,465 (6). Jinks later claimed that he was not consulted at all about the League's decision to support the motion, Jinks to Redmond, 18 August 1927, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms. 15,465 (7).

¹⁵⁹ Redmond to Johnson, 17 August 1927, NLI Johnson Papers Ms. 17,165. However, if T.J. O'Connell had been in the country rather than at a trade union event in Canada, Jinks's celebrated absence could have been absorbed and the League, albeit in shaky condition, would have been entering government. Labour had been confident enough of victory that they did not feel the need to recall O'Connell, Niamh Puirseil, *The Irish Labour Party, 1922-73* (Dublin: UCD Press, 2007), p. 24.

¹⁶⁰ He waited for two by-elections in Dublin County and Dublin South. The National League declined to contest either seat.

special trains to its first rallies in Waterford and Wexford.¹⁶¹ Debts accumulated without the kind of subscriptions needed to sustain the party and Redmond and O'Donnell appear to have overlooked this growing problem in the hope of succeeding at the election and thereby growing support and funding afterwards.¹⁶² The June results, coupled with the shift in political events which followed, scuppered such intentions and many candidates sought redress from the League for loss of their deposits. It all resulted in the leadership writing to friends asking for assistance lest they face personal ruin in late 1927.¹⁶³

After the defeat of the no confidence motion, former followers of the Irish Party were thus faced with the prospect of another electoral disaster. William Duffy was unequivocal in his view as he decided on his effectual political retirement. Duffy wrote to O'Donnell that the people in his constituency were swamped with 'anxiety' in the aftermath of the Jinks affair and that standing for election was now 'useless'. Recounting conversations with stronger farmers, Duffy wrote that they told him 'we voted for you on the last occasion hoping that you would assist the Government... instead of getting the Gov. to keep us, you voted to expel the Gov. and put us over'.¹⁶⁴ Larger farmers and businessmen were now throwing in their lot with Cumann na nGaedheal to prevent de Valera gaining power according to Duffy. Such a view encapsulated the damage done to the League's reputation by the affair. Another League activist had claimed that even prior to the June election that old IPP voters were afraid to vote for the League against the Government in case such a move might allow Fianna Fáil win power.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹ These trains required guarantees up front from the League. In some cases, even the reduced guarantees accepted by the train companies were not honoured for the Wexford rally in October while the shortfall for it was left with the League. Thomas Elliott to O'Donnell, 18 October 1926; Thomas White to B.C. Hackett, 28 September 1926, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms. 15,461 (4); Committee Meeting of Dublin Central Organising Committee of the National League, O'Donnell Papers Ms. 16,186. A League activist in Wexford, White was left to personally pay £20. He tried in vain to get reimbursement from the League for months.

¹⁶² B.C. Hackett's struggles to maintain the position of secretary also meant the appointment of Thomas Lawler from the Federation of Irish Industries as a full time paid secretary at a salary of £400 per annum from January 1927, Lawler to Hackett, 14 December 1926, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms. 15,461 (7).

¹⁶³ Arthur Cox to O'Donnell, 3 January 1929, NLI O'Donnell papers Ms. 15,466 (1). Funds were donated by Alfie Byrne, T.F. McGahon, T.P. O'Connor and the Fianna Fáil party among others. *Munster Express* editor Edward Walsh was insistent 'John Redmond's son will not be involved in financial ruin', Walsh to O'Donnell, 13 July 1928, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms. 15,466 (1).

¹⁶⁴ William Duffy to O'Donnell, 26 September (?) 1927, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms. 15,460.

¹⁶⁵ John Hackett to Lawler, 7 May 1927, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms. 15,464 (4).

Cumann na nGaedheal electoral material used such fears to its advantage, imploring voters to choose the Government party to maintain law and order; one advertisement even asked the question, ‘would John Redmond have done it?’¹⁶⁶ Ultimately, this issue had to be confronted by the League in the September election. Within days of the Jinks vote, local activists warned of the need for old Nationalists to be assured that the League had not been simply used by Fianna Fáil.¹⁶⁷ The League responded with a letter from O’Donnell and Redmond arguing that they ‘were responsible for getting Fianna Fáil into the Dáil’ and that they owed it to the electorate to avail of the first opportunity to remove Cumann na nGaedheal from office and replace them with a government ‘that had no connection with either side’.¹⁶⁸

Redmond continued to claim the League was independent from both of the Civil War parties. League circulars and letters such as William Fallon’s correspondence with supporters in Meath cast the actions of Redmond and the League in the mould of the old IPP and post-1916 Redmondism whereby they had made sacrifices to accommodate a political enemy - the difference obviously being that in 1927, the Redmondite value of conciliation with a natural enemy was with Fianna Fáil rather than unionists. Further along the League’s line of logic, Fallon wrote that the League was not simply grabbing at power, but putting the country first and easing the republicans into parliament and therefore helping to remove the gun from Irish politics.¹⁶⁹

There was some evidence to support the claims of Fallon, however convenient the retrospective logic may appear. Mention of de Valera becoming a constitutional republican had circulated on League platforms during the June elections and Johnson and others within Labour were deeply uneasy with the harsh legislation outlined by Cumann na nGaedheal in the aftermath of O’Higgins’s assassination. Redmond had already veered in this direction before the no confidence vote when he compared de Valera’s position of attempting to balance constitutional and extreme forces with that

¹⁶⁶ *Free Press*, 10 September 1927. See also Ciara Meehan, ‘Politics Pictorialised: Free State Election Posters’, Farrell, Knirck and Meehan (eds), *A Formative Decade*, pp. 16, 21-6.

¹⁶⁷ At John Horgan’s request, John Foley (Cork) wrote to O’Donnell, 18 August 1927, NLI O’Donnell Papers, Ms.15,465 (7) asking that the party make a statement on the affair.

¹⁶⁸ Letter from Capt. Redmond and Tom O’Donnell, 19 August 1927, NLI O’Donnell Papers Ms. 15,465 (7).

¹⁶⁹ Fallon letter to voters, 7 September 1927, NLI Fallon Papers Ms. 22,583.

of Parnell although he drew a distinction by insisting Parnell had never advocated violence.¹⁷⁰ O'Donnell argued passionately on similar lines:

They decided to make any sacrifice to prevent such an appalling calamity. As a result of their wisdom and patriotism, Fianna Fáil entered the Dáil. Such an event marked a new era, a new milestone on the road to national unity. Revolutionary methods were abandoned, the People's Parliament was in future to be the arena where political battles were to be fought and national policy decided.¹⁷¹

Nonetheless, it would be Fianna Fáil rather than the Nationalists who would ultimately prosper from this chain of events. The ensuing election on 15 September saw de Valera's party gain votes and seats. Cumann na nGaedheal profited too; it was able to secure another term in power. As well as seizing on fears of League supporters troubled by the Jinks affair, the Treatyites continued to include a number of politicians from Home Rule backgrounds in their Dáil coterie as highlighted in the table below. The National League's vote crumbled. Running just six candidates due to disillusionment and lack of funds, the party won only two seats.¹⁷² Although Coburn and Redmond remained, thanks to the depth of Redmondite and Hibernian loyalty in Waterford and Louth (and some Fianna Fáil transfers in Coburn's case), the League's vote more than halved in Wexford, Cork Borough and Meath where it had fared well in June.¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ *Irish Independent*, 29 July 1927.

¹⁷¹ Thomas O'Donnell speech, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms. 15,460 (3).

¹⁷² The League tried once more to attract ex-MPs to replace those who would not or could not contest a second election e.g. they tried to attract Thomas Scanlan back from London to contest Sligo-Leitrim, O'Donnell to McTernan, 30 August 1927; O'Donnell to Scanlan, 30 August 1927, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms. 15,465 (7).

¹⁷³ Gallagher, *Irish Elections 1922-44*, p. 107.

Table 4.4 Individuals from Home Rule backgrounds elected at September 1927 election

	Former MPs	Former Candidates	Former Councillors or Guardians	Relations of MPs	Other HR connection
National League (2)	1	0	1	0	0
Cumann na nGaedheal (61)	1	0	12	4	2 (Mongan and McFadden)
Fianna Fáil (57)	0	0	2 (inc. former clerk)	1	0
Farmers (6)	0	0	0	0	0
Independent (12)	1	1	1	0	0
Labour (13)	0	0	0	0	2
Total	3	1	16	5	4

The 1927 elections and the legacy of the Irish Party

As Peter Mair has argued, if 1918 was the ‘mobilising’ election in establishing the Irish nationalist party system, 1927 is problematic as it represented the apogee of support for parties without a Sinn Féin derivation.¹⁷⁴ As discussed in Chapter Two, part of this ‘non-Sinn Féin’ based vote can be accounted for in the success of Labour and Farmers’ parties, but also in the enduring legacy of Irish Party support. The collapse of the vote of the sectional parties and the League was part of a wider process of realignment in Irish politics in 1927 as Fianna Fáil’s entry into the Dáil increased the ‘salience’ of the Civil War divide in the second election.¹⁷⁵ While Meehan has termed the June contest an ‘anomaly’ owing to the fragmentation of the vote into so many parties, the emergence of National League in June illustrated the variety of Free State politics.¹⁷⁶ In comparison to Gary Reich’s model of durable support for smaller parties, the events of the summer and the subsequent collapse in support for the League and other parties, also helps to offer a window into how Cumann na nGaedheal and Fianna Fáil built their support bases in the Free State.

Before the September poll, the Jinks affair undoubtedly split support. Old Irish Party members such as Redmond’s Waterford ally Councillor Patrick Brett had hoped the

¹⁷⁴ Mair, *The Changing Irish Party System*, pp. 45-6.

¹⁷⁵ Mair, *The Changing Irish Party System*, p. 48.

¹⁷⁶ Meehan, *The Cosgrave Party*, p. 87.

League would support the Government.¹⁷⁷ Similarly, Gaughan has alluded those who had supported O'Donnell in Clare transferring allegiance to the Government.¹⁷⁸ Significantly, John P McCabe, one of the staunchest old Irish Party supporters opposed the actions of the League in August 1927. McCabe wrote to the *Independent* to argue the League's policy had been non-interference and non-association with other parties.¹⁷⁹

On the other hand, there was certainly an element to the IPP remnant in the country that cared more about deposing the Treatyite regime than any other concern.¹⁸⁰ John Dillon, whose death earned relatively meagre coverage amidst the political controversies of August 1927, had instructed O'Donnell to invite Waterford republicans to the first National League meetings while as early as April 1927 the republican *Waterford News* had speculated on a similar alliance asking 'could Capt. Redmond save Ireland?'¹⁸¹ This position could also be articulated by the likes of ex-MP Daniel O'Leary and Tom O'Donnell himself.¹⁸² O'Leary conceded that most supporters in his locality of Wicklow had deserted the League in the aftermath of the Jinks affair. Nevertheless, he envisaged a new body politic evolving, with Cumann na nGaedheal spearheading a broad conservative party versus a broad national democratic party with Fianna Fáil its largest constituent part. Interestingly, he felt it was the latter grouping which the old Redmondites would join once they had lost their 'conservative elements.'¹⁸³ Patrick McKenna was of a similar mind and he

¹⁷⁷ Brett to Redmond, 15 August 1927, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms. 15,465 (6).

¹⁷⁸ Gaughan, *A Political Odyssey*, p. 199. In the view of T.F. McGahon, 'even those who were very strongly hostile to Mr Cosgrave at the last general election were not in favour of turning him out of office to make room for a coalition sustained by Fianna Fáil', *Dundalk Democrat*, 20 August 1927.

¹⁷⁹ *Irish Independent*, 15 August 1927.

¹⁸⁰ Meehan has argued that the support for smaller parties in June was partly due to voters who were not yet ready to vote Fianna Fáil supported the smaller parties in June, Meehan, *The Cosgrave Party*, p. 85.

¹⁸¹ Dillon to O'Donnell, 28 August 1926, NLI O'Donnell Papers, Ms. 15,461 (2); *Waterford News*, 8 April 1927. For one of the rare instances of major coverage being given to Dillon's passing, see editorial in *Dundalk Democrat*, 6 August 1927.

¹⁸² *Waterford News*, 8 April 1927. Other supporters also wrote to the League backing their actions and criticising the Government in stronger terms than the republicans, see John C Gahan to Redmond, 13 August 1927, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms. 15,465(6). Former Wexford Alderman Frank Carty also congratulated Redmond and the 'wise and statesmanlike' action he had taken. Undoubtedly, the sense of resentment at the party which had deposed the Irish Party was a factor in these views. See also John J Fanning, Clerk, Gorey RDC to Redmond, 24 August 1927; Carty to Redmond, 18 August 1927, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms. 15,465 (7).

¹⁸³ O'Leary to O'Donnell, 31 August 1927, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms. 15,465 (7).

wrote to the press in October 1927 likening an alliance of Fianna Fáil and the old Nationalists in the same terms as that of Parnell and the Fenians.¹⁸⁴

On 25 August, O'Donnell had written to James Dillon that he wanted no Irishman to submit to the 'evil influence of the present Government'. Displaying views which almost seemed to align with post-colonial theory, O'Donnell added that 'our poor people worship power' after 'centuries of slavery and subserviency'. In his view, the Government was exploiting this, leaving the country without independent thought or action.¹⁸⁵ In another letter to the AOH priest Fr John McCafferty just before the September poll, O'Donnell drew attention to Cumann na nGaedheal's absorption of Bryan Cooper, 'who was the lifelong enemy of Irish nationalists, the companion and friend of Carson, the official British Press censor during the Black and Tan regime in this country.'¹⁸⁶ Such arguments echoed those of the Fianna Fáil party which had urged voters in 1927 to oppose the 'Cosgrave-Cooper combine'.¹⁸⁷ Shortly afterwards, the National League and AOH in Ballybay voted at a convention to oppose the Government at the election even in the absence of a National League candidate.¹⁸⁸ However, although James Dillon seemed to agree with the general thrust of O'Donnell's opinions, he felt the proposed coalition with Fianna Fáil was a 'disastrous mistake'.¹⁸⁹

The diverse opinions expressed by the members of the League highlight the differences existing between the party and many of those who had just elected them. Marrying the poles of this neo-Redmondism, old followers who clung to historical beliefs about the IPP, but not contemporary ones and the sectional interests like vintners which they picked up along the way was never easy. By leaping into such a novel and dangerous proposition, the League were throwing all these separate dice in the air and risking disaster. Many academics and commentators have credited

¹⁸⁴ *Irish Independent*, 10 October 1927.

¹⁸⁵ O'Donnell to James Dillon, 25 August 1927, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms. 15,465 (7).

¹⁸⁶ O'Donnell to McCafferty, 1 September 1927, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms. 15,465 (8). One follower had been keen to find a solution to Fianna Fáil's abstention even before O'Higgins's assassination, Frank Lawrence to John Dillon, 6 July 1927, TCD John Dillon Papers 6786/2038.

¹⁸⁷ 'Show Me Your Company – Mr William Cosgrave's new-found colleague, Major Bryan Cooper', UCDA Fianna Fáil Papers P176/827. This was in reference to Major Bryan Cooper, the former Unionist MP, standing for Cumann na nGaedheal in September 1927.

¹⁸⁸ Sec of Ballybay branch to National League head office, 14 September 1927, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms. 15,465 (9).

¹⁸⁹ James Dillon to O'Donnell, 26 August 1927, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms. 15,465 (7).

Cosgrave's legislation with flushing out de Valera and Fianna Fáil. By forcing them into a corner, it pressurised them into the Dáil and into the democratic process *in toto*.¹⁹⁰ The fatigue of war four years after the close of the Civil War and de Valera's apparent urge to enter politics rather than repeat his political exile of 1922-23 would appear to have supported Cosgrave's thinking.¹⁹¹ Yet adopting this view in early summer of 1927 for Johnson or Redmond would have necessitated an opinion that Cosgrave was reasonably sure he could bounce de Valera into the kind of action that he ended up taking. Glackin has termed Redmond's opposition to the Public Safety Bill as more than 'idle opposition'.¹⁹² Nonetheless, any defence for the actions of the National League relies upon there being some grounds for believing the attempted coalition government could have functioned. Perhaps if Cosgrave's laws had been implemented and the risk of further instability ensued, the proposed coalition with Labour and Fianna Fáil would have appeared less opportunistic in the eyes of the electorate.

Conclusion

If as Liam Weeks has asserted, there has been 'limited scholarly activity on minor parties in the Irish context', much attention on smaller parties in recent times has focussed on their role in governments, particularly the tendency for them to suffer electoral collapse after alliance with a larger party.¹⁹³ However, in 1927, the National League managed to fail after merely an attempt at government; it suffered the consequences of a risky coalition without having first received the reward of office. In spite of the aforementioned elements of old Nationalist support which supported the League's actions, the reactions to the Jinks debacle confirm that many others did not. Many League voters had been loyal to the old party. However, in the absence of central political organisation among old Nationalists in the intervening period, many had begun to exercise their democratic rights in independent Ireland. Although some

¹⁹⁰ For further discussion of this process, see Jeffrey Prager, *Building Democracy in Ireland: Political Order and Cultural Integration in a newly Independent Nation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Bill Kissane, *Explaining Irish Democracy* (Dublin: UCD Press, 2002).

¹⁹¹ For more on de Valera's political evolution, see Ronan Fanning, *Éamon de Valera: A Will to Power* (London: Faber and Faber, 2015).

¹⁹² Glackin, 'Home Rulers in a Free State', pp. 25, 29.

¹⁹³ Weeks, 'The Dog that Failed to Bark: Why Did No New Party Emerge in 2011?', Weeks and Clark (eds), *Radical or Redundant?*, p. 9. In 2010, *Irish Political Studies* commissioned a special issue on minor parties. The issue subsequently led to Weeks and Clark's edited collection. Six of the fourteen in that volume dealt either with minor parties who had been in government or the question of small parties in government broadly.

were as bitter as ever against Cumann na nGaedheal, many others had turned to the Treatyite party out of desire to see peace restored and constitutionalism maintained over republican ideals. The idea of the National League aligning with those who may have been seen as doubly guilty of violence by participating in not just the Rising and the War of Independence, but the Civil War too was deeply troubling. Voters may have been Redmondites before they were Cumann na nGaedhealers, but whether they could stomach Captain Redmond's new brand of Redmondism in apparent coalition with de Valera was entirely another matter.

The failure of the League thus denies us the opportunity to see how similarly to the Irish Party it would have operated in the longer term. The most that can be said is that the League TDs showed signs of copying the IPP's old constituency brokerage role though this differed little from their contemporaries from Sinn Féin backgrounds.¹⁹⁴ However, in addition to the political turmoil of 1927, there were other reasons for the party's brief life. The League had terrible financial problems which were exacerbated by the snap election of September 1927. In fact, the League never had enough money and counted on gaining further subscriptions once it had won seats in the June election and established itself. The Jinks affair left this implausible strategy in ruins and the League eventually ended in bankruptcy. The League's organisational structure around the country was flimsy and hastily composed – it lacked the UIL branch network while the AOH was still significant in certain constituencies, but not in others. The National League also struggled to encompass the AOH and other potential reservoirs of support under one umbrella; former supporters who had defected to Cumann na nGaedheal or other parties did not always return to a Redmondite banner.

Although the League's programme attempted to mobilise old IPP legacies as diverse as its Labour-Nationalist and agrarian elements, many speeches, especially those from O'Donnell, could be reduced to unspecific anti-partition rhetoric and criticisms

¹⁹⁴ Index of Parliamentary Questions, June-August 1927, Oireachtas Library. Although not always the most dedicated parliamentarian, Capt. Redmond asked the most parliamentary questions (15) of the League's deputies between the June election and the Jinks vote. Although he asked a question on the bacon industry and defended Waterford's margarine factory, the majority were not constituency based. Jinks, by contrast, asked eight questions, all of which were constituency based. William Duffy in his brief Dáil tenure also sought to assist a constituent in relation to Dáil Éireann loans, William Duffy to Ernest Blythe, 20 August 1927, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms. 15,465 (7).

of excessive Government spending which echoed those raised by other parties. Categorisation of the League as a traditional mobilising party thus requires qualification; the League did not establish new detailed policy positions to distinguish it from Cumann na nGaedheal or Fianna Fáil (although it obviously differed from the latter in accepting the oath *ab initio*). The League instead spoke to those loyal to an older political tradition which limited its appeal in comparison to other mobilising parties in other contexts. In truth, the Irish Party had always been a broad national coalition - something very hard for the League to recreate among the competing demands of its support bodies. After the September election, it proved impossible. As League declined, Fianna Fáil settled into parliament and the rivalry between the two major parties intensified; the individuals and organisations of the old Home Rule movement which the League had targeted would have to face a new political landscape.

Chapter 5

The Aftermath of the National League: Ex-Home Rulers and the position of constitutionalist politics, 1928-33

The National League which a short time ago appeared to be forming, the nucleus of a central party, is, I think going to be swallowed up, and will disappear. I suggest that we take serious note of this general tendency, that we take time by the fore-lock, and that if it is at all possible that some sort of an alliance should be formed between the National League and Fianna Fáil, and possibly Labour

Daniel O'Leary to Tom O'Donnell, 31 August 1927.

The National League already appeared to be a failed political entity by September 1927. Over time, its last remaining defenders Capt. Redmond, James Coburn and Tom O'Donnell faced the difficult task of winding up a bankrupt political party. As they did so, each also had to decide where to pledge their political allegiance after the attempt to revive the Irish Party had failed. The aftermath of the League led to a period of confusion among old supporters, not least in the example of the AOH. Facing into the pivotal election of 1932, Redmond would join many others from IPP backgrounds who had found homes for themselves in Cumann na nGaedheal. Redmond's entry into the party was, in many ways, the culmination of the process; it allowed the Treatyite party to honour the memory of Redmond's father and to consolidate its support among former Irish Party followers. O'Donnell, on the other hand, would take a more distinctive path, heading in the direction of Fianna Fáil and demonstrating the more radical tradition which had existed in the diverse Home Rule movement. Coburn remained on the independent benches in 1932, where he would be joined by two new politicians with Home Rule heritage: James Dillon and Frank MacDermot.

However, the rise to power of de Valera and Fianna Fáil altered the political landscape; it signified a landmark first change of government in the state, but also the beginning of de Valera's plan to dismantle the Anglo-Irish Treaty. This had implications not just for those from Irish Party backgrounds, but other Treatyites and Britain too. As de Valera stopped paying Britain the Land Annuity payments owed from land legislation previously won by the IPP, the trade dispute which followed

saw all sides of the political divide in the 1930s claim Michael Davitt's legacy.¹ The Annuities dispute propelled MacDermot and Dillon, who both relied to differing extents on the support of farmers, into the political limelight; once again, TDs from Home Rule backgrounds found themselves leading a new political party in the Free State. However, the context for the emergence of the Centre Party and its composition would ensure it had a very different experience as a minor party than the National League had had in 1927.

The National League and its aftermath

By late 1927, the future looked decidedly bleak for the National League. Bereft of funds and reduced to just Redmond and Coburn in the Dáil, the party's scope for expansion was limited. Just twelve months after the enthusiasm which greeted the League's launch in Waterford, the situation must have seemed like added disillusion to those who had been defeated in 1918. In the aftermath of the Jinks debacle, Tom O'Donnell concurred with the thoughts of his old parliamentary colleague Daniel O'Leary expressed at the beginning of this chapter. O'Donnell felt 'that the National League members would form a good blend and directing force with the Fianna Fáil members.' In fact, O'Donnell went further and seemed to invoke the protest party element of the old Irish Party; he told O'Leary that the alliance he saw occurring between Bryan Cooper and Cumann na nGaedheal showed that 'the ancient enemies of Ireland and the anti-Irish forces are now received and welcomed into the ranks of the ex-republicans. These old unionists have not changed, these ex-republicans have.'²

The correspondence between O'Leary and O'Donnell demonstrated that recalcitrant ex-Home Rulers were conflicted in their approach to Free State politics. This was especially true in the case of the Ancient Order of Hibernians. Following the September election, O'Donnell addressed supporters at Hibernian gatherings in Cavan and Monaghan. Nonetheless, as Gaughan has observed, the Hibernians in border counties seemed to be in the minority of National League supporters who had not been alienated by the proposed alliance with Fianna Fáil; whether this applied to

¹ Garvin, *The Evolution of Irish Nationalist Politics*, p. 158; Varley, 'Gaining Ground, Losing Ground', p. 44.

² O'Donnell to O'Leary, 1 September 1927, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms. 15,465 (7).

the Order elsewhere in the Free State was a moot point.³ After the perceived snub suffered by the Order at the time of the National League's foundation, the *Hibernian Journal's* desire to recast the Order in the Free State as a Catholic pressure group only increased after the League's political nadir of 1927. Remaining aloof from any specific party, Nugent often urged members to vote for a Hibernian where he was in the field (and it was always going to be a 'he') and if not, to vote for a man who had been good to the organisation in the past or who at least could be expected to help the AOH in future.⁴ The body could then influence opinion and promote its Catholic nationalist policies via individual members of various parties. This was a marked move away from the Order's position as virtually an auxiliary wing of the Nationalist movement.

However, such a view was not necessarily shared by all members. The 1927 biennial convention decided to call a conference on the issue for later that year and the report contained in the *Hibernian Journal* is instructive. Revealing a cross-section of opinion among members, the discussion also highlighted a distinction between Hibernians in the border counties where the Order stayed strongest and those scattered around other parts of the Free State. The contradictions between the national sentiments expressed by Nugent and the strong co-operation between the Order and the National League in border counties were laid bare.

At the convention in July, Nugent had argued that the Order should not 'divorce' itself from politics as it would lose 'strength and influence and develop into a social and benevolent organisation commanding little influence and less respect'.⁵ However, he remained convinced that they should not strongly identify themselves with any party and instead leave decisions on who to support at election time to local divisions.⁶ This approach found favour at the subsequent conference. J.J. Horgan, who advocated that the Order defend Catholic rights, was among the members who felt the Hibernians should not officially endorse a political party.⁷ One speaker from

³ Gaughan, *A Political Odyssey*, p. 202.

⁴ *Hibernian Journal*, March 1928, p. 15

⁵ Secretary's preliminary report, AOH Biennial Convention 19 July 1927, Ancient Order of Hibernian Collections NAI – LOU 13/1/3 (a).

⁶ Secretary's supplemental report, Meeting of National Board Free State, 17 November 1927, Ancient Order of Hibernian Collections NAI – LOU 13/1/3 (a).

⁷ *Hibernian Journal*, December 1927, p. 74; Curtis, *The Splendid Cause*, pp. 80-81.

Longford wanted the Order to concentrate on its social aspects, lamenting the state of politics. This was countered by another speaker from the same county who had supported the Labour Party candidate (Athlone Hibernian Henry Broderick) at the previous election.⁸

The idea that the Order should remain political, but act as an independent pressure group with prominent members in different parties suited Hibernians who had gravitated towards the governing Cumann na nGaedheal or other parties. However, the biggest support for alignment with a political party came from the border area. National League TD for Louth, James Coburn claimed that there would be no Hibernian organisation in such counties, but for devotion to John Redmond and the IPP. In his opinion, a new national party on the lines of the old Irish Party was what people along the border wanted.⁹ Ultimately, Coburn's view seemed to be a minority one; members voted to adopt Nugent's perspective. The Order's slightly uncomfortable political neutrality therefore continued. By 1928, Nugent claimed the Order had 'members and friends in nearly every party'.¹⁰ This, of course, included Coburn and the remnants of the National League, but also independents like John F. O'Hanlon.

Although outside the scope of this study, the AOH and the Irish Party had a wider legacy in the new state of Northern Ireland. This rump had been centred chiefly around Joe Devlin and had remained distinct from the Sinn Féin school of nationalism in the north-east. Border nationalists eventually abandoned abstention from the Northern parliament and in 1928, Devlin and Sinn Féin leader Cahir Healy came together to lead a new party, the National League of the North. In spite of the similarity in moniker with the National League in the Free State and the well wishes sent from the Monaghan branch of the latter party prior to the 1929 Northern election, the new northern party had no formal connection with Capt. Redmond's dispirited grouping.¹¹ The only connection was the very real sympathy felt by

⁸ *Hibernian Journal*, December 1927, p. 73

⁹ *Hibernian Journal*, December 1927, pp. 73-4

¹⁰ *Hibernian Journal*, March 1928, p. 15.

¹¹ *Irish Independent*, 24 April 1929. The new League did well in the 1929 Northern election and all eleven candidates won seats in the Belfast parliament; however, they were to find it a frustrating experience, Hepburn, *Catholic Belfast and Nationalist Ireland*, p. 261. See also Phoenix, *Northern Nationalism*, p. 360.

nationalists in border counties for the plight of their counterparts in Northern Ireland. At a gathering in Glenties in August 1928, Hibernian J.P. Gaynor acknowledged that the National League of the North was a six-county organisation, but argued, ‘anything that affected the six counties must equally affect Donegal, Monaghan and Cavan’. Declaring all counties part of the province of Ulster, he claimed that he saw an end to partition in the formation of Devlin and Healy’s party.¹² For the AOH, the northern case was clearly different to the one which had obtained with Redmond’s League. Nugent declared that, as Devlin and Healy had formed a united northern nationalist party, it represented the entire community.¹³ The Order therefore fully endorsed the party in a way Nugent consistently argued could not be the case with the ‘sectional’ movements of the Free State. Although the party established links with Fianna Fáil, such unity did not prevent the National League of the North struggling with the numerous challenges it faced.¹⁴

Returning to the Free State, Redmond did, however, have one unexpected victory at this time as he successfully defeated the Government in the Dáil on the establishment of a commission to enquire into the claims of ex-British servicemen. As the Government’s embarrassment subsided, a committee to examine the claims of ex-servicemen was eventually established. Nevertheless, this would prove the National League’s last real success as Redmond’s motion was passed in the Dáil with the support of Fianna Fáil.¹⁵ Such a result, which had undertones of the summer rainbow coalition, failed to answer the question of where old Nationalists fitted into a political landscape vastly changed by the emergence of Fianna Fáil, and specifically its entry into the Dáil. In April 1928, when a by-election was called in Dublin North after the disqualification of Jim Larkin, Tom O’Donnell urged support for Fianna Fáil’s Kathleen Clarke (widow of 1916 leader Tom). However, no press outlet published his letter calling on Nationalists to vote for Clarke.¹⁶

¹² *Irish Independent*, 16 August 1928.

¹³ *Hibernian Journal*, July 1928, p. 47. The *Independent* interpreted the party similarly and stated clearly that it was a new party and an essential movement for northern nationalists, *Irish Independent*, 20 November 1928.

¹⁴ Phoenix, *Northern Nationalism*, pp. 358-65; Harris, *The Catholic Church and the Foundation of the Northern Irish State*, pp. 176-85; Hepburn, *Catholic Belfast and Nationalist Ireland*, pp. 261-2.

¹⁵ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 21, cc. 1393-4, 1445-6, 16 November 1927.

¹⁶ Handwritten note, NLI O’Donnell Papers Ms. 15,466 (1); Gaughan, *A Political Odyssey*, p. 203; Kathleen Clarke (ed. Helen Litton), *Kathleen Clarke Revolutionary Woman* (Dublin: O’Brien Press, 2008), p. 291.

The irony of Redmond's success in the establishment of the Committee on Claims of Ex-Servicemen was that he chose not to attend the meetings of this Committee, objecting to its decision not to hold sittings in public.¹⁷ Despite this, Redmond continued to make representations in the Dáil, questioning Cosgrave and Finance Minister Ernest Blythe on whether ex-servicemen were discriminated against when some were discharged as temporary clerks in the civil service.¹⁸ As the Committee travelled the country hearing accounts of poverty, hardship and the unfulfilled pre-war promises of Lloyd George and the British government, Redmond queried Cosgrave's administration persistently to see if the British government would be involved in the committee's enquiry while also drawing attention to the recommendation that a minimum of 10,000 houses would need to be built by the Irish Sailors and Soldiers Land Trust to satisfy demand.¹⁹ However, the Committee eventually reported that ex-servicemen in the Free State did not suffer any discrimination, or hold grievances different from other sectors in society which could be judged common to them as a group.²⁰

Despite this setback, memory of the Great War continued to be honoured in the Free State. Poppy Day events in the Free State continued though from 1926, the November gatherings were moved out of the city centre to Phoenix Park. This better provided for the crowds and also helped to avoid some of the disruptions although republican protests would peak in 1928 before subsequently declining.²¹ In addition to the continuance of Armistice Day events, the British Legion organised battlefield pilgrimages to France and Flanders in August 1928 and to Belgium in 1930. Redmond travelled on both occasions and the trips were advertised and covered in

¹⁷ Redmond to M.J. Beary, 7 February 1928, quoted in Report of the Committee on Claims of Ex-Servicemen, p. 64, NLI Johnson Papers Ms. 17,192.

¹⁸ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 22, col. 228, 23 February; cc 363-4, 24 February 1928. Redmond wanted such ex-servicemen's dismissals delayed until the Committee on Claims of Ex-Servicemen had reported, *Dáil Debates*, vol. 22, cc. 128-9, 22 February 1928. Redmond could also occasionally still raise controversy, criticising expenditure on the army and suggesting the state instead rely on a 'token army' rather than 'the preposterous idea' we could adequately defend ourselves, *Dáil Debates*, vol. 22, cc 1677-1680, 22 March 1928.

¹⁹ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 28, col. 1014, 7 March 1929. Redmond claimed to receive between fifty and sixty letters per week on the subject, see Myers, "'A Land Fit for Heroes?'" , pp. 191-2.

²⁰ Report of the Committee on Claims of Ex-Servicemen, NLI Johnson Papers Ms. 17,192.

²¹ Contemporary politics sometimes interacted with protests as Blueshirts became as much targets of republicans as unionists, McGarry "'Too Damned Tolerant'" , pp. 66, 75-6; Myers, "'A Land Fit For Heroes?'" , pp. 36-7.

national newspapers.²² £40,000 had been collected for the Merrion Square war memorial which never came to fruition, but calls for an alternative memorial persisted. Although many ex-servicemen were undoubtedly in need of financial assistance, Redmond felt it would be a ‘lasting disgrace’ if a permanent memorial was not erected in the capital.²³ Other issues to excite his interest included opposition to the closure of public houses on St. Patrick’s Day, compulsory Irish for lawyers, and a motion to legalise sweepstakes to help fund hospitals and sanatoria.²⁴

In April 1929, there was a well-reported National League gathering in Monaghan where speakers claimed Fianna Fáil was regressing and called for land purchase in the county to be expedited.²⁵ However, these fitful meetings in border areas were the only signs of vitality in the League’s crumbling edifice.²⁶ Although the party would officially survive its electoral dressing down until 1931, its existence was nominal.²⁷ The League was essentially bankrupt by the end of 1927 and was saddled with a discredited reputation that a successor to the old Irish Party could ill afford.²⁸ Redmond continued to defend his constituency as did Coburn for Louth although the latter was generally less prominent and spoke more on matters affecting unemployment.²⁹ Both TDs usually (but not always) voted with the Government though Coburn was more likely to side with the opposition.³⁰

²² *Irish Independent*, 4 August 1928; 30, 31 July 1930; *Irish Times*, 6 August 1928; 30 July, 1 August 1929. See also Myers, “‘A Land Fit For Heroes’?”, pp. 142-9.

²³ *Irish Times*, 26 October 1929.

²⁴ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 27, cc. 773-7, 27 February 1931. Although not the first Dáil initiative aimed at revoking the ban on sweepstakes to help fund hospitals, this proposal eventually led to the setting up of the Irish Sweepstakes *Dáil Debates*, vol. 32, col. 2340, 6 December 1929. See also Marie Coleman, *The Irish Sweep*, pp. 16-19. Ironically, T.J. Hanna, the former private secretary of John Redmond, won £1,000 on the sweepstakes in 1932, *Irish Independent*, 1 April 1932.

²⁵ On the work of the Land Commission in Monaghan in this period, see P.J. Sammon, *In the Land Commission: A Memoir, 1933-1978* (Dublin: Ashfield Press, 1997).

²⁶ *Irish Independent*, 24 April 1929. The League had won three seats on Monaghan County Council in the 1928 local elections and one in Cavan, *Irish Independent*, 2, 3 July 1928.

²⁷ Such was the League’s inertia that there is even some doubt as to the exact date of the League’s dissolution as Gaughan has dated it in January 1931 while newspaper continued to refer to a National League party for some months subsequently, Glackin, ‘Home Rulers in a Free State’, pp. 38-9; Gaughan, *A Political Odyssey*, p. 213.

²⁸ For accounts of the League’s fundraising attempts and efforts to ensure Capt. Redmond was not personally declared bankrupt, see O’Donnell to Arthur Cox, 3 January 1929; Alfie Byrne to O’Donnell, 13 July 1928; T.M. Farrelly to O’Donnell 13 July 1928; Edward Walsh to O’Donnell, 13 July 1928, NLI O’Donnell Papers Ms. 14,566. Donations also arrived from James Coburn, T.F. McGahon and the Fianna Fáil party, Gaughan, *A Political Odyssey*, p. 204.

²⁹ Redmond worked hard to protect the margarine factory in Waterford city, *Waterford Standard*, 26 October 1927.

³⁰ Glackin, ‘Home Rulers in a Free State’, pp. 37-8. For examples see *Irish Independent*, 14 March 1928; *Dáil Debates*, vol. 22, cc. 947-8, 8 March 1928, vol. 37, cc. 1105-1106, 5 March 1931. Coburn

Redmond's work was interrupted by illness in 1929; worse personal problems were to follow on the evening of 16 April 1930 when his motor car struck a cyclist at Cabinteely on the Dublin-Bray road. The cyclist died that evening, prompting a manslaughter charge against the National League leader with suspicion of drink-driving (Redmond had taken alcohol that lunchtime).³¹ The trial began on 21 May in the Circuit Criminal Court, but the jury could not agree a verdict meaning a retrial was held in the Central Criminal Court.³² Amid much press interest, Redmond was then acquitted at this second trial. Although Alan O'Day has argued the final years of Redmond's life 'were clouded' by the accident, as will be discussed later, Redmond would still be considered a valuable asset by Cumann na nGaedheal in the 1932 election campaign.³³

As time passed, the political breach opening between Redmond and O'Donnell since the summer of 1927 only grew. O'Donnell started to write for Fianna Fáil's weekly newspaper, the *Nation*, and appeared to move towards de Valera's position of retaining the Land Annuities owed to the British government by Irish farmers under the old land acts rather than paying them to the British government.³⁴ The Land Annuities question had first arisen when the left-wing activist Peadar O'Donnell began a campaign against payment in his native Donegal. The tough economic conditions in many agricultural areas and complaints about the implementation of the 1923 Land Act added momentum to the campaign and it was taken up in the Seanad by Maurice Moore. In 1927, Fianna Fáil began to develop a Land Annuities policy; however, while Peadar O'Donnell had simply argued against their payment, Fianna Fáil advocated collecting the Annuities but retaining them in the Free State for the 'development of Irish agriculture'.³⁵ Fianna Fáil disputed the British claim to the payments, claiming that the 1920 Government of Ireland Act provided for the state to retain the Annuities. The party also asserted the subsequent Ultimate

voted with the Fianna Fáil on its motion to extend the scope of the Old Age Pension Act. The Government was defeated on this division, *Dáil Debates*, vol. 34, col. 240, 27 March 1930.

³¹ *Irish Independent*, 18 October 1929.

³² *Irish Times*, 24-28 June 1930; *Irish Independent*, 22-27 May 1930.

³³ Alan O'Day, 'Redmond, William Archer (1886-1932)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Oct. 2005 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/65858>, accessed 27 May 2015]

³⁴ *The Nation*, 26 January, 2 February 1929.

³⁵ For a detailed account of the evolution of Fianna Fáil's Annuities policy, see Brian A. Reynolds, 'The Formation and Development of Fianna Fáil, 1926-1933', unpublished PhD thesis, Trinity College Dublin, 1976, pp. 309-327.

Financial Agreement following the Boundary Commission debacle had not been ratified by the Dáil and did not therefore alter the situation.³⁶

In 1929, Tom O'Donnell argued about the legality of the British claim to the payments and soon antagonised government supporters.³⁷ Conversely, for Redmond, the idea of retaining the Land Annuities amounted to 'national embezzlement'. Redmond instead likened the statements of Agriculture Minister Patrick Hogan on the issue to those made by the IPP in 1908-09.³⁸ Although Gaughan has argued the Annuities issue pushed many ex-Home Rulers towards the Government, it may be said that the National League remnant was far from united on the matter. De Valera's motion to retain them in the Free State was defeated in the Dáil on 2 May 1929; however, Redmond voted with the Government while Coburn voted with the opposition.³⁹

Blending into Cumann na nGaedheal and the 1932 election

As shown in previous chapters, Cumann na nGaedheal had been absorbing (if sometimes problematically) old Irish Party supporters since 1922. However, the bitterness between such followers and the Government party was still all too apparent on the campaign trail in 1927. It was only in the aftermath of the Jinks debacle that real public rapprochement developed. In August 1929, W.T. Cosgrave and his wife Louisa visited the grave of John Redmond in Wexford accompanied by local man James J. Stafford (Cosgrave had not attended the funeral of John Dillon two years previously despite a well-earned reputation for attending funerals).⁴⁰ Mrs Cosgrave also joined crowds of former Irish Party MPs and followers who attended a requiem mass in Dublin's Pro-Cathedral for T.P O'Connor three months later.⁴¹

³⁶ Reynolds, 'The Formation and Development of Fianna Fáil', p. 327.

³⁷ *Irish Independent*, 3, 10 October 1929; *The Nation*, 9 February, 22, 29 June 1929; Gaughan, *A Political Odyssey*, pp. 210-211.

³⁸ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 29, col. 1380-1382, 2 May 1929.

³⁹ The Labour Party was also split, *Dáil Debates*, vol. 29, col. 1448, 2 May 1929; Gaughan, *A Political Odyssey*, p. 213.

⁴⁰ Cosgrave had sent his aide-de-camp Colonel Joseph F. O'Reilly; however, O'Reilly was among a number of notable figures who missed the service as some press reports had indicated it would take place at 10 am rather than 8am, *Irish Independent*, 9 August 1927.

⁴¹ *Irish Independent*, 26 November 1929.

As a party, Cumann na nGaedheal also gave nods to the IPP. O'Connor's passing was marked by a vote of sympathy at a meeting of the parliamentary party.⁴² In November 1931, at the Seanad triennial elections, the party reached out to independent deputies including Redmond, Coburn and John F. O'Hanlon to vote for Cumann na nGaedheal's candidates.⁴³ As can be seen below, the triennial elections saw a handful of individuals from Home Rule backgrounds returned as senators. Such senators elected in 1931, and at the previous election in 1928, were all Treaty supporters whether they were Cumann na nGaedheal representatives or independents.

Table 5.1 Seanad triennial elections 1928-31

	Former MPs	Former Home Rule Candidates	Ex-Home Rule Councillors or Guardians	Relatives of former MPs	AOH/Other Home Rule connections
1928 (19 seats to be filled)	2	1	1	0	2
1931 (16 seats)	1	3	3	1	2

Stephen Gwynn supported the Cosgrave administration and wrote in the *Observer* in December 1931 that John Redmond would have approved of its policies.⁴⁴ Such sentiments and Treatyite overtures to former IPP members were leading to a reconciliation which would receive a crowning glory if Capt. Redmond could be persuaded to join. Redmond aided such moves with declarations that the Dáil worked better than the House of Commons and his support for the Government's commitment to paying the Annuities.⁴⁵ In November 1931, Redmond officially joined the Government party. Cosgrave had prepared the ground at a rally in Letterkenny where he invited Redmond and former followers to come and join the Cumann na nGaedheal.⁴⁶ An announcement that Redmond had accepted this

⁴²Minutes of the Parliamentary Party meeting, 28 November 1929, UCDA Cumann na nGaedheal papers P/39 MIN (3).

⁴³ Minutes of the Parliamentary Party meeting, 3 November 1931, UCDA Cumann na nGaedheal papers P/39 MIN (3). Former National League member John Conlan also stood unsuccessfully for Cumann na nGaedheal in the 1931 Kildare by-election, Farrell, 'Few Supporters and No Organisation', p. 78.

⁴⁴ *Observer*, 6 December 1931 cited in Reid, *The Lost Ireland of Stephen Gwynn*, p. 222.

⁴⁵ *Irish Independent*, 19 March 1929. Redmond had been speaking at the Irish Club in London. In a Dáil debate on the Free State's borrowing rates; Cosgrave defended the Government based on Redmond's comment that such an achievement would have received acclaim in the Commons, *Dáil Debates*, vol. 38, cc. 1095-6, 8 May 1931.

⁴⁶ *Irish Independent*, 30 October 1931.

invitation was soon followed by a meeting in the Redmondite citadel of Waterford where Cosgrave and Redmond appeared together on the same platform on 15 November. Acknowledging that the two men had differed in the past on ‘method and policy’, Redmond declared they had always had one common object: the ‘welfare of the country’. As was the case with many of National League speeches in 1926-7, Redmond invoked the history of the Home Rule movement, commenting on the achievements of the reunited Irish Parliamentary Party after the decade of bitter division over Parnell. At Waterford, he declared that he hoped to see ‘another reconciliation’ as he and his supporters joined the Government party.⁴⁷

In response, Cosgrave paid tribute to the IPP and the work of Parnell, Davitt, Dillon, O’Brien and Healy. Such tributes were echoed by some of the party’s followers. At a Cumann na nGaedheal ard-chomhairle on 1 December, Canon Masterson, a delegate from Leitrim, lauded Cosgrave for paying ‘tardy justice’ to John Redmond and rescuing his memory ‘from the unfortunate cloud that was hanging over it’.⁴⁸ Capt. Redmond attended his first meeting of the party two days later and, accompanied by Cosgrave, he ‘received an ovation’ from his new colleagues and was ‘heartily welcomed’.⁴⁹ Cosgrave became stronger in his endorsements of parliamentary tradition, placing on record his opinion that the names of Redmond and Dillon were great names and that it would augur well if leaders of Cumann na nGaedheal and Fianna Fáil publicly admitted that the Irish Party leaders had been patriots.⁵⁰ As Mel Farrell has observed, Cumann na nGaedheal was thus ‘portraying itself as the heir to the revolution in some quarters and as the inheritor of John Redmond’s legacy in others’.⁵¹ The recruitment of Capt. Redmond undoubtedly demonstrated Cosgrave’s pragmatism in again seeking to appeal to former political enemies, but also the effects of the shifting forces of party politics in the Free State. The emergence and growth of Fianna Fáil had increased the ferocity of political competition and forced fringe elements to either align with one of the two major parties or leave the field.

⁴⁷ *Munster Express*, 20 November 1931.

⁴⁸ *Irish Independent*, 2 December 1931

⁴⁹ Parliamentary Party Meeting, 3 December 1931, UCDA Cumann na nGaedheal minute books P39/MIN.

⁵⁰ *Irish Independent*, 12 February 1932. Ciara Meehan has argued that Redmond was the ‘most beneficial’ of a number of TDs who converted to Cumann na nGaedheal between 1927 and 1932, emphasising the importance of the Redmond name at a time before party affiliation was listed on ballot papers, Meehan, *The Cosgrave Party*, pp. 180-181.

⁵¹ Farrell, ‘Few Supporters and No Organisation’, p. 115.

Although Brian Reynolds has argued that the alliance with Redmond created some tension within Cumann na nGaedheal, it seems that other former Irish Party supporters were tempted to follow Redmond's lead.⁵² Waterford Redmondites joined Cumann na nGaedheal and in Redmond's native Wexford, the formerly pro-National League *Free Press* newspaper fully endorsed the outgoing government in the election campaign.⁵³ A.P. Matthews, a former Home Rule councillor and later Cumann na nGaedheal TD, spoke at the party convention in Meath defending Cosgrave's introduction of the Constitutional Amendment Act. When he finished speaking, a delegate from Virginia in neighbouring Cavan declared himself a Parnellite and Redmondite who was present because Capt. Redmond had joined Cumann na nGaedheal. Another speaker from Kells said he had not taken part in politics in twenty-five years, but had likewise been a supporter of the two former Irish Party leaders. He saluted the unity displayed by Cosgrave and Redmond.⁵⁴

Of course, this alliance was not universally popular. Former IPP critic John Sweetman wrote letters to the press disputing Cosgrave's claims that the Irish Party was a 'great party' and calling Cosgrave and Redmond's union 'tragic'. Such claims, in turn, were countered by both the Cosgrave supporter E.T. Keane, editor of the *Kilkenny People*, and former MP William O'Malley.⁵⁵ The 1932 campaign saw some occasional newspaper correspondence on the IPP's record and debates about who was to blame for partition too; nevertheless, such debates were far less conspicuous than in 1927.⁵⁶

Redmond's canvassing for Cumann na nGaedheal was extensive as he addressed Government meetings in Redmondite strongholds in the south-east, Sligo (where he questioned Fianna Fáil's attitude to ex-servicemen), Limerick, Wicklow and Mayo.⁵⁷ Reconciling his new party label with his desire to lead an alternative nationalist party

⁵² Reynolds, 'The Formation and Development of Fianna Fáil', pp. 356-8. Ciara Meehan also pointed out that Cumann na nGaedheal minimised the Government's achievements at imperial conferences during the 1932 election campaign, Meehan, *The Cosgrave Party*, p. 180.

⁵³ *Free Press*, 23 January, 6 February 1932. Redmondite bodies like the Women's Nationalist Association also merged into the Cumann na nGaedheal organisation in Waterford city, *Irish Independent*, 28 January 1932.

⁵⁴ *Irish Independent*, 18 January 1932.

⁵⁵ *Irish Independent*, 9, 19 November 1931.

⁵⁶ For example, *Irish Independent*, 15, 16 February 1932.

⁵⁷ *Irish Independent*, 29 February 1932; *Free Press*, 23, 30 January 1932.

just five years earlier, Redmond reasoned that the Treaty was now the major issue at election time and alliance was therefore needed for the good of the country.⁵⁸ He repeated this claim on a number of occasions and called for good relations with Britain. According to the former MP, the Government party had shown ‘Irishmen could be a practical and as honourable as the men of any other nation’.⁵⁹

In an election marked by Fianna Fáil attacks on the Government and Cumann na nGaedheal alarm over Fianna Fáil’s links to the IRA and/or left-wing organisations, Redmond stuck closely to his parliamentary tradition and the threat posed by de Valera to the Treaty settlement. In his uncle’s old parliamentary constituency of Clare, the Captain told the crowds that he approached the offer to join Cumann na nGaedheal by considering what Major Willie Redmond would have done. He was confident his uncle would have answered the call as he had always done.⁶⁰ Redmond also bristled at speeches by de Valera on the Treaty referencing Parnell. Redmond insisted whatever differences people had with Parnell, ‘history recorded no greater man for fighting for the rights of Ireland’. This was in marked contrast to Fianna Fáil’s notion of not trading with England according to Redmond.⁶¹

In the election itself, Cumann na nGaedheal displayed its Home Rule tinge with eighteen TDs elected coming from some form of Irish Party background. Some Farmers’ Party members had been absorbed into the Treatyite grouping too and the party’s former leader Denis J. Gorey (himself a poor law guardian pre-1918) was now firmly established in Cumann na nGaedheal.

Table 5.2 – Individuals from Home Rule backgrounds in Cumann na nGaedheal 1932

February 1932	Ex-Home Rule MPs	Ex- IPP candidates	Ex-councillors/guardians	Relations of MPs	Former National League TDs/candidates	Total
Cumann na nGaedheal	1	1	12	4	1	19

⁵⁸ Not everyone would agree with this analysis, Newell, *The West Must Wait*, pp. 166-77; Dunphy, *The Making of Fianna Fáil Power*, pp. 75-144, passim.

⁵⁹ *Irish Independent*, 4 February 1932.

⁶⁰ *Irish Independent*, 11 January 1932.

⁶¹ *Irish Independent*, 2 February 1932.

Home Rulers in Fianna Fáil?

Analysing patterns of political organisation in pre- and post-independence Ireland and the correlations between Parnellite, Sinn Féin and Fianna Fáil organisations, Tom Garvin has written that that Fianna Fáil built ‘on the same agrarian traditions as the old Leagues of Parnell and O’Brien, while Fine Gael built more on the respectable traditions of the later, “deagrarianised” UIL and the AOH.’⁶² Discussions and statistical examination of the early Dáils has already shown a greater tendency for former IPP politicians to enter Cumann na nGaedheal than anti-Treaty parties. However, in addition to comparisons between Fianna Fáil and the earlier Parnellite party, some latter day Home Rulers also gravitated towards de Valera’s party. Such individuals added an intriguing dimension to the campaign trail in 1932 and allowed Fianna Fáil to claim some value from an IPP connection even if, conversely, Redmond’s membership of Cumann na nGaedheal still offered the opportunity to make political capital. The most famous addition to de Valera’s party was Tom O’Donnell. Former Galway MP and TD James Cosgrave also joined de Valera’s party, but did not stand for election while Fred Crowley, who would contest Kerry in the 1932 election, married the daughter of former MP John P. Boland, but was himself a War of Independence veteran.⁶³

O’Donnell had remained in tune with Monaghan Hibernians who were sympathetic towards Fianna Fáil and his anti-partitionist rhetoric firmly blamed Cumann na nGaedheal as well as Sinn Féin for partition. The AOH published O’Donnell’s pamphlet *The Partition of Ireland* which reiterated that John Redmond and John Dillon had never conceded permanent partition and called the Treaty ‘an English victory’ which threw away ‘seven years of bloodshed and suffering’. The strength of O’Donnell’s criticism was striking, accusing Michael Collins of ‘platform oratory’ and arguing that the Treatyites had sought to minimise the Boundary Commission element of the agreement until the 1923 general election was won.⁶⁴ O’Donnell also accused the British government of making partition permanent by demanding little in

⁶² Garvin, *The Evolution of Irish Nationalist Politics*, pp. 153-8, 234.

⁶³ McConnel, *The Irish Parliamentary Party and the Third Home Rule Crisis*, p. 314.

⁶⁴ Tom O’Donnell, *The Partition of Ireland* (1929), pp. 1-3, 15-16, NAI AOH BR/LOU 12/14/45.

the way of financial contribution from Northern Ireland while the Free State fared so much worse.⁶⁵

At a Hibernian gathering in Ballybay in 1929, O'Donnell appeared alongside Nugent and Coburn and complained that 'nationalists of the North had been sold to the greatest autocracy the world had ever seen. For the party who had been guilty of that betrayal time was passing, the writing was on the wall'.⁶⁶ However, for the AOH generally, any alliance with Fianna Fáil would run counter to their projected political neutrality. Such an attitude persisted as de Valera's Fianna Fáil approached power in 1932.⁶⁷ In 1930, John Dillon's son James was among the members of the AOH who had expressed admiration for O'Donnell's pamphlet on partition; however, he failed to understand O'Donnell's belief that Fianna Fáil was the 'only hope'. Dillon doubted what policy de Valera and his party colleague Seán Lemass had on a number of issues.⁶⁸

Fianna Fáil's new newspaper the *Irish Press* (edited by the former O'Brienite journalist Frank Gallagher) openly mocked Cosgrave's 'drastic' decision to court Redmond and carried a memorable cartoon depicting the Redmond blood transfusion to the stricken Cumann na nGaedheal patient as 'the last resort'.⁶⁹ Similarly, Reynolds has argued that the absorption of Redmondites damaged the Treatyites in the 1932 election by associating them with old Home Rulers and unionists while Fianna Fáil could present themselves as true republicans and even lay claim to the

⁶⁵ O'Donnell, *The Partition of Ireland*, pp. 22-3. In Alvin Jackson's view 'there was never any lasting and coherent formula which governed the financial relationship between Belfast and London'. The Northern Ireland Ministry of Finance had control over a small number of taxes; however, the majority were reserved' and paid directly to Westminster which deducted the cost of such services in Northern Ireland while an 'Imperial Contribution' was also deducted by London. This was initially set at £7.92 million, Jackson, *Home Rule*, p. 205. See also Patrick Buckland, *The Factory of Grievances: Devolved Government in Northern Ireland, 1921-39* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1979). Under the Treaty, the Free State assumed liability for servicing the national debt of the United Kingdom 'existing at the date hereof and towards the payment of war pensions as existing at that date in such proportion as may be fair and equitable, having regard to any just claims on the part of Ireland by way of set-off or counter-claim, the amount of such sums being determined in default of agreement by the arbitration of one or more independent persons being citizens of the British Empire', Anglo-Irish Treaty 1921 <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/politics/docs/ait1921.htm> accessed 16 May 2016. However, these arrangements were revised in favour of the Free State in 1926 as part of the Boundary Commission settlement.

⁶⁶ *Hibernian Journal*, August 1929, p. 47.

⁶⁷ *Hibernian Journal*, January 1932, p. 1.

⁶⁸ James Dillon to O'Donnell, 18 June 1930, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms. 15,466 (2).

⁶⁹ *Irish Press*, 24 November 1931.

stepping stone argument of Michael Collins.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, O'Donnell's progression into Fianna Fáil was a counter-point and the party's TD Frank Fahy was quick to declare that with O'Donnell and fellow ex-MP James Cosgrave in de Valera's party, Cumann na nGaedheal had gained little from adding Redmond.⁷¹

O'Donnell's electoral chances undoubtedly suffered in 1923 and 1927 because there was less of a legacy of Irish Party loyalty in Clare or Kerry than in the border counties or the south-east. As Hibernians in Monaghan drifted towards Fianna Fáil, it seems extraordinary that O'Donnell did not seek nomination for the county. Seán Lemass appeared to recognise the potential to profit from AOH support and wrote to O'Donnell in December 1931 about contesting the Donegal constituency.⁷² However, it appears that local TD Neal Blaney and his supporters did not want O'Donnell in the county.⁷³ A meeting of the Fianna Fáil national executive in the same month listed O'Donnell as one of four candidates for selection for the constituency of Louth (where Coburn held the AOH vote) rather than Donegal, but he was unsuccessful.⁷⁴ O'Donnell instead stood for Dublin County on a strong ticket alongside two sitting TDs, Seán MacEntee and Seán Brady, as well as Pádraic Ó Máille and Richard Duke. Although this decision would severely dent O'Donnell's chances of election, it did not take him out of the spotlight as he explained the rationale behind a former Home Rule MP joining de Valera's republican party. Speaking in Cork, he argued that Fianna Fáil was 'representing the highest traditions of Irish nationalism'. In his view, the League had helped the country towards reunion by helping Fianna Fáil's passage into Dáil Éireann. O'Donnell declared 'with all this achieved, the National League was decently interred, having served its purpose.'⁷⁵ He concluded by claiming that if it was not for the disloyalty of Jinks and Rice, the 1927 coalition would have worked ridding the country of the 'Cosgrave-Unionist' government. James Cosgrave was a prominent campaigner for Fianna Fáil in Galway. Cosgrave condemned the Treatyites for conceding partition when John

⁷⁰ Reynolds, 'The Formation and Development of Fianna Fáil', pp. 356-8.

⁷¹ *Irish Press*, 4 January 1932.

⁷² Seán Lemass to O'Donnell, 19 December 1931, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms. 15,466 (2).

⁷³ Raidió na Gaeltachta documentary, *Tomás Ó Domhnaill* (28 May 2001). I am grateful to Cormac Ó Comhraí for providing me with a copy of this programme.

⁷⁴ National Executive Clár, 22 December 1931, UCDA Fianna Fáil Papers P176/352.

⁷⁵ *Irish Press*, 5 January 1932.

Redmond would not purchase any home rule settlement for the price of partition in 1914.⁷⁶

Although much had changed since the era of a more limited suffrage and uncontested constituencies, it could, nevertheless, be argued that the emerging Fianna Fáil shared certain similarities with the IPP. The party's appeal to smaller farmers echoed that of both the Parnellite Irish National League, and also UIL criticisms of the British administration.⁷⁷ Of course, de Valera and his colleagues also lacked parliamentary experience. As they found their feet, one of their initial tactics was to invoke the early tactics of Parnell and Joseph Biggar and briefly engage in obstruction in 1928.⁷⁸ Although it was perhaps unusual for a republican party to reuse a tactic associated with a constitutional tradition, it is perhaps less surprising when one considers that obstructionism was a ploy which was widely seen as bringing shame on the House of Commons.⁷⁹ Irish members were still very much outsiders in the imperial chamber at the time, which was perhaps how Fianna Fáil would have seen itself as a 'slightly constitutional party' in the late 1920s. As will be discussed later, the early Irish Party under Parnell had already been assimilated in nationalist cultural memory in rather different terms than the latter day Redmondite incarnation. Parnell, who had formed the 'New Departure' compact with the Fenians, had previously won the admiration of Arthur Griffith and Patrick Pearse while Redmond's party was very much defined in oppositional terms to the post-Rising Sinn Féin party.⁸⁰

Fianna Fáil's entry into the Dáil in 1927 altered the dynamic in Leinster House. Parnell's party has been generally acknowledged as one of the earliest oath-bound

⁷⁶ *Irish Press*, 11 February 1932.

⁷⁷ Anthony Varley, 'The Politics of Agrarian Reform: The State, Nationalists and the Agrarian Question in the West of Ireland', PhD thesis, Southern Illinois University, 1994, p. 324. However, unlike the UIL, Fianna Fáil did criticise the creation of uneconomic holdings while Cumann na nGaedheal, in common with its anti-Treatyite opponent was 'officially committed to the notion of the viable smallholding', 'The Politics of Agrarian Reform', pp. 327, 337.

⁷⁸ Reynolds, 'The Formation and Development of Fianna Fáil', pp. 187-190.

⁷⁹ David Thornley, 'The Irish Home Rule Party and Parliamentary Obstruction, 1874-87', *Irish Historical Studies*, vol. 12, no. 45 (March, 1960), pp. 38-57.

⁸⁰ Jackson, *Ireland 1798-1998*, pp. 211-212. For Pearse's attitude, see Patrick Pearse, 'Ghosts', <http://www.ucc.ie/celt/online/E900007-010.html> 18 August 2016.

parliamentary parties.⁸¹ This was something that Fianna Fáil would replicate as de Valera instituted strict discipline and a strong whip system, something upon which the Irish Party had prided itself. Prior to this, Cumann na nGaedheal backbenchers who were faced with rows of empty Opposition benches had had little need to ‘sit, act and vote’ as dutifully as the Irish Parliamentary Party had in Westminster. Fianna Fáil soon challenged this although Cumann na nGaedheal was slow to respond. Fianna Fáil managed to defeat a government that was less well organised at division time on Redmond’s motion on ex-servicemen and on another defeated government motion on pensions in 1930.⁸² The number of parliamentary questions based on local concerns also increased significantly between 1926 and 1932, indicating a more vigorous type of constituency-based representation although, as discussed in Chapter Two, Fianna Fáil built on the initial efforts of Labour as a Dáil opposition in this regard.⁸³ Research on the activities of Cosgrave, de Valera, McGilligan and Lemass has suggested little difference in the speaking behaviour of front bench Cumann na nGaedheal and Fianna Fáil politicians in opposition. However, although more research on the behaviour of all backbench TDs is needed to examine this issue in depth, Fianna Fáil appears to have better replicated the IPP’s discipline of the parliamentary party as a whole.⁸⁴

Richard Dunphy has demonstrated how Fianna Fáil established its power base by appealing to certain sectors of society which had little to gain from continued support for Cumann na nGaedheal. Moreover, he has also acknowledged how de Valera’s party succeeded in seeming to set the national agenda as Fianna Fáil took up the Irish political tradition of identifying party with nation.⁸⁵ This success helped to establish the party as a mass nationalist movement which had echoes of pre-Treaty

⁸¹ Eoin O’Malley, ‘The Old Order and the New’ review of Sean D. McGraw, *How Parties Win: Shaping the Irish Political Arena*, *Dublin Review of Books*, no. 68 (June 2015).

⁸² Reynolds, ‘The Formation and Development of Fianna Fáil’, p. 189. Ciara Meehan has noted a ‘general malaise’ among Cumann na nGaedheal backbenchers towards the end of their time in government as they frequently absented themselves from debate, forcing the party to make efforts to ensure attendance, Meehan, *The Cosgrave Party*, p. 160.

⁸³ Delany, Sinnott and O’Reilly, ‘The Extent of Clintelism in Irish Politics’.

⁸⁴ Meehan, *The Cosgrave Party*, pp. 200, 234-7; Elgie and Stapleton, ‘Testing the Decline of Parliament Thesis’, pp. 465-85. On Fianna Fáil’s efforts to enforce parliamentary attendance, see Eunan O’Halpin, ‘Parliamentary Party Discipline and Tactics: The Fianna Fáil Archives, 1926-32’, *Irish Historical Studies*, vol. 30, no. 120 (Nov. 1997), pp. 581-90.

⁸⁵ In Dunphy’s words, ‘Fianna Fáil always sought to articulate the interests of the social forces it represented in such a way as to identify them with the interests of the nation’, Dunphy, *The Making of Fianna Fáil Power*, p. 49.

Sinn Féin, which had itself supplanted the early structures of the Irish Party.⁸⁶ Organisationally, Fianna Fáil proved to be a marvel. Drawing on old IRA networks and achieving considerable fundraising success in the United States (itself an established nationalist tactic), the party expanded rapidly throughout the country. It has been pointed out that the existence of former IRA comrades aided party discipline.⁸⁷ However, although branches of the Fianna Fáil retained the right to vote at party conferences (ard-fheiseanna), its organisation and discipline seemed to contrast with Cumann na nGaedheal's difficulties (and Kevin O'Higgins's complaints that the leadership could not exercise control as Parnell or Redmond had done). Arguably, it also avoided the problems of the Irish Party as the UIL was increasingly undermined by party leadership in later years.⁸⁸

De Valera has variously been described as an 'aspirant to Parnell's mantle' and, notwithstanding Lee's contention that there was 'no second coming for the Parnell model of leadership' (and the role of Fianna Fáil deputies in policy formulation), de Valera was certainly closer than any other leader in independent Ireland to being the chief in his party as Parnell was in the Irish Party.⁸⁹ Even though Mulvagh has argued that central control was retained by Irish Party leadership from 1900 onwards, it was contained within what he described as the 'tetrarchy' of Redmond, Dillon, Devlin and O'Connor rather than one leader.⁹⁰ Despite O'Higgins's influence, Cumann na nGaedheal remained the 'Cosgrave party', yet Cosgrave was hardly a dominant Parnell-like figure either.⁹¹

⁸⁶ Deirdre McMahon has noted how in the 1930s de Valera became an articulator of public opinion, see McMahon, *Republicans and Imperialists: Anglo-Irish Relations in the 1930s* (New Haven: Yale University, 1984), pp. 14-16.

⁸⁷ Dunphy, *The Making of Fianna Fáil Power*, pp. 74-83. The Irish Volunteers had earlier organised along parish structures which held so much currency around the country. This later applied in the War of Independence where it was noteworthy that officers were elected rather than appointed, Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p. 205; Charles Townshend, *The Republic: The Fight for Irish Independence, 1918-1923* (London: Penguin Books, 2014), pp. 37, 44.

⁸⁸ O'Higgins quoted in Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution*, p. 260. In spite of this, Mel Farrell has noted how the parliamentary party was supreme and local constituencies had little influence on policy, Farrell, 'Few Supporters and No Organisation?', p. 292. McConnel, 'The View from the Backbench', pp. 129-136.

⁸⁹ Foster and Jackson, 'Men for All Seasons?', p. 422; Lee, 'On the Birth of the Irish State', pp. 138, 140; O'Halpin, 'Parliamentary Party Discipline and Tactics', p. 590. On de Valera as Taoiseach, see Brian Farrell, *Chairman or Chief? The Role of Taoiseach in Irish Government* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1971).

⁹⁰ Mulvagh, "'Sit, Act, and Vote'", pp. 24, 162.

⁹¹ Meehan, *The Cosgrave Party*, pp. 17-18.

In 1927, Fianna Fáil had been faced by a hostile press, especially the local newspapers. In response, de Valera moved to adopt another tried and tested tool of successful political parties: the party organ and he put in place the funds and personnel to produce a new national daily newspaper. First appearing on 5 September 1931, the *Irish Press* was edited by the former O'Brienite journalist Frank Gallagher and included among its directors the son of a former IPP MP: Stephen O'Mara junior.⁹² Fianna Fáil's organisational success continued after the two elections of 1927 and by 1928, there were an estimated 354 paid up cumainn rising to 759 by 1931 and 1,404 in 1932.⁹³ This compares with 1,230 paid up branches on the island of Ireland for the United Irish League at its organisational zenith in 1902.⁹⁴ Cumann na nGaedheal's organisational peak was 800 branches nationwide.⁹⁵ As stated in an earlier chapter, this cannot be an exact comparison. As part of the IPP's famous 'vampirising' tendency, the UIL was merely the most significant of a range of auxiliary bodies which included the AOH, Foresters, Town Tenants' League and others.⁹⁶ Fianna Fáil was a centralised party with each branch a component of the one organisation. Nonetheless, it could be argued that this was actually an improvement on the Irish Party model. While the Irish Party's auxiliary bodies undoubtedly owed much to the competing demands of various sectional bodies in an essentially one party nationalist movement, Fianna Fáil can be said to have been building a party with mass appeal at this time which attracted a number of different interest groups.

It was symptomatic of Fianna Fáil's success that this collection of interests was expanded as the years passed. This even included some of the support groups which had backed the National League. In 1927, the League attained the support of the

⁹² Reynolds, 'The Formation and Development of Fianna Fáil', pp. 168-9. O'Mara's brother James had been Cumann na nGaedheal TD 1924-7. Although editor of O'Brien's *Cork Free Press*, Frank Gallagher had not necessarily been an avowed believer in O'Brienite politics, see Patrick Maume, 'A Nursery of Editors: the *Cork Free Press*, 1910-16', *History Ireland*, vol. 15, no. 2 (March/April 2007), pp. 42-6.

⁹³ The figure for recorded cumainn cited by Brian Reynolds is far higher for 1928 (1,033). However, as the author notes, branches in these years were counted even if they had not paid the affiliation fee to the party. In order to be consistent with the UIL, these are not counted in this comparison, Reynolds, 'The Formation and Development of Fianna Fáil', pp. 422-3.

⁹⁴ McConnell, 'The View from the Backbench', p. 129. Historians have recently pointed to similarities in the political culture between the IPP and Fianna Fáil through the pre-Treaty Sinn Féin, Newell, *The West Must Wait*, p. 129; Farrell, 'Cumann na nGaedheal: A New "National" Party?', p. 53.

⁹⁵ Mel Farrell, 'From Cumann na nGaedheal to Fine Gael: The Foundation of the United Ireland Party in September 1933', *Éire-Ireland*, Vol. 49, Issues 3 and 4 (Fall/Winter 2014), pp. 146-7.

⁹⁶ Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p. 101.

vintners by condemning O’Higgins’s legislation. Although no new major legislation followed the 1924 Act, the vintners remained a powerful lobby. In 1930, a deputation from the National Union of Vintners, Grocers, and Allied Trade Assistants approached Fianna Fáil. However, the deputation failed to secure any Dáil initiatives from the party in the following year.⁹⁷ De Valera’s party was also lobbied by town tenants’ organisations in 1931. After the defeat of Capt. Redmond’s second town tenants bill in 1926, the Government had appointed the Meredith Commission to investigate the issue. In 1931, the Government passed the Landlords and Tenants Act - a measure which addressed the plight of urban dwellers although it has been described as ‘modest’ in comparison to Redmond’s bill.⁹⁸ As he moved into Fianna Fáil, Tom O’Donnell had apparently been retained as legal adviser to the United Town Tenants’ League and he participated in its campaign on rights for members and wrote articles on the 1931 Act for the *Irish Press*.⁹⁹

One other supporter of Fianna Fáil in 1932 may be worthy of brief comment. The Irish National Foresters, another fraternal body prominent at the height of the Home Rule movement, had never been as significant as the AOH and tended to remain out of politics after 1918. However, its Dublin branch named after John Redmond expressed confidence in and support for de Valera in the Economic War in August 1932.¹⁰⁰

Table 5.3 – Individuals from Home Rule backgrounds in Fianna Fáil 1932

Former MPs	Former IPP candidates	Ex-Home Rule Councillors/Guardians	Relations of MPs	Former National League TDs/ candidates
0	0	0	1	0

⁹⁷ Minutes of parliamentary party meeting, 6 March 1930, 26 February 1931, UCDA Fianna Fáil Papers P176/443. The vintners remained a powerful lobby although they chafed against the influence of the Pioneers in the country, Ferriter, *A Nation of Extremes*, pp. 116-118. For the vintners’ relationship with the IPP and Devlin, in particular, in the earlier period, see Hepburn, *Catholic Belfast and Nationalist Ireland*, pp. 65, 136.

⁹⁸ Graham and Hood, ‘Town Tenant Protest in the Late 19th- and Early 20th-Century Ireland’, p. 55.

⁹⁹ Gaughan, *A Political Odyssey*, pp. 212-213; *Irish Press*, 5-7 January 1932.

¹⁰⁰ *Irish Independent*, 2 August 1932.

Recalcitrant Home Rulers and the 1932 election

The fragmentation of the Free State party system was still visible by 1932. While the Farmers' Party had been outflanked by Cumann na nGaedheal and had declined significantly, the fall of the National League and Redmond's alliance with Cosgrave did not mean that all former Home Rule supporters had been yet assimilated into the body politic. This was certainly true of border Hibernians; the AOH's publication of O'Donnell's pamphlet on partition served to highlight the continued dissatisfaction of southern Hibernians. Cross-border gatherings where members could mingle with their brothers from the other state helped assuage some of this unrest; in 1931, the AOH was able to attract 7,000 Hibernians to attend an anti-partition rally in Cavan.¹⁰¹ However, such events added to the continued perception of the AOH as being associated with politics in the Free State. Although the Order struggled to free itself entirely from party political ties, Nugent's stance of official neutrality also allowed the AOH to present itself as one of the many Catholic action groups of the time. Calling on the Order to remain aloof from party political strife, Nugent urged that 'we must continue our mission of being Catholic and National in the broadest sense of these words and of looking after Catholic social work and such measures of reform as a Catholic nation and a Catholic Government should adopt'.¹⁰²

It also meant that commentary on the position of Catholics worldwide increased in comparison to articles on the historical Irish Party in the *Hibernian Journal*.¹⁰³ However, the negative connotations associated with AOH and its marginal position as a vestigial wing of the IPP may have inhibited its hopes of becoming one of the many prominent Catholic action groups of the period. While groups like the Catholic Young Men's Society and the Knights of St. Columbanus flourished in the Free State, the AOH's attempt to form a consultative council with the latter body was 'cold-shouldered' by the Knights much to Nugent's disappointment.¹⁰⁴ This left the

¹⁰¹ *Hibernian Journal*, August 1931, pp. 65-6 See also *Irish Independent*, 25 July 1932; *Anglo-Celt*, 30 July, 1932; *Hibernian Journal*, August 1932, p. 76 for 24 July rally 'the border must go' in Cavan.

¹⁰² Secretary's Supplemental Report, Meeting of National Board Free State, 17 November 1927, Ancient Order of Hibernian Collections NAI – LOU 13/1/3 (a).

¹⁰³ Concern was expressed over Mussolini's treatment of Catholics in Italy, *Hibernian Journal*, January 1930, p. 7. In 1931, Devlin approached the Westminster election by reiterating the IPP's work for agricultural labourers and stressing himself as 'neither "a socialist nor a reactionary"', Staunton, *The Nationalists of Northern Ireland*, p. 109.

¹⁰⁴ National Secretary's report, Meeting of Great Britain and Northern Ireland National Board, 16 July 1929, Ancient Order of Hibernian Collections NAI – LOU 13/1/3 (a).

Hibernians peripheral if enthusiastic supporters of the Eucharistic Congress held in Dublin in 1932.

In 1932, the Order once more proved a formidable political machine in the border counties even if its position in the social and political life in the wider Free State had become less and less clear. Although Labour had few ex-Home Rulers (the aforementioned Hibernian Broderick notwithstanding), many Hibernians, particularly in border areas, would not renounce their old identity even with salience of the 'Civil War' political divide greatly increased by the 1932 electoral contest. Unmoved by the new Redmond-Cosgrave alliance, Donegal Nationalists sought a candidate to represent the AOH and the old Nationalist voice in the county. They soon found a willing advocate in the form of James Dillon, youngest son of the late Irish Party leader.

Many of Dillon's sons had moved towards endorsement of Cumann na nGaedheal over the previous decade. Fr John Dillon spoke at a Treatyite meeting in Dunlavin, County Wicklow claiming the Treaty would have pleased Tone, O'Connell, Davis, Butt or Parnell.¹⁰⁵ James was courted by both Cumann na nGaedheal and Fianna Fáil and met with Sean T. O'Kelly and W.T. Cosgrave between 1929 and 1931; however, he remained an unrepentant nationalist of the Irish Party school.¹⁰⁶ James's uncle Fr Nicholas remained virulently opposed to any Sinn Féin party. Disgusted at Redmond's decision to join Cumann na nGaedheal, he seems to have exercised some influence on James's decision, writing to him with the mordant advice to 'remember of what blood thou art and (so far as in you lies) strike Sinn Féin down'.¹⁰⁷ While canvassing, James Dillon was clear that Cosgrave's declarations of respect for the former Irish Party leaders who had been previously defamed placed no responsibility on him to 'clamber to his [Cosgrave's] platform'.¹⁰⁸ Instead he campaigned for peace (with a clear implication that Fianna Fáil policy would cause war with Britain), yet insisted he belonged to neither of the main parties and 'never would'.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ *Irish Independent*, 12 February 1932. Fr Dillon was prominent throughout the campaign writing to the Independent lauding any party which can unite the adherents of Redmond, Dillon and Davitt on the one platform. *Irish Independent*, 16 February 1932.

¹⁰⁶ Manning, *James Dillon*, p. 47.

¹⁰⁷ Fr Nicholas Dillon to James Dillon, 24 November 1931 quoted in Manning, *James Dillon*, p. 48.

¹⁰⁸ *Irish Independent*, 12 February 1932.

¹⁰⁹ *Irish Independent*, 11 February 1932.

Although Raymond Ryan is correct to point to independents capitalising on disparate sectional interests dissatisfied with the absorption of the Farmers' Party into Cumann na nGaedheal, some independent farming candidates elected in 1932 were individuals from Home Rule backgrounds.¹¹⁰ One prominent example was Frank MacDermot in Roscommon. Without an obvious reservoir of ex-Irish Party voters to rely on like candidates in the south-east or the border areas, MacDermot instead won support from the farming community locally. MacDermot was a former 'backroom intellectual' of the IPP, who had fought in World War I and subsequently forged a career in banking in Paris.¹¹¹ An unsuccessful Nationalist candidate in west Belfast in 1929, he was certainly an unlikely advocate for the farmers in Roscommon.¹¹²

The Farmers' Party was, by then, in serious decline and struggling with the various political opinions within the movement. In 1928, George O'Callaghan-Westropp estimated that '...the average 100 [IFU] members would be made up of 30 for the Treaty, 20 against, 20 nationalists opposed to both wings of Sinn Fein and jealous of the government and 30 who loathed and distrusted all politicians'.¹¹³ Although the party still contained individuals from broad Home Rule backgrounds, their seats were as vulnerable to Cumann na nGaedheal as those of other deputies in the party. Accordingly, David Leo O'Gorman and John Dineen were among those defeated in 1932 when the Farmers only returned three TDs. In Cavan, John F. O'Hanlon remained independent and combined the Cavan Agricultural League with AOH support as he remained aloof from the Treaty divide while even Dillon added the farming community to his AOH powerbase.¹¹⁴

Other former Home Rulers who remained independent had accepted the Treaty from an early stage, even if Cumann na nGaedheal's policies were not always to their liking. Accordingly, they lined up closer to the party than they did to Fianna Fáil; Alfie Byrne remained an independent throughout his career, but enjoyed close

¹¹⁰ Raymond Ryan, 'The National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League', *Studia Hibernica*, no. 34 (2006-07), pp. 173-4.

¹¹¹ Meleady, *John Redmond: The National Leader*, p. 100; Manning, *James Dillon*, pp. 60-61; Harris, *The Catholic Church and the Foundation of the Northern Irish State*, p. 83.

¹¹² *Irish Independent*, 25 January 1932.

¹¹³ George O'Callaghan-Westropp to Patrick Ford, 4 March 1928, UCDA George O'Callaghan-Westropp Papers, P38/16. I am grateful to Dr Tony Varley for providing me with this reference.

¹¹⁴ Ryan, 'The National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League', p. 174.

relations with Cosgrave's party.¹¹⁵ Having built a huge personal following in north Dublin, Byrne was elected Dublin's Lord Mayor in 1930 and was returned an incredible ten times, holding the position consecutively from 1930 to 1939. He resigned his senate seat at Cosgrave's request to stand again for the Dáil in 1932.¹¹⁶ Byrne held a meeting in the Mansion House prior to the election, urging that the 'smouldering' fires of communism be extinguished'. He went on to warn that the defeat of the Cosgrave administration would have very serious consequences for the country.¹¹⁷ On the other hand, Tom Kettle's widow, Mary, was elected as an independent onto Dublin City Council in 1930, but remained estranged from Cosgrave's regime. Still unhappy that the unveiling of her late husband's monument was cancelled in 1927, she refused to sanction its unveiling until Cumann na nGaedheal was out of power.¹¹⁸

Former National League deputy James Coburn did not follow his former leader Redmond into Cumann na nGaedheal either, instead running as an independent in Louth. However, the *Dundalk Democrat*, which heavily promoted Coburn, made a point of reaching out to voters who had turned their backs on him in September 1927 over the Jinks affair and made it clear that as an independent, he was better disposed towards Cosgrave than de Valera.¹¹⁹ On the campaign trail, Coburn recycled an old IPP trope criticising the folly of physical force. Former Protestant Home Ruler Jasper Wolfe (with no pretence at modesty) maintained that his election to the Dáil 'did more to unite the North and the South than all the speeches of all other politicians'. Wolfe also opposed the non-payment of the Annuities.¹²⁰

¹¹⁵ Farrell, 'Few Supporters and No Organisation', p. 186.

¹¹⁶ David McEllin, 'Legendary Lord Mayor Alfie Byrne' in McManus and Griffith (eds), *Leaders of the City*, pp. 155-6.

¹¹⁷ Keogh, *The Vatican, The Bishops and Irish Politics*, p. 182.

¹¹⁸ Mary Kettle to Fallon, 6 March 1930; Fallon to Devlin, 14 March 1930, NLI Fallon Papers Ms. 22,598 (3).

¹¹⁹ *Dundalk Democrat*, 13 February 1932.

¹²⁰ *Irish Independent*, 9 February 1932.

Table 5.4 – Individuals from Home Rule backgrounds in other groupings in the Seventh Dáil

February 1932	Ex-MPs	Ex-IPP Candidates	Ex-Home Rule Councillors /Guardians	Relatives of MPs	Ex-National League TDs/candidates	Known former HR supporter or UIL/AOH member
Independent (11)	1	1	2	1	0*	1
Labour	0	0	0	0	0	1
Farmers' Party (3)	0	0	0	0	0	0

*Where a TD is included in one of the first categories (reading left to right, they are not counted twice)

The Seventh Dáil

Less than a decade after the end of the Civil War, Fianna Fáil won power in the election on 16 February. The party won 72 seats and 44.5% of the vote, allowing it to govern with support from the Labour Party. Such a scenario meant the opposition benches beckoned for almost all politicians from Home Rule backgrounds. However, many of them proved to be far from inconspicuous backbenchers in the fraught and fleeting Seventh Dáil. While Cumann na nGaedheal voted against de Valera's election as President of the Executive Council on 9 March 1932, James Dillon sparked interest on his very first day in Dáil Éireann by voting for the Fianna Fáil leader. In his view, de Valera deserved his chance as the people had clearly given him their backing. Dillon was joined by O'Hanlon in voting for the Fianna Fáil leader while MacDermot abstained. Jasper Wolfe and Coburn opposed de Valera's election.¹²¹

In the aftermath of Cumann na nGaedheal's election defeat, the party undoubtedly faced serious questions as to how to reverse the electoral swing to Fianna Fáil. Nevertheless, the influence, perceived or otherwise, of former Home Rulers does not seem to have been blamed for electoral decline.¹²² Even after the election, Capt. Redmond seemed set to remain a valued member of Cumann na nGaedheal and he

¹²¹ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 41, cc. 35-8, 9 March 1932.

¹²² Mel Farrell has emphasised the importance of situating Fianna Fáil's usurpation of Cumann na nGaedheal in a European context in the aftermath of the Wall Street crash, Farrell, 'Few Supporters and No Organisation?', conclusion.

was included on the party's new political committee in March 1932.¹²³ However, Redmond's career was cut tragically short as he collapsed and died at the funeral of a supporter on 17 April. For his recently acquired political ally W.T. Cosgrave, Redmond was 'the brilliant son of a great Irish leader' whose death 'severs a link between the old parliamentary movement and men and movements of our own day'.¹²⁴ His death was sudden as he was aged 45 and had only married in November 1930. Redmond's passing leaves a certain lacuna in the story of the absorption of the Irish Party into Cumann na nGaedheal. Yet, his brief months in the party were pivotal in transferring the band of devoted Redmondites into Waterford into the Treatyite movement; his widow, Bridget Redmond, would take his place in the Dáil after the 1933 general election.

Dillon and MacDermot, however, would continue to prove resistant to Treatyite charms. Both were vigorous and high-profile debaters even if their priorities and ideals set them apart from the orthodoxy of nationalist political debate in the early 1930s. MacDermot's clear preference for the Free State to remain within the Commonwealth and his Home Rule background saw him forced to defend himself against accusations from Minister for Finance Seán MacEntee that he was a 'Castle Catholic' and that he had been 'un-Irish' in the period before 1918.¹²⁵ Dillon, on the other hand, demonstrated support for the Government as he endorsed the move to remove the oath of allegiance. Dillon was clear that he had no problem with the oath personally, but agreed with the Government's action as he realised that the oath 'gave scruple and difficulty to honourable men. It was criminal and loathsome to insist on it'.¹²⁶ In the course of a characteristically wide-ranging speech, Dillon also aroused controversy, revealing he would not stand up for the playing the national anthem, 'The Soldier's Song'. The anthem, which had gained currency with the Easter Rising, was associated with 'horrors' in his mind. The deputy declared that even if the Government banned him, he was 'not prepared to raise my hat to the Soldier's Song or to kowtow to the Tricolour'. (MacDermot would later echo

¹²³ Minutes of the Parliamentary Party meeting, 16 March 1932, UCDA Cumann na nGaedheal papers P/39 MIN (3).

¹²⁴ *Irish Independent*, 18 April 1932. De Valera also paid tribute to Redmond, *Dáil Debates* vol. 41, cc. 170-171, 20 April 1932.

¹²⁵ *Irish Press*, 3, 7 October 1932.

¹²⁶ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 31, col 1141, 3 May 1932.

Dillon's criticisms of the national anthem calling it 'a jaunty piece of vulgarity').¹²⁷ Dillon therefore imagined the oath was an even worse requirement for other men. Such a declaration so early in his Dáil career was a glaring example of Dillon's political heritage and would return to haunt him in later life.¹²⁸ In the event, he eventually opposed the bill abolishing the oath as he felt it was too broad.

MacDermot disagreed with the Government's proposal to remove the oath from the beginning and was the only deputy to vote against the bill on its first reading.¹²⁹ He claimed he 'would not weep' if it was removed, but felt the legislation threatened to bring about the Free State's removal from the Commonwealth before it had a chance to consider whether it desired such a course.¹³⁰ He instead suggested an alternative oath which would provide allegiance, but prove less contentious to deputies. MacDermot questioned de Valera persistently, seeking to establish if he wanted to declare a republic. Indeed MacDermot often appeared preoccupied with the constitutional status of the Free State and claimed he did not object to a republic as long as the issue was settled once and for all.¹³¹ The Roscommon deputy sought solutions which would placate unionists, often comparing the mentality of Fianna Fáil and more strident nationalists with that of the 'Orangemen of the Sandy Row'.¹³² MacDermot regularly spoke of the need to change the atmosphere of Irish politics and leave Civil War divisions behind.¹³³

Statements from Dillon such as those on the anthem and the flag left him open to accusations and abuse when incidents from recent history were raised on the floor of the House. Disputes affecting both sides of the Treaty split were more common; nevertheless, Cumann na nGaedheal's Batt O'Connor caused uproar when he raised

¹²⁷ *Irish Independent*, 23 November 1933; *Dáil Debates*, vol. 31, col. 1141, 3 May 1932 for Dillon's comments.

¹²⁸ A speaker at a Fianna Fáil election rally in Donegal in January 1933 made play of this speech when he held a Union Jack and told the crowd J.H. Thomas 'wants you to go under this flag'. The speaker then held the old green flag associated with the IPP and declared Dillon 'wants you under this', but that he and Fianna Fáil wanted voters to put the tricolour 'triumphant above every other in Ireland', *Irish Independent*, 11 January 1933.

¹²⁹ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 41, cc. 171-5, 20 April 1932.

¹³⁰ *Irish Independent* 11 February, 1 April 1932. De Valera drew a distinction between abolishing the oath and leaving the Commonwealth, but favoured leaving the Commonwealth at some point, *Dáil Debates*, vol. 43, cc. 668-9, 12 July 1932.

¹³¹ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 44, col. 1702, 15 November 1932.

¹³² *Irish Independent*, 6 June 1932.

¹³³ *Irish Independent*, 28 November 1932.

the story of the Nationalist MPs cheering the executions of the 1916 leaders during the debate on the second stage of the Constitution (Removal of Oath) Bill. Dillon responded that it was a ‘damned lie’; James Coburn and Alfie Byrne were also quick to dispute the claim. Coburn tried to make his way over to O’Connor and, while being restrained by former MP Byrne, he declared that if he was a young man,

I would kill him where he stands for what he has said. Do not say anything of the Irish Party cheering the executions. I would beat any man who says that. The man does not stand in this country who would say it in front of me, who could throw any insult at the Irish Parliamentary Party as long as I am here.¹³⁴

As Cosgrave rose to call on O’Connor to withdraw his remark, order was eventually restored and O’Connor accepted his leader’s assurance that the story was untrue.¹³⁵ While this eventually brought calm, the episode saw Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington write to the press to refute the accusation, arguing it was time ‘the lie was nailed’.¹³⁶

Although relatively positive about the Government’s first budget, Dillon’s initial support was certainly conditional as he settled into the chamber and began to question government policy on a whole range of policies.¹³⁷ Perhaps ironically given the criticism often levelled at the old Irish Party, this included criticisms of abuses under both Fianna Fáil and Cumann na nGaedheal administrations in relation to civil service appointments and patronage.¹³⁸ Loyal to his constituents in Donegal (including Irish speakers), Dillon also made himself a determined supporter of the farmers and this stance saw him come into conflict with the Government. Dillon was clear that he felt no special attachment to the Treaty; however, he felt strongly about an Irish government breaking a solemn undertaking by removing the oath from the constitution.¹³⁹ During the election campaign, he had supported the payment of Annuities. However, Dillon and others began to see Fianna Fáil policy on non-payment of Annuities as exacerbating an already bad situation for farmers at a time

¹³⁴ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 41 cc. 772-3, 28 April 1932.

¹³⁵ *Irish Independent*, 29 April 1932.

¹³⁶ *Irish Independent*, 9 May 1932.

¹³⁷ *Irish Independent*, 13 May 1932.

¹³⁸ *Irish Independent*, 1 December 1932.

¹³⁹ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 41, col. 632, 27 April 1932.

of global recession. It was this that led to calls for relief (John F. O'Hanlon had been clear that he stood for a moratorium, but not the repudiation of debts).¹⁴⁰ Dillon also clearly opposed Fianna Fáil's protectionism, a policy derived from Arthur Griffith.

Nevertheless, Dáil debates on such matters showed how recalcitrant ex-Home Rulers (and others) who remained aloof from the two main parties were isolated. With this in mind, Dillon and O'Hanlon looked to form an alliance of independents in the Dáil along with Limerick's J.J. O'Shaughnessy (who did not apparently share any AOH or Irish Party heritage).¹⁴¹ On 18 April, Dillon had appeared on a platform with MacDermot in Roscommon at a meeting of the county's Farmers' and Rate-payers' Association. Disputing the views of Tom O'Donnell that de Valera was owed unconditional support in the dispute with Britain, MacDermot complained that Sinn Féin policy would never help bring about reunion. Dillon followed him, agreeing the Government deserved backing, but adding that leaving the Commonwealth and breaking the connection with England would greatly reduce any chance of unity.¹⁴² In Dillon's view, Ireland had been a nation in bondage in 1914. In 1932, it was not in bondage, but consisted of two fragments rather than a nation. The increasing bitterness between the two major parties drew condemnation from Dillon and MacDermot. Both men similarly looked to present themselves as offering a middle ground in the trade dispute between the Free State and Britain with MacDermot suggesting holding Dáil session in private where ideas could be developed.¹⁴³

Cumann na nGaedheal argued non-payment of the Annuities was not only breaking an agreement enshrined in the Anglo-Irish Treaty, but also repudiating the bond entered into by a prior generation of Irish politicians and farmers. However, Fianna Fáil again countered that the state was not in fact liable for such payments. Addressing the Donnybrook branch of the party in a lecture in May 1932, Tom O'Donnell had claimed that for four years the public who understood the Free State

¹⁴⁰ *Irish Independent*, 14 November 1932. MacDermot privately held the view that the Free State could not afford the Annuities and told Edward Marsh, J.H. Thomas's private secretary that Cosgrave would have had to seek remission if he had stayed in power, McMahon, *Republicans and Imperialists*, p. 80.

¹⁴¹ *Irish Independent*, 12 March 1932; Manning, *James Dillon*, p. 54.

¹⁴² *Irish Independent*, 19 April 1932.

¹⁴³ *Irish Independent*, 16 August 1932 for Dillon's speech at AOH rally; *Dáil Debates*, vol. 42, cc. 1531-2, 16 June 1932.

was entitled to retain the Annuities could not understand the refusal of Cumann na nGaedheal to listen to the arguments of de Valera's party.¹⁴⁴ The political controversy caused by the Annuities was the most prominent, but not the only case of the Land League legacy being resurrected in post-independence politics. In the 1920s, the *Hibernian Journal* had included regular references to the need to do something about farmers unable to pay Annuities. Perhaps more unusually, the journal also covered the urgent need to increase tillage versus the non-labour intensive grazing method. This issue showed a desire to back the smaller farmers against the larger graziers, which actually seemed to chime with the stance of Fianna Fáil. However, although such articles were included in a pamphlet published in 1932 entitled *Speed the Plough! The urgent need for tillage if the Free State is to prosper, contrast with the continent*, such sentiments later disappeared from the journal.¹⁴⁵

Of course, the Land League legacy was not a straightforward outflow of the Irish Party. As many scholars of Davitt have attested, the founder of the Land League was a complex political thinker who actually favoured land nationalisation.¹⁴⁶ Davitt's desire for nationalisation together with his esteemed place in Irish memory as the leader of a land war that won tenant proprietorship is certainly an apparent contradiction in terms and invoking his legacy proved a tricky business, yet this did not stop both major parties from seeking to claim it.¹⁴⁷ As early as 1928, the Cumann na nGaedheal government actually invoked the legacy of the land war in response to Fianna Fáil's raising of the Annuities question. Speaking in Clonmel, Patrick Hogan stated the agreements were made by Parnell, Redmond, Dillon and O'Brien, who in their time had spoken for the Irish people with as much authority as the plenipotentiaries did when signing the Treaty.¹⁴⁸ Hogan had personally laid claim to this tradition a year earlier on the campaign trail in Galway when he was

¹⁴⁴ *Irish Independent*, 24 May 1932.

¹⁴⁵ *Speed the plough! The Urgent Need for Tillage if the Free State is to prosper, contrast with the continent* (Dublin: AOH, 1932).

¹⁴⁶ J.J. Lee, 'Michael Davitt: An Appraisal', Fintan Lane and Andrew G. Newby (eds), *Michael Davitt: New Perspectives* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2009), pp. 15-33.

¹⁴⁷ Marley, 'Anomalous Agitator?', pp. 170-3 and Laura McNeil, 'Dissecting Davitt: (Ab)using the Memory of a Great Irishman', pp. 185-8 in Lane and Newby (eds), *Michael Davitt*; Bew, Hazelkorn and Paterson, *The Dynamics of Irish Politics*, p. 50. See also Laurence Marley, *Michael Davitt: Freelance Radical and Frondeur* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007).

¹⁴⁸ *Irish Independent*, 12 November 1928.

accompanied by Michael Davitt junior.¹⁴⁹ However, it should be noted that Davitt junior may not be easily ascribed a former Irish Party supporter; he had been poorly received at the first meeting of the Irish Volunteers at the Rotunda in 1913 and had turned down the opportunity to oppose the Irish Party in the 1917 Roscommon by-election when Count Plunkett won his famous victory.¹⁵⁰ In the 1920s, Davitt was President of the Cumann na nGaedheal party in county Galway.¹⁵¹

Yet, Hogan's colleague, Patrick McGilligan also declared that not only Redmond, but also Charles Stewart Parnell and Tim Healy had repudiated the idea that the Irish farmer would not pay the Annuities.¹⁵² After Fianna Fáil entered power and the Annuities dispute began in earnest between the Free State and Britain, Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs J.H. Thomas was also keen to draw on this tradition referencing Dillon, Healy and Parnell in speeches that insisted the Free State's liability in the matter of Annuities.¹⁵³ Defending the farmers against charges of default, Cosgrave insisted their record in paying Annuities 'was their vindication and the vindication of the undertakings and words of Parnell, Redmond, Dillon, Davitt, Healy and the others.'¹⁵⁴ The Cumann na nGaedheal leader would repeat this argument on the campaign trail in 1933, complaining that the Free State government had a duty to keep its agreements with Britain and 'validate the work' of the leaders who won land legislation for Ireland.¹⁵⁵ By contrast, MacDermot rarely referenced the Irish Party and land legislation, confining himself to criticism of the entire Fianna Fáil policy on the Economic War as 'humbug' and 'unreality.'¹⁵⁶ MacDermot tended to appeal to farmers on more practical basis even on occasion raising fears that rising tides of extreme nationalism or communism could overwhelm the country.¹⁵⁷

Having argued vigorously that Annuities must be paid while in government, Cumann na nGaedheal began to doubt its own position in opposition. At a meeting of the

¹⁴⁹ Newell, *The West Must Wait*, p. 151.

¹⁵⁰ Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland*, p. 79.

¹⁵¹ *Irish Independent*, 3 December 1928.

¹⁵² *Seanad Debates*, vol. 15, cc. 557-8, 28 January 1932.

¹⁵³ *Irish Independent*, 5 July 1932.

¹⁵⁴ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 44, cc. 1928-29, 17 November 1932.

¹⁵⁵ *Irish Independent*, 14 January 1933.

¹⁵⁶ *Irish Independent*, 24 October 1932.

¹⁵⁷ *Irish Independent*, 25 October 1932.

parliamentary party, calls for the Government not to collect the Annuities were raised. Among the TDs with Home Rule backgrounds, FitzGerald-Kenney opposed this while former IPP candidate Dan McMenemy argued inability to pay should not be mentioned, rather, it should be argued that the sums were already being collected from farmers in the form of tariffs. Either position would represent a betrayal of the Irish Party's arrangements as interpreted by Capt. Redmond in the late 1920s.¹⁵⁸

The emergence of the Centre Party

Such agricultural disputes paved the way for the emergence of the National Farmers' and Rate-payers' League [NFRL]. As the old Farmers' Party withered away and farmers found themselves hurt by the tariff dispute with Britain, there was clearly space for a new movement aimed at the larger farmers who stood to suffer most from the decline in trade with Britain. As Ryan has demonstrated, this growth owed much to grassroots farming organisation.¹⁵⁹ The NFRL, officially formed in September 1932, was not a homogenous group politically, and as it gained in strength, some, including former Farmers' Party TD Denis Gorey, opposed any proposed venture into party politics.¹⁶⁰ It included members from Irish Party backgrounds; Frank MacDermot became its first president while former Home Rule councillor and Farmers' Party TD John J. Rooney became the first secretary.¹⁶¹ However, from the beginning, MacDermot had insisted the League must have a 'genuinely national outlook' and members must give loyalty to the Free State first rather than King or Empire.¹⁶² Members of the League were unanimous in the view that farmers were being treated badly and should get relief while the tariffs imposed by Britain were damaging their business. The Convention to form the League in the Mansion House attracted delegates from twenty different counties.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁸ Special Party Meeting, 9 November 1932, UCDA Cumann na nGaedheal Parliamentary Party minutes, P/39 MIN (3).

¹⁵⁹ Ryan, 'The National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League', pp. 174-5.

¹⁶⁰ *Irish Independent*, 28 November 1932.

¹⁶¹ Minutes of Meeting of Standing Committee, 15 September 1932, UCDA P39/ MIN II The National Farmers' and Ratepayers League.

¹⁶² *Irish Independent*, 7 October 1932.

¹⁶³ *Irish Independent*, 7 October 1932. However, the Centre Party's geographical spread would largely correlate with that of the old Farmers' Party, see Tony Varley, 'The Politics of "Holding the Balance": Irish Farmers' Parties and Land Redistribution in the Twentieth Century' in Campbell and Varley (eds), *Land Questions in Modern Ireland*, pp. 251-2.

A number of explanations have been offered for the League's emergence. As Tony Varley has pointed out:

The mixing of nationalist constitutional pressure and direct action was common in pre-independence Ireland and made for considerable tactical complexity. As the pre-independence UIL and secret society-based land agitation campaigns, aimed at speeding up the implementation or perhaps fresh concessions, faded away, the resulting vacuum was largely filled by a party-centred clientelist politics organised around the Treaty/Civil War split and the class appeals of the main pro- and anti-Treaty nationalist parties.¹⁶⁴

However, the winter of 1932-3 would prove to be one of three periods when farmers would seek to organise independently of the two major parties. The economic position of many larger farmers and the fears of those who faced prohibitive tariffs for entry into the British market were important. Surveying the rise of the NFRL and the Blueshirt crisis which followed, A.W. Orridge has argued that the case of the larger farmers in the early 1930s was one of dependence theory; larger farmers relied on the British market and when threatened by a republican party who favoured smaller farmers, they looked for the safety of the British market and by extension the Commonwealth. The Centre Party and NFRL ostensibly represented all farmers, but like the Farmers' Party tended to be supported by larger ones.¹⁶⁵ Such a theory would certainly explain how a grassroots farming organisation adopted a leader like MacDermot and how farming concerns merged with MacDermot's ideas on the national question.

However, there was a party political element too. The Farmers' Party (based on the Irish Farmers' Union organisation throughout the country) of the 1920s had been a sectional party with many different loyalties (Hibernian Richard A. Butler was elected President of the IFU in 1929).¹⁶⁶ The same can be said of the NFRL; yet, it

¹⁶⁴ Varley, 'Gaining Ground, Losing Ground', p. 48.

¹⁶⁵ A.W. Orridge, 'The Blueshirts and the Economic War: A Study of Ireland in the Context of Dependency Theory', *Political Studies*, vol. 31, no. 3 (1983), pp. 351-69. MacDermot acknowledged differences among farmers, but felt they should be able to work together to influence Government such as opposing tariffs, *Irish Independent*, 1 November 1932.

¹⁶⁶ *The Clongownian* (1929), pp. 55-6. For more on the IFU, see Varley, 'Irish Farmers' Parties, Nationalism and Class Politics in the Twentieth Century', pp. 159-72.

still represented a stopping point for former Irish Party members or supporters who did not yet have to join one of the major Treatyite parties. As the NFRL looked to develop into a political party, it proved to be one with a home rule-tinged head as James Dillon joined MacDermot.

Following Cumann na nGaedheal's previous attempts to absorb the Farmers' Party, much speculation centred on the Treatyites' efforts to do likewise with this new farming organisation.¹⁶⁷ Senator Arthur Vincent suggested such a move and Alfie Byrne soon followed his lead. On 29 December, Byrne held a meeting in the Mansion House attended by about 130 people and appealed to Cosgrave's party, the farmers, Labour and independents to come together to form a new national movement to oppose the Government and end the Economic War.¹⁶⁸ Cosgrave favoured such a move if it meant settling the dispute with Britain, but de Valera's move to call a snap election scuppered the possibility of the various parties acting on this proposal.¹⁶⁹ Instead by early January 1933, both Dillon and MacDermot had held a conference and, subject to the approval of the NFRL, had agreed to 'collaborate in the formation of a National Centre Party, independent of Cumann na nGaedheal and Fianna Fáil'.¹⁷⁰ The NFRL standing committee duly met to approve the move although even at this stage, the press, particularly the *Irish Independent*, was still busy speculating on a merger with Cosgrave's party.¹⁷¹

Instead, as the League became represented in the Dáil by 'the Centre Party', an agrarian movement thus expanded into a proposed third force emphasising national reunion. Like the National League, the Centre Party has been classified as a mobilising party.¹⁷² It did not break directly from an existing party; the Farmers' Party had already all but disintegrated while the policies of MacDermot and Dillon, in seeking to end Civil War politics, clearly posited the party as one which entered

¹⁶⁷ Manning, *James Dillon*, p. 63.

¹⁶⁸ *Irish Times*, 30 December 1932.

¹⁶⁹ *Irish Independent*, 31 December 1932. MacDermot was on holiday in France at this time so could not respond immediately to the overtures of either Byrne or Cosgrave. However, it is not clear how uniform support for a merger at this time was among Cumann na nGaedheal deputies either, see Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution*, p. 319; Manning, *James Dillon*, pp. 64-5.

¹⁷⁰ Interestingly the title of 'the National Party' was initially suggested, Standing Committee Meeting, 6 December 1932, UCDA NFRL papers P39/MIN. This also echoed the words of those who initially posited Cumann na nGaedheal as a new 'National Party', Farrell, 'Cumann na nGaedheal', p. 41.

¹⁷¹ *Irish Independent*, 5 January 1933.

¹⁷² Coakley, 'The Rise and Fall of Minor Parties in Ireland', p. 64.

the field with a new policy position. Nevertheless, it was more clearly aligned to the agricultural community than the National League ever was. The Centre Party still faced the challenges which have been identified as common to all agrarian parties in the state. It was a third force (perhaps even fourth behind the Labour party) during a period of intense rivalry between two major nationalist parties while it operated in a modern society which, it has been argued, was not congenial to the emergence of a peasants' party. The Centre Party also faced the perhaps related difficulties surrounding the class boundaries within Irish agrarian society (given its support base among larger farmers) and the challenge of organising a political party around this divide.¹⁷³

The grander ambitions expressed by Dillon and MacDermot reflected the preoccupations and beliefs of the leadership, even if many ordinary members would have been chiefly concerned with the emerging Economic War. Ironically, this allowed Dillon and MacDermot to lead a party with a strong emphasis on the national question while representing the interests of a farming support base: an echo of the Irish Party with its rural UIL around the country.¹⁷⁴ Of course, not all farmers were united in this new movement and some stayed loyal to Fianna Fáil.¹⁷⁵ The new party also enjoyed nothing like the scale of support of the old Land League or UIL, but for a brief time, the National Centre Party afforded Dillon and MacDermot the opportunity to initiate public debates on the state's constitutional status and look forward to achieving the balance of power and ultimately breaking the Civil War duopoly.¹⁷⁶ Others to join included Rooney, David Leo O'Gorman, and Cavan Hibernians Patrick McGovern and John F O'Hanlon.

¹⁷³ Varley, 'Irish Farmers' Parties, Nationalism and Class Politics in the Twentieth Century', pp. 160-161.

¹⁷⁴ Even a Centre Party TD with Fianna Fáil and republican background like William Kent in Cork declared that MacDermot was following in the steps of Parnell, *Irish Independent*, 22 May 1933.

¹⁷⁵ The Independent Farmers TD J.J. O'Shaughnessy was urged by his constituents to remain aloof from the Centre Party amid criticism of MacDermot for his opposition to the policy of Arthur Griffith, *Irish Independent*, 9 January 1933.

¹⁷⁶ *Irish Independent*, 13 December 1932. At local level, the County Dublin Farmers' and Ratepayers' League had former Home Rule Councillors John Rooney and J.P. McCabe on its committee, *Irish Independent*, 16 September 1932.

The 1933 election

De Valera's decision to call a snap election unquestionably surprised the Opposition. Fianna Fáil capitalised on this and secured its first overall majority. However, ahead of the election, MacDermot had confidently proclaimed that the Centre Party would 'strive after the election to force the largest party to form a national government drawn from members of all parties'.¹⁷⁷ Nonetheless, he also described the new party as a 'frail boat on a stormy sea' and Fianna Fáil's success meant he would not hold the balance of power.¹⁷⁸ While there were some clashes between the Centre Party and Cumann na nGaedheal, the situation may be contrasted with the National League in 1927. That party had clearly looked backwards to the IPP's legacy; it engaged in continual arguments on history with Cumann na nGaedheal and occasionally enjoyed friendly relations with de Valera's party on the campaign trail. MacDermot's party, by contrast, was regularly rumoured to be merging with the Treatyites, and in the 1933 election, Fianna Fáil minister Frank Aiken actually advised his supporters that they could continue preferences for Cumann na nGaedheal candidates, but on no account to give any support to the Centre Party.¹⁷⁹

As discussed in the previous chapter, the National League had also been in effect, a legacy party as its new policy position was that of the old Irish Party and it looked backwards for its inspiration. Conversely, the Centre Party was very much entrenched in the politics of the 1930s and was forward looking in its appeal to move away from the Civil War cleavage, even if some of its views jarred with many people. It campaigned on the right to revise the Treaty to allow provision to leave the Commonwealth; the abolition of partition; elimination of poverty; education of the agricultural community to use its power to influence the government; an end to the Civil War party system, and a commitment to build up a 'united Ireland founded on charity, courage, common sense and respect for the rights of the individual'.¹⁸⁰ Dillon insisted that he stood for complete sovereignty and independence. However, he reiterated that this could best be achieved within the structure of the commonwealth rather than a notional republic and envisaged co-operation with other dominions and Britain to aid Irish unity, even suggesting Britain could be convinced

¹⁷⁷ *Irish Independent*, 18 January 1933.

¹⁷⁸ *Irish Independent*, 6 January 1933.

¹⁷⁹ *Irish Independent*, 16 January 1933.

¹⁸⁰ Election advertisement, *Irish Independent*, 23 January 1933.

to end subsidies which meant it paid Northern Ireland ‘to remain outside the Irish nation’.¹⁸¹ Pro-Commonwealth statements undoubtedly alienated some Fianna Fáil farmers and led to many government campaigners painting the Centre Party and, particularly its leaders, as imperialists.

This new party with its ex-IPP leadership was also coming directly into competition with former Home Rulers already in Cumann na nGaedheal such as Sidney Minch and Dermot O’Mahony (who was chairman of another agrarian body the Annuitants’ Defence League).¹⁸² The 1933 election saw others from such a background enter the Treatyite grouping. While Davitt’s contested legacy may make him untypical as an Irish Party figure, Cumann na nGaedheal’s persistent use of the Land League legacy in their rhetoric made the candidacy of Davitt’s son Robert a perfect fit. Addressing supporters in Meath, Cosgrave announced that his new candidate was the son of a great agricultural leader and ‘an apostle of the peasants.’¹⁸³ Cosgrave then likened the problems facing farmers in 1933 to those facing them in the 1880s and that another Davitt had come forward to fight for them. Such an appropriation was hardly likely to go unchallenged. Internal Fianna Fáil files questioning the requirement to pay Annuities had referenced Parnell, O’Brien, Davitt, and the setting up of the Land League; in public, de Valera’s Attorney General Conor Maguire was quick to remark that Michael Davitt would turn in his grave if he knew his son was associated with the policy of Cumann na nGaedheal.¹⁸⁴ Davitt junior responded to Fianna Fáil claims that Cumann na nGaedheal was not national by declaring that it had won a treaty not dreamt of by Parnell, Redmond, or his own father.

Initially considered an unlikely politician, Bridget Redmond proved a committed canvasser in the 1933 election, appearing on a Waterford platform with Cosgrave and elsewhere regularly reminding her audiences of the dangers of returning a Fianna Fáil government.¹⁸⁵ This alliance continued to win some former Irish Party

¹⁸¹ *Irish Independent*, 10, 16 January 1933.

¹⁸² *Irish Independent*, 13 December 1932. For examples of those two contemplating how to deal with MacDermot’s threat see Cumann na nGaedheal parliamentary party meeting, 24 November 1932, UCDA P/39 MIN (3). Minch was one of the Free State delegates to the third conference of the British Service League in 1928, *The Clongownian* (1928), p. 70.

¹⁸³ *Irish Independent*, 14 January 1933.

¹⁸⁴ *Irish Independent*, 14 January 1933; File on ‘Catechism of Land Annuities’, Reports and Correspondence of Honorary Secretaries 1926-32, UCDA Fianna Fáil Archives P176/352.

¹⁸⁵ *Irish Independent*, 9, 16, 18, 20 January 1933.

followers to the Treatyites even if this was only out of disillusion with the policies of de Valera. At the south Wexford convention of Cumann na nGaedheal in January 1933, John Galvin told delegates that he was not a member of the organisation, but an ‘old Nationalist’. However, his conviction was that his duty was throw in his lot with Cosgrave’s party as Fianna Fáil had shown they could only bring unhappiness and loss. Former Sinn Féin supporter Senator Kathleen Browne even used the occasion to state that while she had disagreed with the Irish Party at the time, she was not ashamed to acknowledge there were many ways in which it had been right and she was content that Capt. Redmond and Cumann na nGaedheal had joined forces.¹⁸⁶

In November 1932, the *Sunday Independent* reported that Tom O’Donnell would contest Donegal in the following month’s election for Fianna Fáil stating the fact that he was an Irish speaker as an advantage. However, once again, this did not materialise.¹⁸⁷ Nonetheless, O’Donnell remained a strong voice against the payment of Annuities in the Fianna Fáil camp. O’Donnell’s former National League colleague Henry Harrison also took the view that the British were to blame for the Annuities dispute. Harrison wrote pamphlets on the matter and it was even contemplated that he might go to England along with O’Donnell and Maurice Moore to speak to the British on the Government’s behalf.¹⁸⁸ (O’Donnell’s close relations with de Valera were demonstrated by the fact that he and Harrison were among those offered fees for advising him on the Annuities).¹⁸⁹ As the NFRL opposed the policy of the Fianna Fáil government, O’Donnell became president of a rival organisation: the United Farmers’ Protection Association in November 1932. This group supported the Government’s policy on protectionism and the Annuities and featured among its founder members former National League TD James Cosgrave as well as Clann Éireann founder Pádraic Ó Máille. At one stage, O’Donnell even engaged in press

¹⁸⁶ *Irish Independent*, 7 January 1933.

¹⁸⁷ *Sunday Independent*, 1 November 1932.

¹⁸⁸ Cahir Healy to Alex Donnelly, 16 July 1932, PRONI Cahir Healy Papers D2991/A/2/18; Gaughan, *A Political Odyssey*, p. 218. Henry Harrison, *The Strange Case of the Land Annuities* (Dublin: Gill and Son, 1932); *Spotlights on the Anglo-Irish Financial Quarrel and the Diffuse White Paper on Annuities* (Dublin: Gill and Son, 1932).

¹⁸⁹ The others were Arthur C. Meredith, Michael Comyn, Hubert C. Hamilton, William Jellet, Martin C. Maguire, Arthur Clery, George Gavan Duffy and Diarmuid Crowley. O’Donnell refused the payment of £15 15s as he regarded the work as ‘purely political’, John Burke to O’Donnell, 30 March 1932; O’Donnell to Burke, 31 March 1932, NLI O’Donnell Papers Ms. 15,466 (2); Harrison to de Valera, 25 October 1932, UCDA de Valera Papers P150/2770.

correspondence with Paddy Belton of the NFRL on the benefits to farmers of de-rating versus relief of Annuities.¹⁹⁰ Indeed, O'Donnell favoured an increasingly hard-line approach to the dispute with Britain; at a meeting of the UFPA, he declared that 'not a single article manufactured in England should be allowed into this country, except under licence' while the Economic War continued.¹⁹¹

Both Cumann na nGaedheal and the farmers movement headed by MacDermot and Dillon sought relief for farmers having to pay Annuities. Many were keen to point out that the relief should only be temporary while the economy struggled and that farmers paid similar amounts on tariffs to Britain as they would have paid in Annuities in any case. However, all this required a certain amount of nuance while defending the commitment of Irish farmers to repay the debts agreed by the Irish Party leaders of the past.

Although Dillon was prominent in the AOH, and the *Hibernian Journal* noted the Centre Party's emphasis on the removal of partition, National Secretary John Dillon Nugent encouraged members to take an active part in politics while also striving to maintain the Order's nominal neutrality as a national entity.¹⁹² Nugent was forced to deny a *Daily Mail* report that the AOH was forming a formal alliance with the Centre Party.¹⁹³ On 7 January, the *Irish Independent* reported that the Board of Erin had taken no action and that it had not met. Furthermore, it was reported that the Donegal Hibernian organisation was fully behind Dillon's campaign in the same way it had been in 1932.¹⁹⁴ Nevertheless, at a National Board meeting three days later, Nugent told his fellow Hibernians that they could not ignore the fact that members were standing as independent candidates as well representing Fianna Fáil, the Centre Party and Cumann na nGaedheal. Along with the three Centre Party members (Dillon, O'Hanlon and Patrick McGovern), the Cumann na nGaedheal Hibernians

¹⁹⁰ *Irish Independent*, 3, 19 April, 26 August 1933. This point is not without significance as Bew, Hazelkorn and Patterson have argued that de-rating benefitted larger farmers much more proportionately. They claim this was Fianna Fáil's way of expanding its appeal beyond small farmers and landless men, therefore leaving only the larger farmers to support the Opposition, Bew, Hazelkorn and Patterson, *The Dynamics of Irish Politics*, pp. 44, 48.

¹⁹¹ *Irish Press*, 5 April 1933.

¹⁹² *Hibernian Journal*, February 1933, p. 12. National Board Meeting Free State, 14 July 1931, Ancient Order of Hibernian Collections NAI – LOU 13/1/3 (a).

¹⁹³ National Secretary's Report, Meeting of National Board of Great Britain, Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State, 10 January 1933, NAI – LOU 13/1/3 (a).

¹⁹⁴ *Irish Independent*, 7 January 1933.

were Alderman John Horgan and William Desmond (Cork Borough), and Dan McMenamín and Michael Oge McFadden (Donegal). James Coburn continued to stand as an Independent in Louth while a Hibernian stood for Fianna Fáil in Donegal and in Louth in addition to Monaghan Hibernians declaring support for de Valera's party.¹⁹⁵ The issue of partition continued to hold primacy for the AOH and Horgan expressed confidence in his party's ability to deliver on the issue. He felt the decision of Monaghan Hibernians to support Fianna Fáil was the worst thing that had happened to the nationalists of Northern Ireland in a long time.¹⁹⁶

Unfortunately the Board of Erin's minutes do not record the response of the Board to Nugent's statement.¹⁹⁷ However, the Order was crucial in securing Coburn's return to the Dáil as *Dundalk Democrat* editor T.F. McGahon and Nugent provided cars to bring voters to the polling booths in Louth. Other local Hibernians also assisted in the campaign while in Donegal, James Dillon similarly benefitted from Hibernian assistance and Nugent served as his chief organiser.¹⁹⁸ Although O'Hanlon lost his seat in Cavan, he was replaced in the Eighth Dáil by fellow Hibernian Patrick McGovern. Since Dillon, O'Hanlon, and McGovern of the Centre Party were all Hibernians, the Centre Party had the benefit of the Order's members in at least two constituencies.

Monaghan remained a complicated constituency for the AOH.¹⁹⁹ Members in the county stayed faithful to the Hibernians killed during the War of Independence and 1,500 people attended the unveiling by James Coburn of a memorial to one of the victims, Michael O'Brien on 30 June 1931.²⁰⁰ Calls from Hibernians for a public enquiry were ignored while former IRA commander in the county Eoin O'Duffy was

¹⁹⁵ National Secretary's Report, Meeting of National Board of Great Britain, Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State, 10 January 1933, NAI – LOU 13/1/3 (a).

¹⁹⁶ Meeting of National Board of Great Britain, Northern Ireland and Irish Free State, 10 January 1933, Ancient Order of Hibernian Collections NAI – LOU 13/1/3 (a).

¹⁹⁷ The minutes do record Nugent's defence of Dillon's behaviour in the Dáil where he voting both for and against the Government on different occasions. Nugent insisted Dillon's position has often been 'misunderstood' and that he voted as he believed to be right. Dillon's 'vote is not the property of one party or the other.' Meeting of National Board of Great Britain, Northern Ireland and Irish Free State, 10 January 1933, Ancient Order of Hibernian Collections NAI – LOU 13/1/3 (a).

¹⁹⁸ '1933 Election', Dundalk AOH1/005/001, Louth County Archives, Dundalk; Manning, *James Dillon*, pp. 48-50.

¹⁹⁹ Livingstone, *The Monaghan Story*, pp. 401-402.

²⁰⁰ McPhillips, 'The Ancient Order of Hibernians in County Monaghan', p. 127.

Garda Commissioner.²⁰¹ Ahead of the 1933 contest, an AOH rally in Ballybay ruled that the Order should support Fianna Fáil. Officials H.J. McArdle and Phillip McGee were prominent in their support for Fianna Fáil and the party's vote in Monaghan increased by over 1,500.²⁰² However, the county secretary, James King, had responded by insisting the meeting supporting Fianna Fáil had not been fairly constituted; as Peadar Livingstone has observed, the Order in Monaghan was 'well and truly split'.²⁰³ The residue of Irish Party support did not prove as complicated in other areas. Bridget Redmond preserved the proud Redmondite tradition in Waterford and polled second behind Fianna Fáil's Patrick Little. In other areas, Cumann na nGaedheal elected candidates with varying degrees of Home Rule involvement in their backgrounds.

Table 5.5 – Individuals from Home Rule backgrounds in the Eighth Dáil

1933	Ex MPs	Ex-IPP candidates	Ex-councillors/guardians	Relatives of MPs	Ex-National League TDs/candidates	Ex-Home Ruler /AOH members	Total
Fianna Fáil	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
Cumann na nGaedheal	0	1	7	7	2	1	18
Centre Party	0	0	0	1	0	2	3
Labour	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Independent	1	0	1	0	0	0	2

Commemorations and the memory of the Irish Party

The IPP remained a part of public discourse if not as ostentatiously as in earlier years. The commemorations of John Redmond held each in the south-east had been overshadowed by the emergence of the National League in 1926-7 and became more localised affairs. Nonetheless, they retained significance for Redmondites in Waterford and Wexford including local bands and British Legion branches.²⁰⁴ Efforts were also mounted in Wexford to erect a memorial park to Willie

²⁰¹ McPhillips, 'The Ancient Order of Hibernians in County Monaghan', p. 128.

²⁰² Livingstone, *The Monaghan Story*, pp. 411-412.

²⁰³ Livingstone, *The Monaghan Story*, p. 410; *Dundalk Democrat*, 14, 21 January 1933.

²⁰⁴ *Irish Independent*, 20 March 1928; 12 March 1929; 10 March 1931; 19 March 1932; 13 March 1933.

Redmond.²⁰⁵ The idea for a public park to honour the Great War veteran began in 1917 and £3,000 was collected. The *Independent* reported the delay in building works was, among other reasons, attributed to the ‘disturbed conditions’ in the country. The project was eventually started in 1929 with provision that half of the workers be members of the British Legion and the other half Redmond sympathisers. The park was opened on 11 September 1930 with a bust of Major Redmond unveiled by former MP John P. Hayden on 31 May 1931.²⁰⁶

Oliver Sheppard had been commissioned to complete the bust of Willie Redmond and the local John E. Redmond Memorial committee also countenanced asking Sheppard to make a bust of the former Irish Party leader (Sheppard’s other work included ‘The Death of Cúchulainn in the GPO’).²⁰⁷ However, perhaps evocative of the claims of Dorothy Macardle that the former IPP leader had become more at home in London than Ireland, a bust of Redmond by Francis Doyle Jones was instead presented to the House of Commons in July 1931. Accepted by the speaker on behalf of all parties, the bust was placed in the room Redmond used while leader of the Irish Party.²⁰⁸

The sudden death of Capt. Redmond provoked huge outpourings of grief in Wexford and Waterford, where Redmond lay in state in the city cathedral.²⁰⁹ The funeral in Wexford town was a significant event with a five mile cortège, bands and other rituals previously associated with John Redmond anniversaries.²¹⁰ Votes of sympathy or condolence at Redmond’s passing were frequent across local authorities and public boards throughout the Free State.²¹¹ The *Irish Press* used the occasion of

²⁰⁵ *Hibernian Journal*, January 1928, p. 6.

²⁰⁶ *Irish Independent*, 15 June 1929; 12 September 1930; 16 May 1931. Stephen Gwynn also spoke at the unveiling, Denman, *A Lonely Grave*, p. 136.

²⁰⁷ *Irish Independent*, 26 April, 2 May 1929; 27 December 1929; *Free Press*, 4 May 1929.

²⁰⁸ *Irish Independent*, 23 July 1931; Macardle, *The Irish Republic*, p. 67.

²⁰⁹ *Irish Press*, 19 April 1932.

²¹⁰ *Irish Independent*, 21 April 1932. See also *Free Press, Dundalk Democrat*, 23 April 1932.

²¹¹ Waterford Corporation, Kilrush UDC, Wexford Harbour Board, Wexford Board of Health; Dáil motion moved by de Valera, Cork Corporation, Waterford Board of Assistance, Letterkenny UDC, Tramore Cumann na nGaedheal, Clones UDC, Cork Harbour Board, Cork Independent National Club, Clonakilty UDC, New Ross UDC, Waterford Workers’ Council; Dublin County Council. Dungarven UDC (adjourned), Athlone UDC, South Westmeath executive of Cumann na nGaedheal and the Athlone British Legion; Committee of Licensed Grocers & Vintners’ Association, Dublin County Council, south Tipperary County Council. ;Wicklow UDC, Wicklow Committee of Agriculture, Wicklow Board of Health, Wexford County Council, Kilkenny County Council, Kilkenny Mental Hospital Committee and Rathdown Board of Assistance ; Cork County Council,

Redmond's death to reflect on the history of the Home Rule movement and the career of the late Captain's father in its editorial. Casting the narrative within a framework of robust nationalism, the *Press* explained John Redmond's accession to the leadership of the reunited IPP in 1900 by arguing that people realised Parnell and his attitude to Britain had been proven correct. The people thus wanted Redmond because of a desire for 'a forward national policy'. Noting that the period of Redmond's leadership 'was to disappoint almost every hope of the advanced nationalists', the newspaper admitted that those years also saw much improvement in economic and social terms 'partially due to the passage of time and partially due to John Redmond's influence and agitation'.²¹² However, the *Press* maintained that Redmond was out-manoeuvred by the Liberals and fell out of touch with the Rising generation. The editorial concluded that with Capt. Redmond's passing 'an epoch in which much Irish political history was made is closed. Sympathy goes out to those who sorrow'.²¹³

One poignant outcome of Capt. Redmond's sudden passing was the sale of Aughavanagh and its contents.²¹⁴ Parnell's former shooting lodge, the house had been a sanctuary for John Redmond when he wished to leave public life behind.²¹⁵ However, Bridget Redmond chose to live in her native Kildare after her husband's death and accordingly, the house, a 24 acre farm, shooting rights extending to an area of 1,864 acres and the contents of the house were auctioned on 24 August 1932. Attracting considerable press interest, the occasion was described as a 'pitiful, tragic business'. The *Irish Times*' reporter described 'a strange disturbed view' upon returning to Aughavanagh while in the words of another newspaper correspondent, it was an occasion for 'grizzled veterans' of the old constitutionalist movement to reflect on 'the countryside he knew and loved so well ... mourning the last of the Redmonds'.²¹⁶ Many of the lots sold on the day were addresses given by John

Naas UDC. Kerry County Council, Fermoy UDC, Sligo Cumann na nGaedheal executive council, Ceananus Mór Cumann na nGaedheal. Limerick Corporation, Tullamore UDC, Free State Area Council of the British Legion. Sources: *Irish Independent*, 19, 20, 21 22, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30 April, 10 May 1932.

²¹² *Irish Press*, 18 April 1932.

²¹³ *Irish Press*, 18 April 1932.

²¹⁴ Capt. Redmond passed away with an estate of £1,655 5s which was inherited by his widow Bridget, NAI, p. 511

²¹⁵ Meleady, *John Redmond: The National Leader*, pp. 129-34.

²¹⁶ *Irish Times*, *Irish Independent*, 25 August 1932.

Redmond to various bodies which such organisations had then presented to him at a later date. Other items of interest included a drawing of Daniel O’Connell signed by the subject (sold for 20s), autographs of various Young Ireland leaders, and a signed photograph of Parnell. Although some items of historical value were undoubtedly snapped up by ‘souvenir hunters’ and locals, some of the purchases such as a plaster cast of Doyle Jones’s bust of John Redmond and the original of an 1888 arrest warrant for the former Irish Party leader were later donated to the trustees of Major Willie Redmond Memorial Hall in Wexford.²¹⁷

Extraordinarily, anniversary events to Capt. Redmond also grew up in the south-east for a short time, beginning in April 1933. The first anniversary of his death saw between five and six thousand people come to Wexford to take part in a procession and hear an oration from John P. Hayden.²¹⁸ Two trains brought 2,500 supporters from Waterford while others were reported to have come from Dublin and elsewhere. As was the case with earlier John Redmond anniversaries, there were a number of bands in the procession through the town while violets were worn by those in attendance. The anniversaries were smaller than the John Redmond events of 1924 and 1925; however, Bridget Redmond, James Coburn and local Labour TD Richard Corish (who was a regular as a local councillor at John Redmond events) were joined by Cumann na nGaedheal TDs with Redmondite backgrounds like Osmond Grattan Esmonde and John Keating, but also T.F. O’Higgins, B.J. Maguire, party secretary Liam Burke and Senator Kathleen Browne.²¹⁹

The presence of such figures at Redmondite commemorations coincided with a time when, as scholars have pointed out, there was a greater acceptance of the O’Connellite constitutional tradition, particularly among Treatyites.²²⁰ However, whether Cumann na nGaedheal’s endorsement of the Wexford anniversary meant the memory of Capt. Redmond, as a former Cumann na nGaedheal TD, was any better

²¹⁷ *Irish Independent*, 26 September 1932.

²¹⁸ *Irish Independent*, 24 April 1933.

²¹⁹ *Irish Press*, 24 April 1933. Browne’s father was a Parnellite poor law guardian, but Kathleen was a Gaelic League enthusiast who campaigned for Sinn Fein in 1918 and became a staunch supporter of Cumann na nGaedheal. Pauric J. Dempsey, Shaun Boylan, ‘Browne, Kathleen Anne’, in James McGuire and James Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish Biography*. (Cambridge, 2009).

(<http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a1036>) Date accessed: 4 June 2015.

²²⁰ Jackson, *Ireland 1798-1998*, pp. 56-8.

integrated into the public memory of the Free State than that of his father is open to question. The presence of prominent Treatyite TDs so soon after the absorption of south-east Redmondites into the party undoubtedly had a strong political element. Yet, in one way, it was ironic that prominent Cumann na nGaedheal politicians embraced Redmondite commemorations at a time when the ascendancy of the new Fianna Fáil government created increased difficulties for the Treatyite party in relation to republican commemorations to the Easter Rising.²²¹

While the proposed Tom Kettle memorial in St. Stephen's Green continued to highlight the tensions around the memory of the IPP and the Great War, the anti-Treaty side also had to wrestle with the memory of the old IPP tradition. The funeral of David Sheehy in December 1932 was attended by James Geoghegan, Minister for Justice and Seán T. O'Kelly, Minister for Local Government as well as other government TDs.²²² The *Irish Press* paid Sheehy handsome tribute as an 'outstanding member' of the old Irish Party although its tribute focussed on the Land War and Sheehy's later involvement in Ginnellite cattle-driving.²²³ Sheehy's daughter Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington had become a republican; however, hostility to the Irish Party legacy did manifest itself in Fianna Fáil. On 14 May 1931, the parliamentary party was asked to consider if it would support any bill in the Dáil to provide gratuities for destitute members of the IPP. Fianna Fáil members were 'strongly opposed' to the idea and Senator Michael Comyn undertook to thus inform those lobbying for such measures.²²⁴ This appeal did not end there though as former MP Patrick White wrote to the party on the matter and even met de Valera. However, the party members remained unmoved and felt they could not let such a bill go through.²²⁵ Such an attitude must surely have irked a recruit such as O'Donnell and it contrasted with Fianna Fáil's willingness to cooperate with Capt. Redmond on the inquiry to examine the grievances of ex-servicemen. No reference to any such appeal from White is evident in the minute books of Cumann na

²²¹ Diarmaid Ferriter, *A Nation and Not a Rabble: The Irish Revolution 1913-1923* (London: Profile Books, 2015), pp. 350-351.

²²² *Irish Independent*, 20 December 1932.

²²³ *Irish Press*, 20 December 1932.

²²⁴ Minutes of parliamentary party meeting, 15 May 1931, UCDA Fianna Fáil Papers P176/443.

²²⁵ Minutes of parliamentary party meeting, 28 May, 11 June 1931, UCDA Fianna Fáil Papers P176/443.

nGaedheal; however, the destruction of many files in a fire may account for such an absence.

This period saw many individuals associated with the Home Rule movement pass away such as William O'Brien, T.P. O'Connor, T.P. Gill and Tim Healy. Deaths of such key figures provided opportunities to reflect for writers and publications of various political hues. In the *Hibernian Journal*, which still revered the IPP's memory, O'Brien was praised for his skills as a journalist and it was admitted that he possessed 'intellectual gifts of a brilliant character'. However, the journal also stated that O'Brien,

... suffered from defects of character, and, like many other men of exceptional attainments, chafed under the discipline that is the basis of all effective organisations. But his sympathies were genuinely nationalist and no one could question his intentions, however much they may have differed from his methods.

Acknowledging O'Brien's opposition to the AOH, the journal magnanimously declared that 'with death, however, disappear the minor disagreements'. Furthermore, the journal wished to 'lay a wreath of remembrance of the many years of brilliant and unselfish service that he gave to the cause of Irish freedom'.²²⁶ T.F. McGahon was slightly less charitable in his *Dundalk Democrat* editorial, praising O'Brien's patriotism, political and writing skills, but concluding he 'did no useful work for Ireland' since the fall of Parnell.²²⁷ Fianna Fáil's weekly paper *The Nation* took an entirely different line - Frank Gallagher's obituary recounted that O'Brien was 'the rebel still' when he worked with him. Gallagher admitted O'Brien erred in supporting enlistment in the world war and that he fell out of touch with Irish people between 1914 and 1916. However, he reminded readers that O'Brien never agreed with Redmond's policy of trusting Asquith and that he was a 'Fenian boy who regained his Fenian faith when age came upon him'.²²⁸ The *Independent* also noted that O'Brien had been the first nationalist leader to support the Allies in the Great

²²⁶ *Hibernian Journal*, March 1928, p. 16.

²²⁷ *Dundalk Democrat*, 3 March 1928.

²²⁸ *The Nation*, 3 March 1928.

War. However, the paper added that he gracefully left the political stage in 1918 and like the *Nation*, reiterated that O'Brien as 'a Fenian to the core, while doing his best for Ireland in the constitutional role'.²²⁹

O'Brien's old ally Tim Healy remained as Governor-General after the two elections of 1927. However, his public speeches had become increasingly intemperate, including criticisms of republicans and overly effusive toasts to the King. In late 1927, the Government moved to bring his term to an end and on 31 January 1928, he officially left office.²³⁰ Afterwards, Healy moved into quiet retirement (aside from airing his disdain for de Valera to the *Daily Express*) and an opportunity beckoned for him to publish his memoirs.²³¹ *Letters and Leaders of My Day*, a collection of his correspondence, was thus published in 1928. Although not a Sinn Féiner, Healy was undoubtedly more favourable to them than the IPP, claiming the people had rejected the IPP rather than embracing a doctrinaire ideal of a republic about which he claimed they 'never cared a straw'.²³² The letters also revealed respect for Redmond who 'had not sinned', but had been too 'weak' for his role according to Healy.²³³

By the time of Healy's death in March 1931, the *Hibernian Journal* noted that he would be remembered for the Land League and as part of 'brilliant galaxy of genius' in Parnell's party who, 'laid the foundations of that great Irish Party which, until its destruction in 1918, was, on the admission even of its enemies, the most powerful and successful political force that this country has at any time produced'.²³⁴ For its part, the *Irish Independent*, an old ally of Healy, recounted his career during the Land War and his time at the bar, noting that he was an 'able advocate' of O'Brien's policy of conciliation. The paper sought to make a distinction between his reputation for public ridicule and the private man, describing him as a 'delightful personage' socially.²³⁵ Attention was also drawn to his work as an advocate for those

²²⁹ *Irish Independent*, 27 February 1928.

²³⁰ Frank Callanan has noted that in spite of such embarrassments, 'there is nothing to suggest that this decision was prompted by dissatisfaction with Healy personally' and that he was removed to 'build on the gains of the Imperial Conference of 1926 and to emphasise the government's authority', Callanan, *T.M. Healy*, pp. 612, 623-4.

²³¹ Callanan, *T.M. Healy*, p. 625.

²³² Healy, *Letters and Leaders of My Day*, pp. 598, 650.

²³³ Healy, *Letters and Leaders of My Day*, pp. 573-4, 609.

²³⁴ *Hibernian Journal*, April 1931, p. 32.

²³⁵ *Irish Independent*, 27 March 1931.

imprisoned following the 1916 Rising. Deaths of former Irish Party figures prominent in the Land struggle seemed to have less political immediacy and therefore were easier subjects of tribute e.g. Thomas Sexton received tributes as an orator and newspaper man and a piece in the *Independent* described his part in the Land War.²³⁶

Both Stephen and Denis Gwynn remained prominent writers; however, their perspectives on Irish history certainly did not meet with universal approval. Treatyite writer P.S. O’Hegarty wrote to Stephen Gwynn admitting that Sinn Féin mishandled partition, but noting that it was the Irish Party who made the first mistake on the matter.²³⁷ On the other hand, Denis published another work on Action Française in 1928 along with a biography of Roger Casement in 1931.²³⁸ He also published *The Irish Free State, 1922-27*, an overview of the new state’s foundation and institutions; in his view, the government’s achievement in state-building had vindicated the ‘long struggle for Irish self-government’.²³⁹

While Henry Harrison had published *Parnell Vindicated* which attempted to restore the Chief’s moral standing the previous year, Denis Gwynn’s 1932 biography of Redmond also proved a sympathetic portrayal.²⁴⁰ Gwynn’s account including Redmond’s initial repugnance at the thought of partition was gladly seized upon by Hibernians who decried attempts to blame the Irish Party for partition.²⁴¹ The book was the first work on the IPP leader to make use of Redmond’s personal papers. Gwynn junior had attended Pearse’s school St. Enda’s and it has been argued that being raised a Catholic he found integration into independent Ireland easier than his father.²⁴² Nevertheless, while researching and writing the biography, Denis certainly developed an affinity for his subject. Gwynn argued Redmond’s decision to take over the Volunteer committee in 1914 was popular outside of ‘jealousy’ in Dublin

²³⁶ *Irish Independent*, 2 November 1932.

²³⁷ O’Hegarty to Gwynn, 16 October 1929, NLI Stephen Gwynn Papers Ms. 8600 (13).

²³⁸ Scotland Yard denied Gwynn a request to see the infamous Black Diaries Denis Gwynn, *The “Action Française” Condemnation* (London: Oates, 1928); Denis Gwynn, *The Life and Death of Roger Casement* (London: Newnes, 1931).

²³⁹ Denis Gwynn, *The Irish Free State 1922-27* (London: Macmillan, 1928), p. xii.

²⁴⁰ Henry Harrison, *Parnell Vindicated: The Lifting of the Veil* (London: Constable, 1931).

²⁴¹ Denis Gwynn, *The Life of John Redmond; Hibernian Journal*, August 1932, p. 80.

²⁴² Colin Reid, ‘Redmondism in the Irish Free State: Stephen Gwynn, Denis Gwynn and the Historical Memory of John Redmond’, conference presentation, ‘Outsiders in Independent Ireland’, Maynooth University 5 September 2014.

and highlighted how the failure of 1916 home rule negotiations left Redmond ‘irreparably damaged’.²⁴³

Denis Gwynn’s biography of de Valera, published in 1933, was certainly less sympathetic. Although he claimed it was not ‘either a criticism or a defence’, he disapproved of the Fianna Fáil leader on a number of issues including his *faux pas* in Irish-American politics in 1919-20 and his stance on the Treaty. Gwynn was more positive in his appraisal of de Valera’s time as leader of Fianna Fáil, but still feared the possibility of IRA revolution in the 1930s.²⁴⁴

Conclusion

While in 1932, a publisher promoting a novel about the Irish Volunteers could ascribe John Redmond the dubious role of the Mirabeau of the Irish revolution, the memory of the former IPP leader had seemed to benefit in these years from the absorption of his son into the Treatyite party.²⁴⁵ One side, at least, of the old Sinn Féin grouping was now free to respect the man who had brought Ireland to the brink of home rule. However, as 1932 drifted into 1933 and Fianna Fáil tightened its grip on power, this would prove a chimera. The view of Redmond outlined in the *Irish Press* would become the official one and priority would be given to the memory of the Rising and those who had taken part in the armed struggle for Irish independence. Debates on public memory reflected and interacted with political developments. After the National League, there was no further possibility of constructing a neo-Redmondite party and devotees who still held a primarily Irish Party political loyalty were generally representative of either a border nationalist identity or a local affinity to the Redmond family.

One of the National League’s great weaknesses had been the difficulty of recapturing what exactly constituted the politics of the mass nationalist Irish Party. Capt. Redmond and others had variously claimed not to have been ‘in ecstasies’ about the Treaty. However, the Treaty proved acceptable to most who had supported the home

²⁴³ Gwynn, *The Life of John Redmond*, pp. 316, 524.

²⁴⁴ Denis Gwynn, *De Valera* (London: Jarrolds, 1933), pp. 11, 255, 280-86.

²⁴⁵ *Irish Independent*, 1 January, 1932. The novel in question was *The Irish Volunteer* by Francis Carty (no relation to Frank Carty, then Fianna Fáil TD for Sligo). Mirabeau had been a moderate leader of the French Revolution who favoured a constitutional monarchy. He died a hero in 1791, but was later discovered to have been in the pay of the King from 1790.

rule struggle. If the IPP had been offered a settlement on the lines of the Treaty with unity in 1912 or 1914, the party would surely have accepted it. It was the means by which it had been achieved, the bad memories of the revolutionary years, the partition clause in the Treaty, and a lack of official respect for the achievements of Redmond and his colleagues which had aggravated many recalcitrant Home Rulers.

The rhetoric of Parnell or Redmond could vary at times and the latter certainly developed a more imperial vision in his last years, but many supporters of the party had not been doctrinaire in their demand for self-government. As McConnell and others have noted, this lack of fixed ideals could encompass MPs who expressed imperial sentiments as well as ‘Irish-Ireland’ affinities for the Gaelic League and GAA.²⁴⁶ It could thus include a strain of anti-English feeling which allowed someone like Tom O’Donnell to feel instinctively at home in Fianna Fáil. In contrast, the perceived fanaticism of Fianna Fáil members in their devotion to the ideal of a republic was anathema to former Irish Party followers who still looked askance at what they felt was the fanaticism of 1916 and the Civil War.

For some from IPP backgrounds, a path of sane politics and steady constitutional gain appeared a far better alternative. The insistence of James Dillon and Frank MacDermot that debate return to the constitutional status of the Free State and whether a republic, a dominion, or a reunited state was preferable, undoubtedly owed much to their Home Rule backgrounds. However, both men also broadened political debate to an extent in an environment where squabbling between Cumann na nGaedheal and Fianna Fáil had already tended to squeeze the northern issue out of the foreground. On the other hand, the Centre Party had gained support from a loose assembly of agricultural bodies. Many of the farmers who had benefitted from the home rule struggle had already moved to support whatever candidate or party might best represent their place in the emerging Free State. They had thus voted for Farmers’ Party, independents or Cumann na nGaedheal in the 1920s.

The irony was that what brought former Home Rulers together in the NFRL and Centre Party (the obliteration of the centre ground by the salience of the Economic

²⁴⁶ McConnell, *The Irish Parliamentary Party and the Third Home Rule Crisis*, pp 141-7; Wheatley, *Nationalism and the Irish Party*, pp 66-8, 256.

War dispute) would undermine them and push them into the Treatyite fold. The Land League could be invoked for multiple causes, but the tradition of defying law to achieve one's aims could actually be inimical to the devotion to constitutionalism of many former Home Rulers. This would prove apparent as politics in the 1930s developed. Although farmers were the beneficiaries of the Land War, there was a significant difference between those who had formed the Land League movement and MacDermot's coterie of larger farmers. He could not succeed in harnessing all sectors of the agricultural community in a land struggle; he was thus destined to fail in his grander ambitions and would never be 'the Parnell of 1932.'²⁴⁷

²⁴⁷ This description came from a speaker in Macroom, Cork. *Irish Independent*, 28 November 1932; Ryan, 'The National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League', pp. 188-92.

Chapter 6

From Free State to Republic: The place of old Home Rulers in a new Ireland, 1933-49

At any rate Sinn Féin was successful, and the Irish Party was annihilated. Its members certainly proved their belief in democratic methods of government; for they stepped quietly backed into private life, and since then not one of them has raised a voice in opposition to the elected Governments or to any verdict of the people

John Lalor-Fitzpatrick (ex-MP), *Irish Times*, 7 August 1940

The foundation of the United Ireland Party/Fine Gael party in September 1933 marked a decisive moment in the assimilation of many politicians from Home Rule background into the post-independence body politic. The new United Ireland Party had recommended itself to Dillon and MacDermot due to their hope that it could move the state away from Civil War politics. However, much of the new party's dynamism came from agrarian agitation while its formation also entailed alliance with the Blueshirts and Eoin O'Duffy, who became the UIP's first leader. O'Duffy's interest in continental fascism and increasingly erratic behaviour would leave those from a constitutionalist background in a highly invidious position. The Blueshirt crisis was not the only political trauma faced in this period; the Free State's strongly Catholic society was much troubled by the Spanish Civil War (1936-9). The period also saw the introduction of a new constitution, the outbreak of World War II (when de Valera would declare neutrality rather than repeat Redmond's 1914 call), the ascension of the Inter-Party government in 1948, and the declaration of a republic. Such constitutional changes might on the surface have seemed anathema to those from Irish Party backgrounds. The fact that this was not always the case bears further examination.

It was also an era of Fianna Fáil ascendancy which left the majority of ex-Home Rulers engaged in politics consigned to opposition. Slowly, but surely, former Home Rule families and individuals of various hues found their way into Treatyite politics; this included the AOH which started to develop into an auxiliary organisation for Fine Gael in border counties, but continued to decline elsewhere. For those who still held fast to the memory of the IPP, assimilation into Treatyite politics had therefore

brought no apparent succour. Fianna Fáil's hegemony would also inform the politics of commemoration with important implications for the place of the Irish Party in public memory. Although Fianna Fáil's success might have borne some comparison with the IPP, its brand of nationalism and personnel contrasted sharply at a time when the state marked the centenaries of the births of Thomas Davis, Michael Davitt and Parnell.

Years had passed since the collapse of the Irish Party and many politicians from home rule backgrounds were by the 1930s and 40s second generation ex-Home Rulers. Such figures, well ensconced in the contemporary political scene, rarely displayed distinctive home rule identities or policies. This chapter examines the debates around instability and conflict in Europe and constitutional changes at home, highlighting where individuals and bodies once loyal to the IPP fitted into the contemporary discourse.

Towards a united Treatyite party?

After the 1933 election, Fianna Fáil had firmly established its Dáil majority. Although speculation on a merger of opposition parties persisted, Dillon and MacDermot showed signs of independence. The Centre Party had abstained on the election of de Valera as President of the Executive Council and the Dáil agreed to its leaders' motion on national union founded on goodwill as a primary government concern on 1 March.¹ The debate even saw agreement between Cumann na nGaedheal and de Valera when the latter said the only way he could see to unity was to use the freedom they had in the Free State to create conditions that would encourage those north of the border to join.

It remained the view of Dillon and MacDermot that a republic would not bring unity. MacDermot was determined that the Government clarify whether the state was to remain in the Commonwealth or not.² Although he did not personally desire it, he almost dared the Government to declare a republic rather than dangling it in front of the people. MacDermot made no secret of the primacy of unity in his mind; he criticised both of the major parties for neglecting the issue and declared that 'I could

¹ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 46, cc. 178-93, 1 March 1933.

² *Irish Independent*, 9 February 1933.

not bear to be in Irish politics one moment if I did not hope to see the border and partition abolished in my own lifetime.’³ In May, MacDermot declared that Cumann na nGaedheal was on the downgrade while reiterating his preference for a united Ireland within the Commonwealth rather than a twenty-six county republic.⁴ As a member of Cumann na nGaedheal representative of Irish Party opinion, Bridget Redmond declared a thirty-two county republic impossible and accused the Government of driving the two sections of Ireland further apart.⁵ At a meeting at Lismore, she declared that she would never stand for a twenty-six county republic as there were as many men in the North who were just as good nationalists as those in the south and they should not be ignored.⁶

Addressing supporters in Waterford shortly after the election, MacDermot denied his party would have supported Cumann na nGaedheal had it secured the balance of power at the election. The Centre Party had twin objects: to secure more representation for the farmers and to break the party system based on civil war divisions. In MacDermot’s view, such goals would not be achieved by merely supporting Cosgrave’s party.⁷ In spite of the view of many historians that there was little of substance differentiating the Centre Party and Cumann na nGaedheal in 1933, such speeches demonstrated a real desire on MacDermot’s part to remain independent.⁸ Yet other issues left the Centre Party and its followers far closer to Cumann na nGaedheal than Fianna Fáil. The government’s 1933 Land Act was a significant advance on the previous administration’s legislation. It extended the powers of the Land Commission to acquire land (even prior to agreement of settlement price for untenanted land) and transferred responsibility for determining whose land was to be taken, the price involved, and who obtained land, from the Minister for Lands over to Commissioners.⁹ Dillon personally disliked the legislation, fearing that it would interfere with fixity of tenure, an article of faith for

³ *Irish Independent*, 5 December 1932; 9 February, 27 May 1933.

⁴ *Irish Independent*, 15 May 1933.

⁵ *Irish Independent*, 16 June 1933.

⁶ *Irish Independent* 26, 27 June 1933. The previous day, Mrs Redmond also attacked de Valera for his tolerance of the IRA.

⁷ *Irish Independent*, 13 February, 1 May 1933.

⁸ Meehan, *The Cosgrave Party*, p. 208; Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution*, p. 341; Manning, *James Dillon*, p. 73. As Tony Varley has observed, by 1933, the Civil War political contest had acquired ‘a distinctive class politics’ relating to the question of land, Varley, ‘Gaining Ground, Losing Ground’, p. 32.

⁹ Varley, ‘The Politics of Agrarian Reform’, pp. 342-3.

the son of a Land League campaigner. He quoted Parnell and Davitt on platform meetings and in parliamentary debates during 1933.¹⁰ Disputes about the Land Commission treating Fianna Fáil supporters favourably (led by Dillon and MacDermot, but also Cumann na nGaedheal deputies, including on occasion former Home Rulers like Sidney Minch and Robert Davitt) highlighted the mistrust and bitterness of the period, but also the tendency of former Irish Party followers to become absorbed in the new and sharply divisive discourse of Economic War Ireland.¹¹

The worsening dispute with Britain also engendered more bitter feeling among the Centre Party's farming base. As documented by Ryan, the party had to contend with the fragmented nature of its movement as local bodies of farmers passed resolutions that rates and Land Annuities should not be paid at all.¹² The Centre Party had to balance alliance with its grassroots and a requirement to distance itself from government accusations that it endorsed breaking the law.¹³ MacDermot often argued that collecting Land Annuities from those who genuinely could not pay was unjust, but stopped short of encouraging farmers to defy the law and enact the Land League tradition of direct action.¹⁴ However, the commitment of MacDermot to obeying the law frustrated some of his supporters. Invoking the Land War undoubtedly appealed to the larger farmers whose livelihoods were threatened by the tariff war with Britain. While applying the methods of the 1880s to the 1930s could in one sense be seen as taking up the tradition of the early Irish Party, it was problematic, if not simply undesirable, for men like MacDermot and Dillon who cast themselves as avowed constitutionalists. Bridget Redmond referenced the Land

¹⁰ *Irish Independent*, 30 March; 2 August 1933. Varley, 'The Politics of "Holding the Balance"', p. 255.

¹¹ *Irish Independent*, 20 July 1933; *Dáil Debates*, vol. 49, cc. 192-196, 19 July 1933 for Davitt's speech; see also Dillon speaking at Toomevara, *Irish Independent*, 16 June 1933. On favourable treatment for Fianna Fáil supporters, see Dooley, 'The Land for the People', pp. 217-23.

¹² Ryan, 'The National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League', pp. 187.

¹³ This organisational weakness, occasioned by a division between parliamentary party and grassroots organisation, corresponded to one of the pitfalls of Irish agrarian parties discussed earlier, Ryan, 'The National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League'; Varley, 'Irish Farmers' Parties, Nationalism and Class Politics in the Twentieth Century', pp. 160-161. Dillon distrusted some of the Farmers representatives at the formation of Centre Party, Manning, *James Dillon*, p. 65.

¹⁴ *Irish Independent*, 13 December 1932. For example, a motion of Co. Dublin Farmers that there was no liability on farmers to pay Annuities and inviting the Government to take legal proceedings as tests cases. MacDermot moved an amendment merely stating that the Annuities were unjust. Former Fianna Fáil TD Patrick Belton was prominent in making more radical claims, *Irish Independent*, 30 September 1932.

League legacy, warning that the new Land Bill could ruin the fixity of tenure won through the land struggle of previous generations; the Centre Party's dilemma was shared by those within Cumann na nGaedheal from Home Rule backgrounds.¹⁵

The most serious issue afflicting those in opposition remained the spectre of political violence. During the general election campaign, Dillon's meetings had been disrupted by supporters of Fianna Fáil and the IRA.¹⁶ In May 1933, the IRA's Seán McCool interrupted a meeting addressed by Dillon and MacDermot in Ballybofey, Co. Donegal. McCool had to be forcibly removed by the Gardaí as he lambasted Dillon for his criticism of the national flag. Centre Party rallies began to suffer as many disturbances as those held by Cumann na nGaedheal and opposition parties grew sceptical about de Valera's desire to take action against the IRA and left-wing threats.¹⁷ The Army Comrades Association (a body of former soldiers and policemen) had been founded on 9 February 1932.¹⁸ The ACA soon started to act as bodyguards at Cumann na nGaedheal meetings and had preserved order at party gatherings during the 1933 election. This association was initially led by T.F. O'Higgins; however, he was replaced by Eoin O'Duffy in July 1933. O'Duffy was a War of Independence veteran as well as having served as the state's first Garda Commissioner. De Valera wasted little time in dismissing him upon reaching power in an affair which caused considerable disquiet across the opposition benches. Under O'Duffy's control, the ACA began to adopt some of the outward trappings of continental Fascism including the wearing of blue shirts in a development which exacerbated the air of suspicion and distrust permeating politics at the time. While Dillon and MacDermot drew unfavourable comparisons between the treatment of the 'Blueshirts' and the IRA, the Government moved against O'Duffy's plan to lead a procession to Leinster Lawn for the 1933 Griffith-Collins commemoration and confiscated the gun licences of Cumann na nGaedheal members.¹⁹

¹⁵ *Irish Independent*, 17 July 1933.

¹⁶ *Irish Independent*, 18 January 1933.

¹⁷ *Irish Independent*, 15, 22 May 1933. Responding to Dillon's concerns about the IRA, de Valera replied that he felt that as many of the IRA's republican objects were attained, the reason for the organisation would disappear. *Dáil Debates*, vol. 49, cc. 905, 1059-67, 1 August 1933.

¹⁸ Maurice Manning, *The Blueshirts* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1970), p. 23.

¹⁹ *Irish Independent*, 8 December 1932; Manning, *James Dillon*, pp. 74-5.

MacDermot had previously insisted that any farmers' party must remain independent of the two major parties to be successful. However, the tense political atmosphere placed enormous pressure on this desire to remain independent of the major parties.²⁰ It was this tension which finally pushed many individuals from Home Rule backgrounds to accept a Treatyite label. As seen from the way that Cumann na nGaedheal absorbed the Farmers' Party of the 1920s and former Redmondites, the party had few qualms about embracing other political traditions. Yet, at first, it was desire for a strong unified opposition party that many embraced rather than acceptance of the Treatyite banner.

A merger began to take shape in late August 1933 as O'Duffy's Blueshirts were included in discussions. MacDermot clearly had reservations about the former Garda Commissioner. He stated that he did not agree with O'Duffy's ideas about replacing the parliamentary system with a scheme of vocational councils that possessed a veto on legislation affecting them (such vocational ideas were popular owing to the Papal Encyclicals *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno*, but also mirrored Mussolini's Corporate State).²¹ However, while reiterating his desire to remain free from Civil War politics, MacDermot began to praise O'Duffy on two conditions: that he eliminate the military features of his movement and that that he refrain from demanding radical changes to the constitution.²² This helped to prepare the ground for a merger although MacDermot held tight to his line that he would not be merely swallowed up by Cosgrave's party. MacDermot thus demanded that Cosgrave not lead the new party and though Dillon favoured Patrick Hogan, the former Minister refused and O'Duffy was approached to be leader.²³

The merger was formally announced on 8 September. Dillon admitted he was not thrilled at the prospect at first; he would have preferred that the Centre Party had remained independent, but he recalled that he needed to sink political prejudices he

²⁰ *Irish Independent*, 14 November, 12 December 1932; Varley, 'The Politics of "Holding the Balance"', p. 252.

²¹ *Irish Independent*, 14 August 1933. For a full account of this issue, see Don O'Leary, *Vocationalism and Social Catholicism in Twentieth-Century Ireland: The Search for a Christian Social Order* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2000).

²² *Irish Independent*, 21 August 1933.

²³ Manning, *James Dillon*, pp. 78-9.

had accumulated since 1918 for the good of the country.²⁴ In the fevered political atmosphere, MacDermot's party and farmers' representatives around the country endorsed O'Duffy; he was received with much cheering and clapping as the Centre Party approved the merger.²⁵ Initially, a couple of aspects of the merger indicated MacDermot and Dillon's desire to maintain a distinct identity beyond Civil War politics and O'Duffy's desire to remain distinct from Cumann na nGaedheal-style constitutionalism. The party's name was Fine Gael/The United Ireland Party. The UIP moniker was clearly a nod to the former Centre Party's leaders and their prominent campaigning on the issue of unity. In fact, at the time of the merger, MacDermot revealed the name 'United Ireland' was his suggestion and that he would not have joined the new party if it had any other name.²⁶ A party title in the English language also provided some distance from parties claiming derivation from Sinn Féin.²⁷

Dillon and MacDermot used the UIP label often and this name was the party's primary appellation in its early days.²⁸ The former Centre Party leaders also became vice-presidents of the party along with Hogan, Michael Tierney and Peter Nugent, a Hibernian nominated by Dillon.²⁹ On an organisational level, the Cumann na nGaedheal grouping was generous in allowing the Centre Party and the Blueshirts equality in appointing six members each to the new party's committee alongside six former Cumann na nGaedheal members. MacDermot and Dillon's twin priorities also won their way into the first two heads of policy agreed by the new party's standing committee in November 1933:

... voluntary reunion of all Ireland in a single independent state as member, without any abatement of Irish sovereignty, of the British Commonwealth in

²⁴ *Irish Independent*, 9 September 1933.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Irish Independent*, 9 September 1933.

²⁷ The newspaper of the new party was also titled *United Ireland* which went bankrupt in 1936.

United Ireland succeeded the Cumann na nGaedheal journal *United Irishman* which ran from 1932-3.

²⁸ *Irish Independent*, 2 September 1933. The Longford Leader curiously referred to the United Ireland Party as the 'United Ireland League', an intriguing similarity with the old Redmondite UIL, Mel Farrell, 'September 1933: From Cumann na nGaedheal to Fine Gael, a Longford perspective', *Teathbha (Journal of Longford History Society)*, vol. 4, no. 2 (2015), p. 12.

²⁹ Manning, *James Dillon*, p. 83.

free and equal partnership for mutual benefit with Great Britain, Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand.³⁰

The Corporatist ideas of the Blueshirts were also included while the UIP would have to try to contain the independent streak of the farmers' movement around the country.³¹

At the first parliamentary party meeting, Dillon made clear that all parts of the movement must hold together and that it must fight the Government if it tried to ban the Young Ireland Association, the title adopted by the Blueshirts after the 'National Guard', the name O'Duffy gave to the Blueshirts, was banned by the Government in August 1933.³² The same meeting was attended by Louth Hibernian James Coburn, who had previously remained aloof from all parties after the fall of the National League. Coburn joined twenty-one others with varying degrees of Home Rule heritage in the new party.

Table 6.1 – Individuals from Home Rule backgrounds in the UIP/Fine Gael at party's foundation

Ex- Home Rule MPs	Ex-IPP Candidates	Ex-Councillor/Guardians	Relatives of MPs	Other (National League/AOH/Known Home Rule Background)	Total
0	1	9	8	4	22

With the addition of Coburn, Dillon and MacDermot, there were now few TDs from Irish Party backgrounds not absorbed into the new Treatyite party. Former Home Rulers in this venture were clearly in the midst of a very different political drama than that which had seen the Irish Party fall in 1918. In 1927 too, Capt. Redmond approached Free State politics clinging to an older political identity. In 1933, a distinct ex-Home Rule identity would be eliminated from Irish politics by the

³⁰ Heads of Policy, minutes of meeting of the General Purposes Committee of Fine Gael, 9 November 1933, UCDA Fine Gael Papers, P39/MIN 2. Other policies included settling the economic dispute with Britain, remission of Annuities, anti-communism, opposition to proportional representation and reform of local government.

³¹ Minutes of Meeting of General Purposes Committee, 16 November 1933, UCDA Fine Gael Papers P39/MIN 2.

³² First Meeting of the United Ireland Party, 27 September 1933, UCDA Fine Gael papers P39/MIN4.

formation of this united opposition party and the intensity of the contemporary political divide. The UIP began a series of public meetings and Dillon and MacDermot joined Cosgrave and O'Duffy in a leadership quadrumvirate at all major gatherings. Casting aside previous reluctance to join with former 'Sinn Féin' politicians, Dillon painted the collaboration with Cumann na nGaedheal and the Blueshirts as evidence of the new spirit which had arisen in the country.³³ While he did not go as far as Capt. Redmond had in 1932 by alluding to historical precedents, Dillon noted that he had differed with Cosgrave in the past, but that he had never doubted his sincere patriotism.

Much of MacDermot's rhetoric on nationalism and Irish unity did not change. Speaking at a UIP meeting in Cork in October, he argued that Fianna Fáil policy forgot that a quarter of the population were of mainly British stock. MacDermot said Irish nationalism through Parnell and others had long accepted the principle that Ireland could not spare any of her sons. Broadening his argument, he asked if people wanted a Gaelic country or not and whether they wanted two nations or one.³⁴ Some of his other ideas would seem to have been quite different from the statements and policies of the old Cumann na nGaedheal party, such as his statement that the Treaty should have included an opt-out clause after ten years and that Commonwealth membership should be voluntary.³⁵ MacDermot's own position remained the almost neo-Redmondite one of supporting Commonwealth membership in order to foster closer relations and ultimately, unity with unionists.³⁶

Dillon rejected any notion that the youth movement wing of the UIP had any plans of conspiracy to overthrow the Government.³⁷ In Cork, Dillon insisted the Blueshirts were peaceful and did not want to fight interrupters although he warned ominously, if ambiguously, 'by jingo if we do...'³⁸ Although it has been argued that Fianna Fáil's policy was not simply an attack on the cattle market, many cattle farmers perceived the Government's policy in very different terms. Such perceptions were seized upon by many in the UIP, including members who could draw on Land

³³ *Irish Independent*, 18 September 1933.

³⁴ *Irish Independent*, 2 October 1933.

³⁵ *Irish Independent*, 25 September 1933.

³⁶ See for example MacDermot at Waterford, *Irish Independent* 20 November 1933.

³⁷ *Irish Independent*, 25 September, 13 October 1933.

³⁸ *Irish Independent*, 2 October 1933.

League or IPP roots.³⁹ Bridget Redmond addressed a UIP meeting in early October and declared herself a ‘standard-bearer’ of a party,

... composed of the best elements of the nation’s life that was determined by constitutional and legal means to eject Fianna Fáil from office and put in its place a truly Irish Government that would end the economic war and restore the British market, the only outlet there was for the surplus agricultural produce of the country.⁴⁰

For his part, Eoin O’Duffy complemented such rhetoric when he visited Waterford the following month claiming that if Capt. Redmond, his father, Michael Davitt or Parnell were alive today they would be on a UIP platform. Locals seemed amenable to the message as shouts of ‘Up O’Duffy’ and ‘Up Cosgrave’ accompanied those of ‘Up Redmond’.⁴¹

In spite of the contradiction between fidelity to a constitutional tradition and what has been termed the ‘proto-Fascist’ leanings of O’Duffy’s movement, the Waterford Redmondites seemed to embrace the Blueshirt movement.⁴² Redmond visited nine Waterford farmers imprisoned around the time of the formation of Fine Gael/UIP and greeted them at a party reception in Leinster House upon their release.⁴³ Their return to Waterford in October 1933 was a major event in the city; a reception was laid on by the Mayor, the Chamber of Commerce and the local Farmers’ Defence League. Redmond attended this event too along with Dillon, Richard Mulcahy and a large contingent of Blueshirts.⁴⁴

³⁹ In Tony Varley’s view, Fianna Fáil’s policy might be ‘more correctly described as anti-rancher than anti-cattle in principle’, Varley, ‘The Politics of Agrarian Reform’, pp. 345-9.

⁴⁰ *Irish Independent*, 3 October 1933.

⁴¹ *Irish Independent*, 20 November 1933, Fearghal McGarry, *Eoin O’Duffy: A Self-Made Hero* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 236. In Wexford, the old Redmondite William Corcoran (editor of the *Free Press*) also joined the new party and became the treasurer of the UIP in the county). *Irish Independent*, 29 December 1933.

⁴² For the fullest theoretical elucidation of whether the Blueshirts were Fascist or not or ‘proto-Fascist’, see Mike Cronin, ‘The Blueshirt Movement, 1932-5: Ireland’s Fascists?’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 30, no. 2 (April, 1995), pp. 311-332.

⁴³ *Irish Independent*, 25, 29 September, 12 October 1933; *Dáil Debates*, vol. 49, cc. 1799-1800, 28 September 1933.

⁴⁴ *Irish Independent*, 13 October 1933.

Dillon insisted the movement contained no trace of conspiracy to defy the law.⁴⁵ Such a view was tested when, in November 1933, he found himself under cross-examination at a Military Tribunal as the Government cracked down on the Blueshirts, banning the Young Ireland Association.⁴⁶ During his evidence, Dillon insisted that any military conduct would be repudiated by the UIP's national executive. MacDermot also defended the Blueshirts against government accusations that O'Duffy was a 'would be dictator' by countering that the Blueshirts recognised the state and were banned only due to a resemblance with continental Fascism.⁴⁷

The apparent contradictions in ideology and background among the members of the new Treatyite party did not go unremarked by political opponents. Seán MacEntee could not decide if MacDermot, Dillon and Blythe,

... were converting themselves into as strong Republicans as Gen. O'Duffy said he was from 1917 to 1921, or whether Gen. O'Duffy had agreed to become as much an imperialist as Mr. MacDermot was from 1914 to 1916, when he was winning medals and laurels under the Union Jack, or as Mr Dillon was in 1918 to 1921, when he was then, as he was today, opposed to the will of the Irish people.⁴⁸

However, MacDermot and Dillon attempted to make a virtue out of necessity. MacDermot praised Cosgrave for the sacrifices he made in setting up the UIP, asking if de Valera would do the same and stand aside from Fianna Fáil under any circumstances.⁴⁹ Dillon likewise argued it was a good omen for the new party's success that he and Cosgrave could sink their previous prejudices.⁵⁰

Despite O'Duffy's attempts to appeal to former Home Rulers, he could also get himself into trouble with such sections of UIP support. The Cork meeting in October was used to present O'Duffy with the opportunity to retract his slur that those who had attacked him at a Tralee rally were 'ex-British servicemen type corner boys'.

⁴⁵ *Irish Independent*, 13 October 1933.

⁴⁶ *Irish Independent*, 4, 9 November 1933.

⁴⁷ *Irish Independent*, 11 September, 12 December 1933.

⁴⁸ *Irish Independent*, 18 September 1933.

⁴⁹ *Irish Independent*, 2 October 1933.

⁵⁰ *Irish Independent*, 18 September 1933.

O'Duffy reiterated that ex-servicemen were fully behind the UIP in Munster and that he 'did not intend to cast any reflection on the general body of ex-British Army men in this country, many of whom soldiered with me both in the Volunteers and later in the National army.'⁵¹ However, this was hardly a full endorsement of the ex-British servicemen community in the Free State; O'Duffy repeated his claim that ex-servicemen were involved in the 'disgraceful and cowardly' incidents in Tralee and he made no reference to ex-servicemen who had not subsequently joined the revolutionary struggle. It was not surprising that some members of this community were dissatisfied with the General's explanation.⁵² Monaghan Hibernians' distaste for Treatyites was also worsened by O'Duffy's accession to the leadership of the new party.⁵³ New UIP TD James Coburn spoke at the unveiling of a monument to murdered Hibernian Francis McPhillips in 1933. O'Duffy attempted to ease some of the bad feeling of Hibernians in his native county by calling on both Home Rulers and old unionists to rally to the UIP cause.⁵⁴ However, this was not altogether successful and a group of Hibernians in the county continued to endorse Fianna Fáil.⁵⁵

O'Duffy aside, the tone of these speeches was not that surprising considering the reconciliation taking place between Cumann na nGaedheal and the former Irish Party followers in previous years. The creation of what was, initially at least, a new party with a new name that unified different groupings made this integration easier for even recalcitrant former IPP supporters. Nonetheless, the invocation of the Home Rule tradition by many in the UIP/Fine Gael from other backgrounds could be respectful, but assertive of their own traditions. Cosgrave name-checked and honoured former constitutional leaders, but also extolled the party's Sinn Féin antecedents. According to Cosgrave, Griffith and Collins had got for Ireland its own army, which was something Parnell and Redmond had never dreamed of attaining

⁵¹ *Irish Independent*, 16 October 1933. O'Duffy had been assaulted by a crowd of opponents while making his way through the streets of Tralee on his way to a UIP convention in the town on 6 October. O'Duffy was struck on the head with a hammer in the incident. Additional Gardaí used tear gas bombs to disperse crowds amid chaotic and violent scenes, *Irish Independent*, 7 October 1933.

⁵² P.J. Shelly, chairman of ex-servicemen's body 'Forward' stated this at a meeting in Dublin, *Irish Independent*, 16 October 1933.

⁵³ McPhillips, 'The Ancient Order of Hibernians in County Monaghan', p. 128.

⁵⁴ *Irish Independent*, 30 October 1933.

⁵⁵ Livingstone, *The Monaghan Story*, pp. 408-18; McGarry, *Eoin O'Duffy*, p. 67.

(even if Redmond may have held a vision of an Irish brigade in 1914).⁵⁶ Although O'Duffy did not attend the 1934 Capt. Redmond anniversary in Wexford town, it became a UIP and Blueshirt celebration as well as a Redmondite memorial, encompassing what one newspaper described 'a memorable fusion of many political elements'.⁵⁷ Among the estimated 2,000 participants from Wexford, Waterford, Cork and Dublin, there were between 700 and 1,000 Blueshirts and between 100 and 200 Blue Blouses reported as present.⁵⁸ Cosgrave joined local Redmondites and ex-Irish Party members such as Alfie Byrne, John Keating and John Hayden, who gave the oration. Hayden's speech dwelt little on contemporary politics, but mentioned the plight of the farmers before referring to land legislation won by Redmond's father. Eighteen years after the Rising, Cosgrave also addressed the crowd declaring it an honour that he enjoyed association with Capt. Redmond in the latter stages of his career.⁵⁹

Nevertheless, the new party did not win the public endorsement of AOH National Secretary, John Dillon Nugent. Nugent praised the primacy the party placed on a 'united Ireland' and added that men opposed to Cumann na nGaedheal had great hope in the new venture. However, he again insisted that the Order must continue to 'keep to the middle of the road', perhaps a surprising stance considering Dillon's prominence in the AOH.⁶⁰ The Order's fears of communism and the IRA sometimes instinctively led to distrust of Fianna Fáil.⁶¹ Nugent questioned why de Valera was harder on Blueshirts than communists and speculated whether he might be beholden to some IRA elements. De Valera's statement that he would rather no member of Fianna Fáil were in the Knights of St. Columbanus was also received badly in the *Hibernian Journal*.⁶² However, Nugent made some slightly odd statements too; he likened de Valera's attitude to the British as akin to that of the old Irish Party claiming that people might disagree with his methods not his purpose.⁶³ In practice at least, the Order now faced less division within its organisation as its five

⁵⁶ *Irish Independent*, 11 December 1933.

⁵⁷ *Irish Independent*, 23 April 1934.

⁵⁸ *Irish Press*, 23 April 1934.

⁵⁹ *Cork Examiner*, 23 April 1934.

⁶⁰ *Hibernian Journal*, October 1933, p. 92.

⁶¹ *Hibernian Journal*, June 1933, pp. 55, 57.

⁶² *Hibernian Journal*, November 1933 p. 102; December 1933, p. 120.

⁶³ *Hibernian Journal*, June 1933 p. 54.

Hibernian TDs were all absorbed into the UIP. Dillon continued to speak at AOH rallies as before, promising Hibernians from both sides of the border in December 1933 that partition would come to an end.⁶⁴

In May 1934, Nugent told Hibernians that they could join the UIP, Fianna Fáil, Labour, the Blueshirts or the new Volunteer army 'but no member has got any right or authority to identify the AOH in any way whatever with any of the bodies referred to.'⁶⁵ Nugent insisted that it was up to individual divisions to decide whether to let their halls to any party or not, but declared that it was 'equally clear' no member or division had right to give a hall over to Saor Éire or the IRA as the Order continued to fulminate at left-wing and republican threats.⁶⁶ Such a stance had the backing of James Dillon who insisted that the Order should not be attached to any party.⁶⁷ In practice, it was far more common for UIP meetings to be held in Hibernian halls; however, there were some Fianna Fáil gatherings in such halls, particularly in Monaghan and parts of county Cavan.⁶⁸ AOH bands also occasionally marched in Blueshirt rallies though Hibernian gatherings were spared the disturbances often accompanying meetings of O'Duffy's movement. As political bitterness eased after the Blueshirt crisis, the Board of Erin was happy for its Sandymount division to let its premises to Fianna Fáil in 1936 while Fine Gael were offered the Order's hall in Tralee as well as property belonging to the Hibernians in Dublin city.⁶⁹

Despite the drive that O'Duffy and the Blueshirts were intended to provide, the UIP failed to match Fianna Fáil's organisational prowess with just 1,038 branches compared to Fianna Fáil's 1,800 in 1933.⁷⁰ Although Dillon and MacDermot were among the speakers who predicted the Government's demise, it was the Opposition which soon began to implode.⁷¹ On 9 July 1934, MacDermot was moved to write to

⁶⁴ *Irish Independent*, 2 December 1933.

⁶⁵ *Hibernian Journal*, May 1934, p. 49.

⁶⁶ *Hibernian Journal*, May 1934, p. 49. Saor Éire was brief left-wing movement formed by members of the IRA in September 1931, Brian Hanley, 'Moss Twomey, Radicalism and the IRA, 1931-33: A Reassessment', *Saothar*, no. 26 (2001), pp. 53-60.

⁶⁷ *Hibernian Journal*, August 1934, p. 73; December 1934, p. 113.

⁶⁸ *Anglo-Celt*, 21 January 1933; 28 April, 1 September, 10 November 1934.

⁶⁹ Annual Meeting of National Board, 20 July 1936, BOE Minutes of Meetings, NAI – LOU 13/1/3 (a).

⁷⁰ Report of Fianna Fáil Ard-Fheis 1933, UCDA de Valera Papers P150/2054; Manning, *James Dillon*, p. 86.

⁷¹ *Irish Independent*, 6 November 1933.

O'Duffy to 'make a more formal protest than I have yet done' about him and others in the party who condemned the parliamentary system. MacDermot acknowledged that the party had committed to the 'experiment' of corporative councils and training youth, but he also insisted that the party had remained faithful to 'the supremacy of parliament'.⁷² Although O'Duffy replied that parliament remained a part of his envisaged corporatist future, tensions were clearly rising within the party.

The tensions centred on O'Duffy and his increasingly erratic behaviour. There was little sign of political violence dissipating as meetings around the country often ended in trouble and arrests.⁷³ In August, a man was injured and later died after a violent dispute in Marsh's Yard in Cork involving the Blueshirts.⁷⁴ At a Blueshirt convention, O'Duffy then supported a resolution that farmers actively refuse to pay their Annuities if the Government insisted on collecting them without recourse to an independent tribunal to examine the plight of farmers.⁷⁵ This was the step from which MacDermot and Dillon had always held aloof; it committed O'Duffy and the Blueshirts to open defiance of law and order and possibly extra-parliamentary methods. MacDermot was unwell at this time and would remain *hors de combat* for the ensuing crisis, but was kept informed by Dillon and party colleague Michael Tierney. In the wake of the Blueshirt resolution, Dillon wrote to MacDermot that the policy was 'morally infeasible' and 'politically infeasible' as it would lead to anarchy and civil war.⁷⁶ Dillon's view was shared by others from Cumann na nGaedheal backgrounds and after an explosive meeting of the UIP national executive, O'Duffy sent his resignation to the party on 18 September.⁷⁷ In Dillon's view, O'Duffy had made up his mind that 'constitutionalism did not pay' after he failed to deliver the decisive victory he had promised at the local elections and was talking 'raiméis' in invoking the virtues of Hitler's rule in Germany.⁷⁸ In the aftermath, O'Duffy's vain attempts to argue that he had resigned from the UIP, but not the Blueshirts, stirred further controversy and led to a split in the latter

⁷² MacDermot to Eoin O'Duffy, 9 July 1934, NAI MacDermot Papers 1065/3/1.

⁷³ *Irish Independent*, 25 September 1933. A Garda sergeant was assaulted at one UIP rally in Limerick and suffered a stab wound. The man responsible was later jailed for four months. At another rally in Tralee, a Mill's Bomb was thrown, *Irish Independent*, 12 October, 7 November 1933.

⁷⁴ Cronin, *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics*, pp. 144-5; Manning, *The Blueshirts*, pp. 136-7.

⁷⁵ Manning, *The Blueshirts*, p. 142.

⁷⁶ Dillon to MacDermot, 24 August 1934, NAI MacDermot Papers 1065/2/1.

⁷⁷ Manning, *James Dillon*, p. 101.

⁷⁸ Dillon to MacDermot 25 September 1934 NAI MacDermot Papers 1065/2/4.

movement, which slowly declined despite the efforts of its new leader Edmund Cronin.⁷⁹

The persistence of ex-Home Rulers in Irish politics

Dillon's biographer has argued that he was one of the few politicians to emerge with credit from the entire O'Duffy debacle and that Dillon improved his standing in the party.⁸⁰ On the other hand, MacDermot, who had missed much of O'Duffy's road to ruin, seemed despondent about politics in its aftermath. It was the beginning of his gradual drift away from the party which he had helped to found. Although Dillon and MacDermot remained personally committed to situating public debate around the issue of commonwealth membership versus the state declaring itself a republic, by 1935 Dillon admitted to his former Centre Party colleague that 'I am not at all sure that it will be possible to carry everyone in our ranks with us'.⁸¹

MacDermot's absence during the O'Duffy controversy had engendered suspicion or hostility from some in the party while he also diverged from the party line on many issues. As de Valera's government moved to abolish the Seanad (a series of rows with the Upper House culminated in a proposal to abolish it after the chamber opposed legislation outlawing the Blueshirts in 1934), MacDermot criticised the Seanad himself. This jarred with the party's support for the House and earned him a rebuke from his party colleague Seán Milroy.⁸² In the end, MacDermot's departure was precipitated by Fine Gael's refusal to support de Valera's speech at the League of Nations on the Abyssinia question. MacDermot agreed fully with de Valera's criticism of the League for failing to take adequate action against Italy's aggression to the African state, but Fine Gael instead took an antagonistic position. Simmering hostilities between MacDermot and many of his front bench colleagues reached their

⁷⁹ O'Duffy launched personal attacks on a number of Fine Gael politicians including Dillon and MacDermot, *The Blueshirt*, 1, 8 December 1934. At one stage, O'Duffy also bizarrely claimed that the AOH supported his wing of the riven Blueshirt movement, *The Blueshirt*, 5 January 1935. The Cork based former Home Ruler J.J. Horgan was able to remain an aloof observer for the Commonwealth journal *The Round Table* throughout the crisis. Although hostile to de Valera, he was gave clear accounts of O'Duffy's political inadequacies, *The Round Table*, March 1935, p. 377.

⁸⁰ Manning, *James Dillon*, pp. 105, 119-125.

⁸¹ Dillon to MacDermot, 1 January 1935, NAI MacDermot Papers 1065/2/7.

⁸² Minutes of Parliamentary Party Meeting, 6 December 1934, UCDA Fine Gael Papers P39/MIN 4. MacDermot's view was not shared by other from Home Rule backgrounds such as Dillon and John Lymbrick Esmonde.

final pitch and MacDermot resigned in October 1935.⁸³ Dillon, on the other hand, grew more influential within the party, especially in the formulation of agricultural policy.⁸⁴ Although Dillon's enthusiasm for the Empire Parliamentary Union was probably not shared by many others in Fine Gael, he also served on various Oireachtas committees.⁸⁵ TDs with Home Rule roots, like their fellow parliamentarians, were increasingly absorbed in the contemporary problems. The 'keeper of the Redmondite flame' Bridget Redmond contributed more in later years on matters affecting housing and social conditions rather than on explicitly historical debates.⁸⁶

Although the initially predominant moniker of UIP helped to assure MacDermot of a new and broader identity that could move beyond the Civil War divide, the state's old and new constitutionalists had soon found themselves overshadowed by the more extreme ideals of the party's leader and his increasing interest in Fascist ideas. The ensuing debacle which saw O'Duffy removed meant that the majority of former Home Rulers were left in a demoralised Fine Gael party led by the former Cumann na nGaedheal leader W.T. Cosgrave.⁸⁷ While John M. Regan has suggested the UIP/FG name implied uncertainty about the party's 'cultural identity', such concerns faded as Fine Gael became the party's dominant title after the O'Duffy debacle.⁸⁸ Mel Farrell has argued that the acceptance of Fine Gael as party name after 1934 reflected the primacy of Cosgrave/ex Sinn Féin element of the party; yet, the cleavage between the two parties was now shaped as much by the Economic War and the economic alignments of the 1930s as the Treaty split.⁸⁹ As seen below, for the next fourteen years, the TDs elected for the party at successive elections included

⁸³ The standing committee of Fine Gael had initially approved MacDermot's initiative to support Government on upholding the Covenant of the League of Nations, Minutes of the Meeting of the Standing Committee, 1 October 1935, UCDA Fine Gael papers P39/MIN 2.

⁸⁴ Dillon and farmer deputies were detailed to form a committee to formulate the party's agricultural policy for the 1937 election, Minutes of Parliamentary Party Meeting, 4 February 1937, UCDA Fine Gael Papers P39/MIN 4.

⁸⁵ Minutes of Parliamentary party meeting, 7 July 1938, UCDA Fine Gael Papers P39/MIN4. In 1935, Dillon travelled to the Empire Parliamentary Association conference as part of an Irish delegation led by the association's President T.W. Westropp Bennett, TCD James Dillon Papers 10541/8 – 1935 extra diary.

⁸⁶ McDermott, 'Bridget Redmond: The Keeper of the Redmondite Flame in Waterford'.

⁸⁷ Dillon was keenly aware of the danger that simply re-instating Cosgrave as leader would look like a reversion to Cumann na nGaedheal, Dillon to MacDermot, 1 October 1934, NAI MacDermot Papers 1065/2/5.

⁸⁸ Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution*, p. 341.

⁸⁹ Farrell, 'From Cumann na nGaedheal to Fine Gael', p. 166.

a sizeable minority from Irish Party backgrounds. However, a distinctive former Home Rule identity faded from prominence.

Table 6.2 - TDs from Home Rule backgrounds in Fine Gael 1937-44

Year	Ex-Home Rule MP	Ex-IPP candidate	Ex-Councillor/Guardian	Relative of MP	Other (National League/AOH/Known Home Rule background)	Total
1937	1	1	6	5	4	17
1938	1	1	6	4	4	16
1943	1	1	4	1	3	10
1944	0	1	4	1	2	8

Table 6.3 – Individuals from Home Rule backgrounds in Fianna Fáil 1934-44

	Ex-Home Rule MPs	Ex-IPP candidates	Ex-Councillor/Guardian	Relatives of MPs	Other National League/AOH/Known Home Rule background	Total
1937	0	0	0	1	0	1
1938	0	0	0	1	0	1
1943	0	0	0	1	0	1
1944	0	0	0	1	0	1

Table 6.4 – Individuals from Home Rule backgrounds in the Labour Party 1934-44 (*incorporating National Labour in 1944)

Year	Ex-Home Rule MP	Ex-IPP candidate	Ex-Councillor/Guardian	Relatives of MPs	Other National League/AOH/Known Home Rule background	Total
1937	0	0	0	0	1	1
1938	0	0	0	0	1	1
1943	0	0	0	0	1	1
1944	0	0	0	0	1	1

Table 6.5 – Independent TDs from Home Rule backgrounds 1934-44

	Ex-Home Rule MP	Ex-IPP candidate	Ex-Councillor/Guardian	Relatives of MPs	Other National League/AOH/Known Home Rule background	Total
1937 (7)	1	0	0	1	0	1
1938 (6)	1	0	0	1	0	2
1943 (6)	1	0	0	2	0	3
1944 (6)	1	0	0	1	1	3

Although some Hibernian writers continued to laud the IPP as Ireland's labour party, T.J. Murphy, from an O'Brienite background, was the only one with any kind of Home Rule background in the Labour Party in these years.⁹⁰ Any association with communist ideas, however tenuous, was anathema to those on the Catholic right. However, William Fallon, who had a centre-left Catholic disposition, joined Labour and subscribed to the party in the 1940s.⁹¹ Fallon maintained correspondence with members of Fine Gael too though and was positive about the concept of coalition governments.⁹² Although former O'Brienite D.D Sheehan had stood unsuccessfully for Labour at the 1930 local election, he appeared to leave this behind by offering himself as a potential candidate for Fine Gael in South Cork in 1942. However, his candidacy was rejected.⁹³

Fianna Fáil could be seen to build on some of the IPP's traditions in its iron discipline in parliament and its adherence to de Valera as leader; its long period in power also saw it face accusations of jobbery and preferment of supporters.⁹⁴ The culture of expectation regarding political favours infiltrated any vocational idealism concerning the new Seanad; de Valera received numerous appeals to appoint Fianna Fáil supporters as Taoiseach's nominees based on their past service to the party.⁹⁵ There was perhaps a little irony that it was often John Dillon's son, rather than Arthur Griffith or William O'Brien, who condemned instances of government supporters prospering due to their political allegiances while veterans of the

⁹⁰ *Hibernian Journal*, June 1939, pp. 40-42. Nugent had earlier stated that many in the Labour party would be a credit to any party though he was concerned at individuals who might have been amenable to communism *Hibernian Journal*, November 1933, p. 103.

⁹¹ Receipt of donation, Davison to Fallon, 1 July 1943, NLI Fallon Papers Ms. 22,584.

⁹² Fallon to Richard Mulcahy, 16 June 1943, NLI Fallon Papers Ms. 22,577.

⁹³ Patrick Maume, 'Sheehan, Daniel Desmond (D.D.)', in James McGuire and James Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish Biography*. (Cambridge, 2009).

(<http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a8016>) Accessed 10 December 2015; John Dillon, *D.D. Sheehan, BL, MP, His Life and Times* (Templemore: Foilsíúcháin Nua, 2013), pp. 38-9.

⁹⁴ Maurice Manning has argued that in the 1940s, the 'extent of Fianna Fáil patronage... is hard to quantify, but that it existed is not in question', Manning, *James Dillon*, pp. 202-210; Dooley, *The Land for the People*, passim.

⁹⁵ Examples in the Department of the Taoiseach files are legion. Patrick J. Mallon to Éamon de Valera, 16 March 1938; Sean Kelly to de Valera, 4 March 1938; Anthony Doogan to Seán Lemass, 15 January 1938; Robert Briscoe to de Valera, 4 February 1938; Lizzy Coll to de Valera, 9 March 1938, NAI, s9264A. In an example of looking for a nomination in reward for recent election activity, see appeal made by the three Donegal Fianna Fáil TDs John Friel, Neal Blaney and Cormac Ua Breisleáin for the nomination of Patrick 'Co-Op' Gallagher. Ua Breisleáin claimed that he 'would not be a TD today without Mr. Gallagher's assistance' and that Gallagher's work for the party had seen his family business suffer as a result of a Cumann na nGaedheal orchestrated boycott, see Friel, Blaney and Ua Breisleáin to de Valera, 25 February 1938, NAI Dept. of the Taoiseach, s9264A.

revolution sought to defend a new hegemonic nationalist party. However, such issues had a long tradition in Irish political life which pre-dated the IPP; the Inter-Party government which came to power in 1948 would also be accused of unethical practices, most notably in the infamous ‘Battle of Baltinglass’.⁹⁶ The tendency of Dáil Éireann to return politicians resident in their constituency as opposed to the absentee MPs of the IPP has been noted.⁹⁷ However, TDs from Irish Party backgrounds continued to provide echoes of old IPP practices. James Dillon was assiduous in corresponding with constituents, but rarely visited his constituency, instead relying on his AOH network. However, TDs with Home Rule heritage were not unique in this regard and there were noteworthy examples from both sides of the Civil War divide of TDs who continued to reside outside their constituencies into the 1940s.⁹⁸

As referred to in the previous chapter, Fianna Fáil adopted far fewer politicians from IPP backgrounds and in this entire period, the only TDs in the party with Home Rule heritage were Fred and Honor Crowley (son-in-law and daughter of John P. Boland). In the Seanad, Fianna Fáil was represented by former O’Brienite William O’Callaghan and Patrick Lynch, de Valera’s opponent in the east Clare by-election of 1917 who had joined Sinn Féin and opposed the Treaty. By the 1930s, Lynch was a loyal supporter of Fianna Fáil and won a seat in the Seanad for the party in 1934. De Valera later appointed him Attorney-General in 1936, a position he held until 1940.⁹⁹

For Tom O’Donnell, memory of the Irish Party could accompany remembrance of those who lost their lives in 1916 and he was invited to a requiem mass for the souls

⁹⁶ This conflict arose when a Labour party supporter was granted the local post office in Baltinglass, Co Wicklow, ahead of the existing postmistress, David McCullagh, *A Makeshift Majority: The First Inter-Party Government, 1948-51* (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 1998), pp. 66-9. For a full account of corruption in independent Ireland, see Elaine Byrne, *Political Corruption in Ireland 1922-2010: A Crooked Harp?* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012).

⁹⁷ 85% of TDs were resident in their constituencies by 1927, McConnel, ‘The View from the Backbench’, p. 279.

⁹⁸ Others to do so included de Valera, James Ryan, Thomas Derrig, P.J. Ruttledge, Gerald Boland, W.T. Cosgrave, Desmond FitzGerald, John M. O’Sullivan, Frank Aiken and Bridget Redmond, Manning, *James Dillon*, p. 112. Tom Garvin attributed this persistence to the ‘revolutionary charisma’ of a generation that did not need to rely exclusively on localism, Garvin, ‘Continuity and Change in Irish Electoral Politics, 1923-1969’, *Economic and Social Review*, vol. 3, no. 3 (1972), p. 362.

⁹⁹ David Fitzpatrick, *The Two Irelands: 1912-39* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 198; *Irish Times*, 9 July 2007.

of those who were killed in the Rising on 2 May 1939 at Arbour Hill.¹⁰⁰ This was in contrast to Frank MacDermot who had turned down Frank Aiken's invite to the 1916 requiem mass in 1934. MacDermot replied that he would not attend until equal status was given to those who died in the First World War 'as the result of responding to the appeal of the chosen leaders of the Irish national movement.'¹⁰¹ Henry Harrison remained independent from any party, but enjoyed good relations with de Valera as he supported his stance on the Annuities. Harrison published a series of pamphlets condemning the British government's conduct.¹⁰² Harrison also became involved with plans to establish the Irish News and Information Bureau in London and became its first editor in 1933.¹⁰³ This bureau then served as a publication vehicle for pro-Government propaganda in Britain.¹⁰⁴ MacDermot, on the other hand, met with those on the British side during the dispute.¹⁰⁵

During the 1930s, the Fianna Fáil government embarked upon a policy of 'dismantling the Treaty', abolishing the oath of allegiance to the British monarch, removing the right of appeal to the Privy Council in London, abolishing the senate in 1936, and undermining and eventually getting rid of the office of Governor-General. Such moves were in line with the party's republican ethos and thus were entirely inimical to the statements of Dillon and MacDermot on the benefits of Commonwealth membership as a means of guaranteeing Irish economic prosperity and eventual unity. De Valera's new constitution *Bunreacht na hÉireann*, which was

¹⁰⁰ Invite to Mr and Mrs Tom O'Donnell. Interestingly, O'Donnell also received appeals for funds for Fine Gael from Cosgrave and James Dillon, Dillon and Cosgrave to O'Donnell, 17 January 1939, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms. 15,466 (5).

¹⁰¹ MacDermot to Aiken, 26 April 1934, NAI MacDermot Papers 1065/14/3.

¹⁰² *The Strange Case of the Irish Land Purchase Annuities; Spotlights on the Anglo-Irish Financial Quarrel*.

¹⁰³ Harrison to de Valera, 21 September 1933; Moore to de Valera draft letters 17 and 18 August 1933, NLI Moore Papers Ms. 10,586. Owen McGee, 'Harrison, Henry', in James McGuire and James Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish Biography*. (Cambridge, 2009).

(<http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a3824>) Accessed 10 December 2015.

¹⁰⁴ Henry Harrison, *The Anglo-Irish Economic War of 1932-1934: The Game of "Beggars my Neighbour" Who Wins?* (London: Irish News and Information Bureau, 1934) and *Professor A. Berriedale Keith on certain legal and constitutional aspects of the Anglo-Irish Dispute – with introduction by Henry Harrison* (London: Irish News and Information Bureau, 1934). Henry Harrison, *Ireland and the British Empire; Conflict or Collaboration?* (1937), *Ulster and the British Empire; Help or Hindrance* (1939).

¹⁰⁵ McMahon, *Republicans and Imperialists*, pp. 80, 139.

passed in a referendum in 1937, saw the name of the state change to Éire and was the culmination of many of the changes undertaken since 1932.¹⁰⁶

Among those from Home Rule backgrounds, MacDermot was the most vocal on the constitution and put down over a hundred amendments in the Dáil, including reiteration of the benefits of Commonwealth membership, opposition to Irish being declared the first official language of the state and the special position accorded to the Catholic Church.¹⁰⁷ MacDermot also favoured granting those in Northern Ireland a vote in the referendum on the constitution. However, in spite of all this, MacDermot advocated support for Bunreacht na hÉireann and former Home Rule MP and Cumann na nGaedheal minister Hugh Law agreed with MacDermot, convinced by his arguments that personal liberty and Irish unity would both be best served by passing the Constitution.¹⁰⁸ MacDermot also felt that its safe passage ‘removed any possible excuse for Fianna Fáil again becoming an unconstitutional party’ and would help de Valera outflank opponents on his left.¹⁰⁹

MacDermot ended his time as TD in 1937 as he decided not to contest Roscommon at the general election, citing his prolonged absences from the constituency due to business and personal interests.¹¹⁰ Although MacDermot had been inimical to O’Duffy in many ways during their brief stint together in Fine Gael, the former Centre Party leader shared the enthusiasm of others in Irish society for vocationalism. However, while O’Duffy was inclined to look to the example of Mussolini, MacDermot and most would-be theorists in Ireland spoke of ‘vocationalism’ and the Papal Encyclicals. MacDermot was thus appointed by de Valera to the Commission on Second House as he contemplated re-instituting a second chamber. Enjoying cordial personal relations with de Valera, MacDermot

¹⁰⁶ Dermot Keogh and Andrew McCarthy, *The Making of the Irish Constitution 1937* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2007), pp. 38-60.

¹⁰⁷ Kyran FitzGerald, ‘MacDermot, Francis Charles’, in James McGuire and James Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish Biography*. (Cambridge, 2009).

(<http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a5150>) 18 August 2016.

Angela Clifford, *The Constitutional History of Éire/Ireland* (Belfast: Athol Press, 1995), pp. 120-123. MacDermot opposed the omission of the King and disliked the ambivalence on the Commonwealth. It has been argued that de Valera maintained such ambivalence as a concession to Northern Ireland, McMahon, *Republicans and Imperialists*, p. 217.

¹⁰⁸ Law to MacDermot, 27 June 1937, NAI MacDermot Papers 1065/10/1.

¹⁰⁹ MacDermot to Law, 1 July 1937, NAI MacDermot Papers 1065/ 10/2.

¹¹⁰ MacDermot to C.E. Callan, 12 April 1937, NAI MacDermot Papers 1065/8/1.

accepted his nomination to the new chamber which was then formed on a partially vocational basis (this composition did not preclude the appearance of senators from ex-Unionist and Home Rule backgrounds as seen in tables 6.5 and 6.6 below).¹¹¹ MacDermot busied himself on a range of topics in the new Upper House criticising IRA bombing campaigns in Britain and leading a landmark debate on unity where de Valera admitted he would not be prepared to sacrifice the promotion of the Irish language, the tricolour and other symbols of nationalism in order to appease unionists and secure reunification.¹¹²

Table 6.6 – Seanad triennial election 1934

Former MPs	Former Home Rule Candidates	Ex-Home Rule Councillors/Guardians	Relatives of former MPs	AOH/Other Home Rule connections
0	3	3	1	1

Table 6.7 – Senators in reconstituted Seanad, 1938-49

Year	Former MPs	Former IPP Candidates	Ex-Home Rule Councillors/Guardians	Relatives of former MPs	Other Home Rule connections
1938	0	0	3	0	3
1938	0	0	6	0	3
1943	0	0	3	0	1
1944	0	0	3	0	2
1948	0	1	3	0	2

The new constitution also saw the creation of the role of President as head of state and, for a brief time, it looked as though former MP Alfie Byrne might be the first office holder. Always primarily concerned with maintaining his local popularity, Byrne also advocated Irish unity and closer relations with Britain throughout his

¹¹¹ In fact a number of old Home Rulers were unsuccessful in the first election to new chamber such as J.J. Horgan, William Desmond, Felix Hackett, William J. Flynn and Walter Nugent. Others in the chamber who had pre-1918 political careers had been Sinn Féin or Labour e.g. Matthew Stafford and Peter Joseph O’Loughlen. On vocationalism, J.J. Lee described the chamber’s composition as merely a sop to supporters of vocationalism, Lee, *Ireland*, pp. 271-4. See also Martin O’Donoghue, ‘As nearly subservient’ as it could be? Vocationalism and Senatorial Speaking Behaviour in the Irish Senate, 1938-45’, *Parliaments, Estates and Representation*, vol. 36, no. 2 (2016), pp. 211-231.

¹¹² *Seanad Debates*, vol. 22 cc. 923-995, 7 February 1939. MacDermot continued to get involved in debates on unity, getting into an exchange with northern nationalist MP Cahir Healy in the *Irish Press* in 1939, where he invoked Parnell’s commitment that Ireland would accept its share of imperial responsibilities if home rule was granted, MacDermot to *Irish Press*, 3 February 1939, NAI MacDermot Papers 1065/9/3.

career and attended the funeral of King George V in January 1936.¹¹³ Although he remained independent after the fall of the IPP, his popularity within the Fine Gael party was significant. After the Government had initially promoted the name of Seán T. O’Kelly, Fine Gael looked to Byrne as an alternative. However, after discussion, Gaelic League founder Douglas Hyde, who had always remained non-political, was suggested and proved acceptable to all parties.¹¹⁴ The *Hibernian Journal* was happy to support Hyde as president. According to Nugent:

We know nothing of his political views and we do not care what they are. He has been a loyal, enthusiastic and unshakeable advocate of Ireland’s ancient tongue, and no other cause has been allowed by him to weaken or divert his life’s purpose in the slightest degree.¹¹⁵

The AOH in the 1930s

The AOH was frustrated that nothing came from Dillon and MacDermot’s Dáil motion on partition in March 1933 and continued to agitate on the issue.¹¹⁶ At its 1934 convention, Nugent reported it had published eighteen pamphlets in recent years, half a dozen of which were on the subject of partition.¹¹⁷ For Nugent, partition and the fight against communism were the ‘two outstanding questions’ facing the Order.¹¹⁸ The AOH had welcomed the 1938 Anglo-Irish Agreement which ended the Economic War, but still pointed to the one issue outstanding in Anglo-Irish relations: partition.¹¹⁹ The organisation continued to articulate absolute opposition to all violence, condemning the IRA bombing campaign in Britain.¹²⁰

Reviewing its operations at the opening of 1935, the *Hibernian Journal* had declared that when the Irish Party was defeated, the Order ‘dropped politics there and then so

¹¹³ MacEllin, ‘Legendary Lord Mayor Alfie Byrne’, p. 159.

¹¹⁴ MacEllin, ‘Legendary Lord Mayor Alfie Byrne’, p. 162.

¹¹⁵ *Hibernian Journal*, June 1938, p. 42.

¹¹⁶ *Hibernian Journal*, April 1933, p. 44, March 1938, pp. 22-3.

¹¹⁷ Biennial Convention 18 July 1934, Board of Erin Minutes of Meetings, NAI – LOU 13/1/3 (a).

¹¹⁸ Annual Meeting of National Board Free State, Northern Ireland and Great Britain, 16 July 1935, Board of Erin Minutes of Meetings, NAI – LOU 13/1/3 (a). Although focus on the AOH’s activities in the six counties would be outside the scope of the current study, Nugent’s correspondence with Australian Prime Minister J.A. Lyons published in the *Irish News* and in Australian and New Zealand newspapers in 1935 highlighted the continued ability of the Order to attract publicity in Ireland and among the diaspora when it did get involved in politics.

¹¹⁹ *Hibernian Journal*, June 1938, pp. 41-42.

¹²⁰ *Hibernian Journal*, September 1938, pp. 55-6 for Coburn’s speech; also April 1939, p. 17.

far as the Free State was concerned' and focussed on supporting movements in the six counties.¹²¹ Government legislation had brought the end of the AOH's national health insurance society and the state took over the AOH's approved society on 31 December 1934 along with other such groups which were absorbed into a unified society.¹²² The AOH retained an insurance scheme for ordinary members; Nugent remained the chairman of the Irish Life and General Assurance Company and his son James A. Nugent was managing director.¹²³ Although the Order organised friendship nights for old IPP supporters in Dublin in the 1930s and James Dillon remained a prominent politician, there was still an unquestionable sense that the AOH had entered its twilight in the Free State outside of the border counties.¹²⁴ There were still 147 listed divisions in the Free State by 1932, but 97 of these and over half of its ordinary members were in the four border counties.¹²⁵ James A. Nugent's succession to the role of national secretary after his father's death in 1940 seemed to accelerate the shift away from politics. In some areas, divisions focussed on social activities while elsewhere, the Order was sustained by its benefit divisions which provided affordable health cover to members.¹²⁶

In Monaghan, the Order ruled that the county board could not associate the organisation with a political party as it had done with Fianna Fáil.¹²⁷ The county board was eventually dissolved and, as disputes became more serious, the Board of Erin eventually issued legal proceedings against members to regain possession of halls.¹²⁸ Members were expelled, divisions were dissolved and a new county board was eventually put in place by 1936. James Coburn attended its first meeting and

¹²¹ *Hibernian Journal*, January 1935, p. 5.

¹²² *Hibernian Journal*, February 1934, p. 20; May 1934, p. 48; January 1935, p. 7. James Dillon was perturbed by the Government's new National Health Insurance Bill which would force the AOH to merge with other societies, *Irish Independent*, 28 April 1933.

¹²³ *Hibernian Journal*, January 1935, p. 7.

¹²⁴ *Hibernian Journal*, August 1934, p. 70; Nugent to Fallon, 5 October 1934, NLI Fallon Papers Ms. 22,582.

¹²⁵ National Secretary's Preliminary Report, AOH Biennial Convention, 19 July 1932, NAI – LOU 13/1/3 (a).

¹²⁶ In Cork, the AOH was successful in the Munster Junior football league in the 1940s and even won the Munster Senior League in 1951. The AOH in Cork also had its own GAA and table tennis teams and drama society, AOH Files, CCCA U389/Add/2011/10-13.

¹²⁷ Meeting National Board Free State, 25 July 1933, Board of Erin Minutes of Meetings, NAI – LOU 13/1/3 (a).

¹²⁸ Minutes of Meeting of Subcommittee of National Board, 11 December 1934; Annual Meeting of National Board, 20 July 1936, NAI – LOU 13/1/3 (a). On legal proceedings, see Meeting of Subcommittee, 11 November 1937.

emphasised again that no member could associate the Order with any particular party.¹²⁹ James Dillon's move to leave Donegal and contest Monaghan in 1937 helped to smooth the situation though even he faced some opposition at first.¹³⁰

As well as opposing communism, the *Hibernian Journal* had echoed the Pope's criticism of 'exaggerated nationalism' and stated clearly that the Order was neither Fascist nor communist.¹³¹ However, while the Order was critical of Mussolini and Hitler, it shared the respect of other Irish advocates of Catholic action for church-state arrangements in Austria. The *Hibernian Journal* was supportive of the Austrian leader Engelbert Dollfuss and was appalled at the assassination of a leader it saw as Europe's greatest statesman in July 1934.¹³²

While insisting on political neutrality, John Dillon Nugent argued that on certain issues such as the plight of Catholics in the north, and the threat of communism, the Order had a 'bounden duty to take part in politics'. If General Franco was defeated by the Communists in Spain, he warned in 1936, 'Catholicity in Spain is gone, and France, festering at the core from the cancer of communism, will follow suit'.¹³³ James Dillon treated audiences at Hibernian rallies to lectures on the evils of both communism and Fascism and the primacy of parliament over dictatorship while simultaneously, favouring Franco in the Spanish Civil War.¹³⁴ The *Hibernian Journal* featured accounts of outrages against the Catholic Church in Spain and Nugent was instrumental in inviting Fr Henry Gabana to visit Ireland and give talks

¹²⁹ *Hibernian Journal*, January 1936, p. 4. At a further meeting, an arbitration board set up to which all matters shall be referred. Board will consist of President and secretary of each of district boards of Co Monaghan, Louth and Armagh together with J.G. Lennon of the Armagh board, *Hibernian Journal*, May 1936, p. 45.

¹³⁰ Livingstone, *The Monaghan Story*, pp. 416, 426-7. The division of Donegal into two constituencies had weakened Dillon's AOH base in that county, Manning, *James Dillon*, pp. 134-7.

¹³¹ *Hibernian Journal*, December 1933, p. 113, February 1938, pp. 15-16.

¹³² The 'Austrofascist' dictator Dollfuss was opposed to Anschluss or merger with Germany as long as Hitler's Nazi Party remained in power in Berlin. Dollfuss was assassinated on 25 July 1934 by Austrian Nazi agents, *Hibernian Journal*, August 1934, p. 81. The Jesuit Catholic action advocate Fr Edward Cahill drew on the Austrian and Polish constitutions and the Austrian concordat with the Vatican in his draft proposals to de Valera on 'the Catholic principles on which a Constitution ought to be based', Keogh, *The Vatican, The Bishops and Irish Politics*, pp. 204-209.

¹³³ National Secretary's Report, Meeting of National Board Standing Committee, 13 October 1936 quoted in *Hibernian Journal*, November 1936, p. 100.

¹³⁴ *Hibernian Journal*, September 1937, p. 75; April 1939, pp. 20-21.

on the Spanish situation in May 1937.¹³⁵ In 1939, General Franco accepted the congratulations of the AOH on his eventual victory.¹³⁶

The AOH's TDs all took strongly pro-Franco perspectives in parliamentary debates in February 1937 on the Government's Non-Intervention Bill.¹³⁷ However, while such views reflected the Catholic anti-communist view of the Order, it is difficult to argue that Hibernian TDs were displaying a distinctive identity. Many other Opposition speakers condemned any suggestion that the war in Spain was a case of fascism versus democracy as Patrick Belton, leader of the pro-Franco Irish Christian Front, called on the Government to recognise Franco's administration.¹³⁸ James Dillon's characterisation of the Spanish conflict as between 'Godism or no-Godism' was typical of Fine Gael generally. James Coburn was the most active of the Hibernians in the debate interrupting frequently and openly accusing de Valera of having communist sympathies.¹³⁹ However, Coburn stated he was animated by the atrocities visited on clergy in Spain and the fact that his own sister was a nun. Coburn argued he did not approach the debate as a 'mere politician', but 'an Irishman and a Christian' and furthermore claimed he would rather support Mussolini than the Labour party, 'that representative of sloppy sentimentalisation in the form of cheap, sloppy democracy'.¹⁴⁰ Dan McMenamin was certain the Spanish case concerned a choice between 'Christianity or atheism' while McGovern felt Caballero's administration was that of the 'Anti-Christ'.¹⁴¹

Former MP Alfie Byrne addressed the first meeting of the Irish Christian Front on 28 August 1936 and welcomed home Eoin O'Duffy and his brigade of Irishmen who fought on behalf of Franco in June 1937.¹⁴² However, while anti-communist in

¹³⁵ Nugent to Archbishop Byrne, 16 April 1937, DDA Archbishop Byrne Papers, Box on Government 1922-39, Folder on AOH; *Hibernian Journal*, October 1937, p. 85; *Irish Press*, 30 August 1937.

¹³⁶ *Hibernian Journal*, October 1939, p. 64.

¹³⁷ This legislation was introduced after an agreement between the state and other European countries not to intervene on either side in the conflict see McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War*, pp. 193-8.

¹³⁸ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 65, cc. 608, 626, 17 February 1937.

¹³⁹ Coburn declared 'I knew all about law and order before the President did. I knew about law and order when the President was out to upset law and order in this country', *Dáil Debates* vol. 65, col. 851, 19 February 1937.

¹⁴⁰ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 65, cc 706, 825, 828, 19 February 1937.

¹⁴¹ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 65, cc. 812-813, 19 February 1937.

¹⁴² Donal Fallon, 'All's Loud on the Christian Front', 'Come Here to Me!' blog, <https://comeheretome.com/2014/12/17/all-s-loud-on-the-christian-front/> accessed 29 April 2016.

sympathy, Byrne was absent from the Dáil debates on the Spanish Civil War.¹⁴³ Others from an Irish Party background such as Bridget Redmond did not contribute. By contrast, Frank MacDermot displayed his independence; unlike the Hibernian TDs in Fine Gael, the Roscommon TD consistently voted with the Government and was involved in very bitter exchanges with former colleagues over the course of the debate. MacDermot's claim that Fine Gael was exploiting Christianity for political gain and his criticism of the leadership skills of O'Duffy drew opprobrium from MacDermot's former party colleagues.¹⁴⁴

The Order's continued vitality in its border heartland was reflected in politics. While Paul M. Sacks suggested that partition and the isolation of border counties like Donegal from their natural centres of commerce made localism more acute, the strength of the AOH's branch network made it a valuable asset for aspiring politicians.¹⁴⁵ Hibernian meetings provided opportunities for TDs to meet fellow members and learn their grievances, and maintained the role of such politicians as constituency brokers.¹⁴⁶

Where it survived, the AOH thus maintained an efficient political machine at election time (its difficulties in Monaghan notwithstanding). At consecutive elections in 1937 and 1938 six of its candidates (Dillon, Coburn, Patrick McGovern, Dan McMenemy, Michael Oge McFadden and Cork North's Timothy Linehan) were successful, a feat Nugent considered could provide a good model for elections north of the border.¹⁴⁷ McGovern was defeated in Cavan in 1943, but a year later, the AOH again had a TD in the county as the local GAA hero Thomas O'Reilly was elected as an independent.¹⁴⁸ The Order was proud of McMenemy when he was

¹⁴³ Dolan, 'Byrne, Alfred'.

¹⁴⁴ Dillon expressed disgust at his former ally's remarks *Dáil Debates*, vol. 65, col. 689, 18 February 1937.

¹⁴⁵ RTÉ *Seven Days: Donegal Mafia* (4 July 1975); clip available at <https://www.rte.ie/archives/2015/0703/712440-donegal-mafia/> accessed 5 July 2016; Paul M. Sacks, *The Donegal Mafia: An Irish Political Machine* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976).

¹⁴⁶ Conversation with Rosaleen Linehan, daughter of Daniel McMenemy TD.

¹⁴⁷ Meeting of Subcommittee, 11 November 1937, Board of Erin Minutes of Meetings, NAI – LOU 13/1/3 (a). For more on the role of the AOH in the organisation of Nationalist politics in Northern Ireland, see Eamon Phoenix, 'Nationalism in Tyrone 1880-1972', in Charles Dillon and Henry A. Jefferies, *Tyrone: History and Society* (Dublin: Geography Publications, 2000), pp. 799-801. Eight Hibernians stood in 1937 in total. Nugent was equally proud of Hibernians elected at local government level, *Hibernian Journal* September 1937, p. 74.

¹⁴⁸ *Hibernian Journal*, July 1944, pp. 34-5.

elected Leas Ceann Comhairle of the Dáil in 1943 (having been proposed by McFadden, the president of Donegal District Board). The association with the Irish Party never faded completely either. Responding to the gibes of Fianna Fáil's Patrick Little concerning the AOH in 1947, Coburn argued that the Order's 'only crime' had been to support the Irish Party when it was 'fighting for the freedom of their country'.¹⁴⁹

'The Emergency'

The AOH initially responded to the outbreak of war in Europe by concerning itself with the numbers of Catholics affected in each country.¹⁵⁰ However, by 1940, new national secretary James A. Nugent was clear that it supported the Allies, even though he acknowledged that 'many Irish people and some of our own members, in particular, find it unpalatable to be on England's side in this war.'¹⁵¹ Nugent stopped short of likening Irish neutrality to the state's 'ignominious' neutrality during the Spanish Civil War, but did reflect that the Nazi conquest of Denmark and Norway (including their Catholic populations) should leave people to ponder the 'wisdom and dignity of our neutrality'. In his view,

... in terms of armies and munitions Ireland can make little or no contribution in the present conflict, but her spiritual influence and her prayers, more potent than bullets or bombs, can and should be thrown into the scales.¹⁵²

In spite of such peaceful words, Nugent insisted that the possibility of Ireland getting dragged into war was real and called on Hibernians to volunteer for Éire's defence forces. He praised Dillon and Coburn for joining him in personally volunteering although the Government would refuse to allow Oireachtas members to join.¹⁵³ Hibernian TD Michael Oge McFadden lauded the march of the men and women of the Irish Army at a Hibernian rally in Donegal town on St. Patrick's Day 1943, declaring himself proud to see members of the AOH in the ranks.¹⁵⁴ In 1941, Nugent had responded with horror to the bombing of Belfast, expressing sympathy with

¹⁴⁹ *Hibernian Journal*, January 1947, p. 11.

¹⁵⁰ *Hibernian Journal*, October 1939, p. 62.

¹⁵¹ *Hibernian Journal*, June 1940, p. 37.

¹⁵² *Hibernian Journal*, June 1940, pp. 37-8.

¹⁵³ *Hibernian Journal*, July 1940, p. 41; Manning, *James Dillon*, p. 160.

¹⁵⁴ *Hibernian Journal*, May 1943, p. 20.

northern Hibernians and calling on members on both sides of the border to contribute help.¹⁵⁵ Despite the *Hibernian Journal* publishing articles by the controversial Holy Ghost priest, Fr Denis Fahey, the Order remained aloof from many of the far right movements circulating in Ireland during the war.¹⁵⁶

The outbreak of Second World War in September 1939 saw the Government move quickly to adopt a policy of neutrality and it began to introduce a number of ‘emergency’ wartime measures which would include a strict regime of censorship overseen by Minister Frank Aiken. Neutrality received near universal support across the political spectrum and, though James Dillon had reservations, he maintained the Fine Gael party line initially.¹⁵⁷ As the war progressed, however, Dillon would join his old comrade MacDermot, in becoming a conspicuous opponent of neutrality, stances which would again emphasise their distinctiveness on the Irish political landscape. By the 1930s, the nationalism of the pre-Rising Redmondite party looked very different to that which was then being espoused by Fianna Fáil and Dillon and MacDermot’s contributions to debates on the state’s constitutional status and relationship to the Commonwealth bore the mark of politicians from a different political background. Nonetheless, the strength of the connection between the attitudes of Dillon and MacDermot to Ireland’s neutrality and both men’s roots in a party which had advocated support of the British war effort in 1914 remains open to interpretation. While both would ultimately declare in favour of de Valera adopting a similar policy to that which John Redmond had pursued in the First World War, Dillon, in particular, situated his opinions in the contemporary context and his own convictions rather than allusion back to the example of the Irish Party.

MacDermot’s membership of the Seanad provided him with an opportunity to air his difficulties with the Government’s policy of neutrality from an early stage. MacDermot wrote to de Valera on 5 June 1940 urging him to take some ‘political risk’; he advised the Taoiseach to invite Irishmen serving as officers in the British

¹⁵⁵ *Hibernian Journal*, May 1941, p. 21.

¹⁵⁶ In October 1943, the Cork AOH replied to a request from the new far-right movement Ailtirí na hAiséirghe regretting that they could not accommodate them, J. Murray to secretary, Ailtirí na hAiséirghe, 23 October 1943, CCCA, AOH Records Cork U389 Letter books 10/1; R.M. Douglas, ‘Ailtirí na hAiséirghe: Ireland’s Fascist New Order’, *History Ireland*, vol. 17, no. 5 (September/October 2009), pp. 40-44.

¹⁵⁷ Manning, *James Dillon*, pp. 156-162.

Army to take up commissions in the Irish Army and assist in home defence. MacDermot also advised some contact with British forces in Northern Ireland, suggesting it would not compromise neutrality 'and it might be the beginning of the end of partition'.¹⁵⁸ Such proposals reflected MacDermot's broad political goals of the past decade, but seem to have had little influence on de Valera.

Although the American ambassador David Gray had an uneasy relationship with de Valera throughout the war, he enjoyed good relations with Dillon and another former Home Ruler J.J. Horgan (then Irish correspondent for *The Round Table*).¹⁵⁹ Both men appear to have been at least privy to initiatives which the British and Americans hoped might bring Ireland into the war. After the fall of France, British overtures to de Valera increased and in June 1940, British Health Minister Malcolm MacDonald was sent to Dublin to broach the subject of Irish entry into the war in exchange for unity. In initial discussions, the Taoiseach indicated privately that the country's position on neutrality might have been different if there had been a united Ireland. On 26 June, de Valera then received a formal written offer that Britain would declare its acceptance of the principle of Irish unity if de Valera abandoned the policy of neutrality.¹⁶⁰ Such an offer, which would be greeted with horror by Northern Irish Prime Minister Lord Craigavon, was rejected.¹⁶¹ After MacDonald met with de Valera, Lemass and Aiken in Dublin, another British offer followed on 29 June which offered unity as long as Éire invited British forces into the country to occupy key defensive locations. De Valera was only willing to contemplate an entirely neutral united Ireland and, after meeting with his cabinet, de Valera formally rejected what he described as the 'purely tentative' plan.

¹⁵⁸ MacDermot to de Valera, 5 June, 1940, NAI MacDermot Papers 1065/14/7.

¹⁵⁹ Joseph Brennan in the Department of Foreign Affairs later recalled that Dillon, Horgan and John Maffey had done 'the thinking for Gray during his tenure of office', Joseph Brennan to Leo T. McCauley, 28 October 1948, NAI DFA/10/P12/6. Gray's admiration for Dillon stretched to him writing that 'by birth and tradition Dillon was "Irish nationalism"', Paul Bew (ed.), *The Memoir of David Gray: A Yankee in de Valera's Ireland* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2012), p. 61; Dermot Keogh characterised Gray as 'a troublemaker of the first order', Keogh, *Twentieth-Century Ireland: Revolution and State-Building* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2005), pp. 120-122.

¹⁶⁰ Robert Fisk, *In Time of War: Ireland, Ulster and the Price of Neutrality 1939-45* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1983), pp. 193-202; Bowman, *De Valera and the Ulster Question*, pp. 226-33.

¹⁶¹ Dillon, despite his close relations with both Gray and the British representative John Maffey and his own fears of invasion, apparently felt de Valera could not carry the country on the matter, David Gray to Franklin D. Roosevelt, 2 July 1940 cited in Bew (ed.), *The Memoir of David Gray*, p. 231.

Although historians have pointed out the naivety of the British offer, it is interesting that de Valera refused this offer with the fate of John Redmond in mind.¹⁶² Deirdre McMahon has written that Redmond's career held a 'melancholy fascination' for de Valera in the 1930s when he remained wary of damaging his leadership through any compromise with the British that might wound him domestically. In fact, according to McMahon, de Valera had a 'Redmond complex' throughout his career, so affected was he by the fate which befell the late Irish Party leader.¹⁶³ In 1938, de Valera had referenced Redmond to British politicians when discussing the possibility of war. In 1940, the analogy with Redmond's 1914 war strategy, when he urged Irish enlistment in the British army to help secure home rule only to lose the support of nationalist Ireland, was not lost on de Valera.¹⁶⁴ As John Bowman has asked:

Was de Valera not being cast in the role of Redmond? Were not Fianna Fáil being invited to repeat the mistakes of the Irish Party by accepting London's pledge of Irish unity in return for participation in a 'British war'?¹⁶⁵

It would be too much to argue that the echo of Redmond was decisive as there were many other reasons for de Valera to reject Churchill, not least de Valera's fear of how more extreme republicans may have reacted. Nevertheless, if neither Dillon nor MacDermot mentioned their Irish Party heritage very often in their arguments against Irish neutrality, it could perhaps be argued that the legacy of Redmond and the Irish Party during the 'Emergency' was most visible in the lesson that de Valera drew from the painful experience of Redmond's political decline during the First World War.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶² Fisk, *In Time of War*, p. 214.

¹⁶³ McMahon, *Republicans and Imperialists*, pp. 14, 237, 240.

¹⁶⁴ Minutes of conference between representatives of the United Kingdom and Ireland (secret) (I.N. (38) 1st Meeting), 17 January 1938, NAI DT S10389; Manning, *James Dillon*, p. 163.

¹⁶⁵ Bowman, *De Valera and the Ulster Question*, p. 235.

¹⁶⁶ Churchill certainly compared it unfavourably to the actions of the Redmonds and Tom Kettle, confidential report from John W. Dulanty to Joseph P. Walshe (No. 15) (Secret) 26 May 1941, NAI FA Secretary's Files P12/14/1. There was an epilogue in the form of an ambiguous telegram from Churchill after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941 in which he told 'now or never. "A nation once again"'. Fisk has pointed out that this did not necessarily imply an offer of unity and that the use of the former Irish Party anthem would have appealed to a man 'desperate to avoid Redmond's mistakes'. It has since been suggested that Churchill was drunk when he sent the message, Fisk, *In Time of War*, p. 323; Diarmaid Ferriter, *Judging Dev* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2007), pp. 153-4.

As Irish entry into the war became an ever more remote possibility, opponents of neutrality would become isolated. In 1941, MacDermot visited the United States and, in a number of media outlets, outlined his reasoning for Ireland entering the war, which was based on moral and economic reasoning as well as concern for Irish unity and the benefits of Commonwealth membership.¹⁶⁷ On this occasion, MacDermot did reference the home rule tradition, telling American audiences that the 1921 Treaty had broken the ‘strategic unity of the British isles’ which no home rule bill ever envisioned. MacDermot continued to believe that Ireland’s interests were bound up with victory for Britain and that for geographical and practical reasons it needed to foster close relations with Britain.¹⁶⁸ When in Ireland, MacDermot was involved in the Irish Institute of International Affairs, a society of Irish intellectuals and political figures which discussed matters of international relations and invited speakers from abroad.¹⁶⁹ However, as the war continued, MacDermot, who also wrote for the *Sunday Times*, spent almost all his time in the US and he resigned his Seanad seat in 1943.¹⁷⁰

Dillon’s misgivings concerning neutrality remained largely private in the first couple of years of the war. However, in a Dáil debate on 17 July 1941, he expressed support for Ireland joining the war. This was at odds with the views of others in his party and Dillon’s views were correlated with his lack of Sinn Féin heritage by his colleague Eamonn O’Neill. These suspicions may hardly have been assuaged by the solidarity shown to Dillon by James Coburn. The Louth deputy defended Dillon’s courage and his right to make the speech and intimated that he privately supported the Allied side, but was committed to the Fine Gael party whip.¹⁷¹ At a subsequent parliamentary party meeting, Cosgrave was pleased with the conduct of the debate and Dillon subsequently retained a somewhat uneasy peace with his party’s

¹⁶⁷ CBS Press Release, ‘Ireland and the War’, Frank MacDermot, 17 September 1941, NAI MacDermot Papers 1065/15/1.

¹⁶⁸ ‘Ireland and the War’, 30 September 1941, NAI MacDermot Papers 1065/15/2. See also Frank MacDermot, ‘Ireland and the War’, *Saturday Evening Post*, 29 November 1941, NAI MacDermot Papers 1065/15/3.

¹⁶⁹ MacDermot had been a key figure in the society’s origins, Mick McCarthy, *International Affairs at Home: The Story of the Irish Institute of International Affairs* (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 2006), pp. 17-22, 67, *passim*.

¹⁷⁰ Since the beginning of the war, MacDermot had given his Oireachtas salary to the Irish Red Cross, MacDermot to de Valera, 7 July 1943, NAI Dept. of Taoiseach files, S97/9/435. See also Memo of a conversation with David Gray, Joseph P. Walshe to de Valera, 17 April 1942, NAI DFA Secretary’s Files P48A.

¹⁷¹ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 84 cc. 1894-6, 17 July 1941.

position.¹⁷² However, this would not last. At the party's Ard-Fheis in February 1942, Dillon insisted Ireland's duty was to help her historic ally, the United States, in the war in whatever capacity would be possible.¹⁷³ Dillon would not waver from such a firmly held belief and his position in Fine Gael was no longer tenable.

On 5 February, Cosgrave presented Dillon's resignation to the parliamentary party.¹⁷⁴ Dillon wrote to Cosgrave thirteen days later acknowledging that if Cosgrave felt his views on relations with the United States were not consistent with his remaining as deputy leader, he would therefore resign from Fine Gael. Dillon's brother Hibernian Nugent also resigned his position on the standing committee of Fine Gael shortly afterwards.¹⁷⁵ However, Dillon remained the only member of the Dáil to oppose neutrality and found no public allies among his fellow TDs from Home Rule backgrounds. Dillon's move was undoubtedly a question of conscience and he reiterated his 'sincere admiration' and 'warm personal regard' for Cosgrave and his colleagues. Similarly, Cosgrave replied with the wish that the party would maintain friendly relations with him though the party 'could not in the interests of the country approve' of his view.¹⁷⁶ In spite of the previous criticism of his stance within the party, Dillon would be approached to return to the party as leader in the Dáil before the end of the war.¹⁷⁷

Dillon and MacDermot suffered at the hands of Aiken's censorship regime for the rest of the war as opponents of neutrality.¹⁷⁸ However, other less prominent individuals from broadly Home Rule backgrounds decided to take active parts on the Allies' side. Ex-MP Tom Lundon moved to London after 1918 and he lost his son, an RAF pilot, in the war.¹⁷⁹ In Waterford, Redmond Cunningham (son of John

¹⁷² Parliamentary Party Meeting, 23 July 1941, UCDA Fine Gael Papers P39/MIN 4. *Dáil Debates*, vol. 84, cc. 1863-72, 17 July 1941.

¹⁷³ Manning, *James Dillon*, pp. 173-4.

¹⁷⁴ Parliamentary Party Meeting, 5 February 1942, UCDA Fine Gael Papers P39/MIN 4.

¹⁷⁵ Minutes of Standing Committee, 16 April 1942, UCDA Fine Gael Papers P39/MIN 2. Others in Fine Gael such as Desmond FitzGerald appear to have privately shared Dillon's outright sympathy with the Allies, McCarthy, *International Affairs*, p. 69.

¹⁷⁶ Dillon to Cosgrave; Cosgrave to Dillon, 18 February 1942, Minutes of Standing Committee, UCDA Fine Gael Papers P39/MIN 2.

¹⁷⁷ Dillon refused at that point as the war was still ongoing, Manning, *James Dillon*, p. 190.

¹⁷⁸ Ó Drisceoil, *Censorship in Ireland*, pp. 162, 260-267.

¹⁷⁹ Marie Coleman, 'Lundon, William', in James McGuire and James Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish Biography*. (Cambridge, 2009).

(<http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a4918>) accessed 10 December 2015.

Redmond's electoral agent) and ten others in his family enlisted in the British Army.¹⁸⁰ However, in Redmond Cunningham's case, it seems his Redmondite heritage played little role in his personal motivations for doing so.¹⁸¹ Writing in *The Student's History of Ireland* in 1925, Stephen Gwynn argued that 'Redmond and his following would not honourably advocate' neutrality in the First World War. However, Gwynn, now living in Britain, was 'sensitive' to Ireland's neutrality during World War II, which he correctly identified as benevolent to the Allies. By 1945, Gwynn felt that de Valera's policy had been 'justified'.¹⁸² Former Parnellite and World War I veteran Henry Harrison also supported neutrality. He engaged in pamphlet writing on the topic and took issue with the American academic Professor Henry Steele Commager of Columbia University, who had lambasted the Irish government's policy.¹⁸³

The post-war period and the Inter-Party Government

The conclusion of hostilities and the defeat of the Nazis saw the AOH use the opportunity to justify the actions of its national vice-president Dillon in opposing neutrality.¹⁸⁴ Although the *Hibernian Journal* had contained few references or comment on Irish neutrality between 1940 and 1945, Nugent was pleased that the Government's censorship was ending and expressed pride that Hibernians remained loyal to Dillon when he was condemned for his opposition to neutrality.¹⁸⁵ Nugent later added that, 'when in 1946 the Encyclical of Pope Pius XI, on which Bro Dillon had based his condemnation of Nazi Germany, was released from censor, our unwavering faith and trust in him was justified'.¹⁸⁶

While historians have pointed out the difficulties faced by the Irish state on the international stage in the immediate aftermath of its wartime policy of neutrality,

¹⁸⁰ *Irish Times*, 4 December 1999.

¹⁸¹ See piece by Kevin Myers, *Irish Times*, 2 June 1994. I am grateful to Dr Steven O'Connor for providing me with these references.

¹⁸² Stephen Gwynn, *The Student's History of Ireland*, p. 294; Reid, *The Lost Ireland of Stephen Gwynn*, pp. 220, 235. According to his biographer, Gwynn 'stood aloof from the major political and cultural battles that defined the Irish experience of self-government from the foundation of the Free State to the declaration of the republic'.

¹⁸³ Henry Harrison, *The Price of Ireland's Neutrality. An Invocation of Historical Truth in Reply to Henry Steele Commager Professor of History at Columbia University, New York* (London: Offices of the Commonwealth Irish Association, 1943); McCarthy, *International Affairs*, p. 83.

¹⁸⁴ *Hibernian Journal*, July 1945, pp. 38-40.

¹⁸⁵ *Hibernian Journal*, June 1945, p. 29.

¹⁸⁶ *Hibernian Journal*, March 1948, p. 18.

Dillon was uncomfortable with any position where Irish involvement in international organisations was predicated on securing reunion.¹⁸⁷ However, many contemporaries remained optimistic; the end to the war saw the AOH speculate as to how the post-war world might view the prospect of Irish unity. As the election of a Labour government in Britain raised optimism, the Anti-Partition of Ireland League emerged as a new effort to constitute a united nationalist political movement in Northern Ireland and branches of the League were also started in the twenty-six counties and Britain.¹⁸⁸ While the Anti-Partition League did attract some members from an Irish Party or at least AOH background in Northern Ireland from its inception in 1945, the League, as a whole, was a broad movement for all those opposed to partition.¹⁸⁹ The AOH gave initial backing to the Anti-Partition League which followed the war and the cooperation among nationalists which was displayed.¹⁹⁰

Frank MacDermot also felt that the post-war world might create an apposite environment to finally secure Irish unity; he wrote to the new Taoiseach John A Costello in March 1948 offering to act as a government representative in Northern Ireland who might work for that very purpose.¹⁹¹ However, AOH National secretary James A. Nugent admitted that ‘it would be folly to build high hopes on possibilities’ as he reminded readers of the *Hibernian Journal* of how Ireland’s claims were disappointed in 1918-20 and ‘how their cynicism drove the young men of Ireland to arms.’ Nugent maintained nevertheless that ‘it would be equally foolish to decide in advance that it is hopeless for this country to press its just claims on the conscience of the outside world.’¹⁹²

¹⁸⁷ F.S.L. Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1971), pp. 556-560; Ronan Fanning, ‘The Anglo-American Alliance and the Irish Application for Membership of the United Nations’, *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, vol. 2, no. 2 (1986), pp. 35-61; Dillon cited in Manning, *James Dillon*, p. 217.

¹⁸⁸ The promise of the National League of the North had quickly failed and although Northern nationalists mounted a successful campaign against conscription during the Second World War, lasting unity proved elusive, Brendan Lynn, ‘The Irish Anti-Partition League and the Political Realities of Partition, 1945-9’, *Irish Historical Studies*, vol. 34, no. 135 (May 2005), pp. 321-5; Staunton, *The Nationalists of Northern Ireland*, pp. 158-63.

¹⁸⁹ Examples included the AOH’s James G. Lennon; Lynn, ‘The Irish Anti-Partition League’, p. 332.

¹⁹⁰ However, the Board of Erin had not viewed ‘with favour any association’ with an organisation styling itself as the Anti-Partition of Ireland League of Great Britain which contacted the Order in 1939, Minutes of Meeting of the Board of Erin, 17 July 1939, BOE Minutes of Meetings, NAI – LOU 13/1/3 (a); *Hibernian Journal*, July 1946, p. 67.

¹⁹¹ MacDermot to John A Costello, 22 March 1928, UCDA John A. Costello Papers P190/398 (8). MacDermot claimed in the letter that Basil Brooke had been amenable to ending partition if the south abandoned neutrality in 1940.

¹⁹² *Hibernian Journal*, September 1944, p. 41.

In the sphere of representative politics, most individuals from Home Rule backgrounds continued to labour within a struggling Fine Gael party during through the war years. W.T. Cosgrave stepped aside as leader in 1944, but fortunes hardly improved under his successor Richard Mulcahy and by November 1945, the party was hard pressed even to find candidates willing to contest by-elections.¹⁹³ In 1944 and 1948, it received a lower percentage vote than the IPP had attained in 1918.¹⁹⁴ In many ways, Fine Gael would be saved by its entry into an unlikely coalition government after the 1948 election.¹⁹⁵ This arrangement saw Fine Gael form an alliance with the two sections of a riven Labour party,¹⁹⁶ the new republican party Clann na Poblachta led by Seán MacBride, and Clann na Talmhan, the new agrarian party aimed at smaller farmers, as well as a group of independent deputies which included James Dillon, Alfie Byrne and his son, Alfred P. Byrne.

Table 6.8- Individuals from Home Rule backgrounds in the Dáil 1948

Year	Ex-Home Rule MP	Ex-IPP candidate	Ex-Councillor/Guardian	Relative of MPs	Other National League/AOH/Known Home Rule background	Total
Fianna Fáil	0	0	0	1	0	1
Fine Gael	1	1	2	1	3	8
Labour*	0	0	0	0	1	1
Clann na Talmhan	0	0	0	0	0	0
Clann na Poblachta	0	0	0	0	0	0
Independent	1	0	0	2	0	3

*Labour and National Labour

It could be credibly maintained that such a coalition remains the most unlikely in the history of the state and the diversity of opinions within it and the sensitivities involved were underscored by the delicacies surrounding the selection of Taoiseach. Mulcahy was unacceptable to Labour and Clann na Poblachta. James Dillon had taken a leading role in attempting a possible merger of Fine Gael and Clann na

¹⁹³ Minutes of Party and Standing Committee, 14 November 1945, UCDA Fine Gael Papers P39/MIN 4.

¹⁹⁴ McCullagh, *The Reluctant Taoiseach*, p. 378.

¹⁹⁵ This is the view of McCullagh, *A Makeshift Majority*, p. 5 who argues it was saved 'from seemingly terminal decline'. Manning has argued that there were 'tentative signs of new growth' prior to the poll as the party attracted new members, Manning, *James Dillon*, pp. 220, 223.

¹⁹⁶ In 1944, the Labour Party split as the ITGWU and five Labour TDs left the party to form National Labour over concerns that Labour were veering too close to communism, Donal Nevin, 'Industry and Labour', pp. 94-108; John A. Murphy, 'The Irish Party System, 1938-51', pp. 147-67 in Kevin B. Nowlan & T. Desmond Williams (eds), *Ireland in the War Years and After 1939-51* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1969).

Talmhan in 1947; however, surprisingly, former Home Rule MP John Lymbrick Esmonde was favoured by Clann na Poblachta leader Seán MacBride (son of Major John MacBride who fought in Easter Week 1916).¹⁹⁷ Esmonde does not appear to have been considered by those in his own party, though, and it was instead John A. Costello who eventually proved acceptable to all parties and became Taoiseach. Although Costello had neither been an Irish Party politician, nor had he a familial connection to one, he was clearly not from a Sinn Féin background. He attended home rule debates as a student in UCD and according to his biographer, there ‘could be no doubt’ that he was a ‘staunch Home Ruler’ in his youth.¹⁹⁸

In the view of Hibernian and son of an IPP MP, James Nugent, the new Taoiseach had an ‘unimpeachable’ record and as he did ‘not belong to the controversial politics of 1916 or to any earlier period, so that constitutional and former physical force adherents can unite under his leadership’. Nugent also promised that Hibernians would watch the progress of Dillon, a son of a Land League founder, as Minister for Agriculture with ‘almost paternal interest’.¹⁹⁹

Supporting the Republic

Many politicians had become increasingly dissatisfied with the 1936 External Relations Act which left the state externally related to the Commonwealth and forced diplomats into the circuitous route of clearing documents through London. The constitutional uncertainty was a constant bugbear for James Dillon, who had unleashed his frustration in a famous Dáil debate in July 1945 where he asked de Valera to clarify whether the state was a republic or not. De Valera’s response in his ‘Dictionary Republic’ speech where he gave various definitions and concluded that the state was to all intents and purposes a republic although the word was nowhere to be found in Bunreacht na hÉireann, further irked Dillon. He was in favour of Commonwealth membership, but declared he would rather the clarity of a formal declaration of a republic than the present ambiguity.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁷ McCullagh, *A Makeshift Majority*, pp. 17, 30; Seán MacBride, *That Day’s Struggle: A Memoir, 1904-51* (Dublin: Currach Press, 2005), p. 144 cited in McCullagh, *The Reluctant Taoiseach*, p. 161.

¹⁹⁸ McCullagh, *The Reluctant Taoiseach*, pp. 21-2. Costello’s brother also served in the British army in World War I.

¹⁹⁹ *Hibernian Journal*, March 1948, pp. 17-18.

²⁰⁰ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 97, cc. 2593-2606, 17 July 1945.

The surprise decision of the first Inter-Party Government to declare Ireland a republic in 1948 was thus a particularly awkward occasion for politicians with Home Rule heritage. The declaration itself was controversial when during an official visit to Canada, Costello told assembled reporters that Ireland was to leave the Commonwealth. While the manner was most unconventional and surprising given Fine Gael's reputation as a pro-Commonwealth party, David McCullagh has argued that Costello's actions were neither unilateral nor unconstitutional. Accordingly, McCullagh argues that there was evidence that the cabinet had already resolved to repeal the External Relations Act before Costello's impromptu remarks in Ottawa.²⁰¹

Nevertheless, Costello's actions certainly placed individuals from Irish Party backgrounds, or those who had openly advocated Commonwealth membership, in an invidious position. Alfie Byrne received correspondence from some of his supporters who were rather unhappy at the Government's move.²⁰² Although there is no evidence that Byrne's correspondents were former Home Rulers, his son, Alfred, moved an amendment that the Dáil reject the Government's subsequent Republic of Ireland Bill 'believing that its enactment at this time would seriously impair the prospects of uniting the six counties of Northern Ireland with the rest of Ireland.'²⁰³ Byrne's father seconded the amendment recalling to the house his time at Westminster and John Redmond's refusal to accept partition. Alfie Byrne declared, 'I stand for a united 32-county Ireland', and asked if people believed unity was possible in 1912 why could not they believe so now with a Labour government in power in Britain.²⁰⁴

Dillon had remained the most outspoken advocate of Commonwealth membership from a Home Rule background. This had given him an exalted place in J.J. Horgan's articles as correspondent for the Commonwealth journal the *Round Table*. Horgan

²⁰¹ McCullagh, *A Makeshift Majority*, pp. 72-88; Elizabeth Keane, *Seán MacBride: A Life* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2007), pp. 104-112. The opposing view is given by Health Minister Noel Browne who claimed Costello offered his resignation to cabinet on his return to Ireland at a meeting for which MacBride was absent; see Noel Browne, *Against the Tide* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1986), pp. 129-33; Eithne McDermott, *Clann na Poblachta* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1998), pp. 123-31.

²⁰² Geraldine Fitzgerald to Byrne, 23 November 1948, Little Museum of Dublin, Byrne Papers AB/CW/1948/0003. Another supporter questioned the repeal of the External Relations Act and wanted Byrne to vote against the Government, Charles Forde to Byrne, 16 November 1948, AB/AR/1948/0087.

²⁰³ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 113, cc. 399-400, 24 November 1948.

²⁰⁴ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 113, cc. 402-405, 24 November 1948.

shared Dillon's disdain for the narrow domestic focus of Irish politics in the war years and often looked to him as a possible future leader of the opposition.²⁰⁵ However, Dillon recorded his support for the Republic of Ireland Bill, lauding the transparency it brought to Ireland's constitutional status. Having done so, he then departed for an agricultural conference in the United States and was absent for the Dáil debate on the matter. Horgan acerbically turned on the son of the last Irish Party leader, writing that Dillon had 'been fortuitously absent in America' and thus 'was spared the difficult and unpleasant task of eating his own words'.²⁰⁶ Horgan revealed his own historical perspective as he reflected on the celebration of the republic with sadness. He included Carson, O'Connell, Parnell, Redmond and Griffith in a school of Irish politics which, he argued saw 'fundamental unity' between Britain and Ireland; Horgan lamented their defeat to what he called the island's 'separatist minority'.²⁰⁷

In the Dáil, however, even Byrne's initial speech maintained cordiality to Costello and he later withdrew his amendment when British Prime Minister Clement Attlee confirmed that Irish citizens would not be regarded as aliens in Britain as a result of the constitutional changes.²⁰⁸ In fact, there was actually no trace of discord in the Inter-Party government among its members with Irish Party heritage. Bridget Redmond admitted she been in favour of Commonwealth membership, but, as the state had been 'neither in the Commonwealth nor really outside it' for the past few years, she welcomed the end of such 'hypocrisy' and the constitutional clarity brought about by the legislation.²⁰⁹ Such a stance was similar to Dillon's advocacy of the measure as ending the position where the state was 'living a lie'. Redmond added praise of Costello as a 'statesman' and felt it was a bill which should make all Irish people 'pleased'. Redmond concluded with a call for reconciliation north and south, and a quotation from Tom Kettle. John Lymbrick Esmonde merely declared himself, as one who had entered politics in 1915 as a member of the IPP, to be 'glad to have seen this day'.²¹⁰

²⁰⁵ *Round Table*, June 1946 p. 264; June 1947, pp. 280-281, March 1948, p. 599.

²⁰⁶ *Round Table*, March 1949, p. 154.

²⁰⁷ *Round Table*, June 1949, p. 220.

²⁰⁸ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 113, col. 512, 25 November 1948.

²⁰⁹ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 113, cc 644-645, 26 November 1948.

²¹⁰ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 113, col. 848, 1 December 1948. Dillon cited in Manning, *James Dillon*, pp. 241-6.

The AOH appeared cautious in its initial reactions to the declaration of the republic and little coverage was devoted to Costello's remarks in Ottawa. In February 1949, under the heading that 'partition [was] now a world question', the *Hibernian Journal* stated that Northern Irish Prime Minister Basil Brooke 'bitterly resented this exercise by the representatives of the Irish nation of their unquestionable right to determine the country's exact political status'.²¹¹ The British Government's introduction of the Ireland Act (which guaranteed that Northern Ireland would not leave the UK unless its parliament decided to do so) made matters more complicated.²¹² The AOH obviously felt the need to assuage nationalists on both sides of the border. June's *Hibernian Journal* included a signed letter from the body's vice-president, James Dillon, which stated that the Northern Government's bid to have the British include a clause confirming partition into the bill really 'has no effect one way or another, but it does gratuitously affront our people'.²¹³ The *Hibernian Journal* was insistent that the British guarantee was meaningless and there seems to have been little chance of the Order brooking any suggestion that the Irish government's declaration had stymied any possibility of reunification. Instead, the AOH returned to the familiar ground of lambasting the Northern government and restating the horror of partition.²¹⁴

Henry Harrison supported the Anti-Partition League initially and served as President in the League's branch in Paddington, founded in 1948. Harrison presided at a meeting organised by the branch the following year when speakers included John Lympbrick Esmonde, Cork solicitor and campaigner Eoin O'Mahony, and de Valera.²¹⁵ Indeed, Harrison appeared to have some regard for de Valera's notion of

²¹¹ *Hibernian Journal*, February 1949, pp. 15-17.

²¹² Ronan Fanning, 'The Response of the London and Belfast Governments to the Declaration of the Republic of Ireland, 1948-49', *International Affairs*, vol. 58, no. 1 (Winter, 1981-1982), pp. 95-114. The Act 'declared that Northern Ireland remains part of His Majesty's dominions and of the United Kingdom and it is hereby affirmed that in no event will Northern Ireland or any part thereof cease to be part of His Majesty's dominions and of the United Kingdom without the consent of the parliament of Northern Ireland', <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/hmsso/irelandact1949org.pdf> accessed 30 April 2016.

²¹³ *Hibernian Journal*, June 1949, p. 41. The Order moved to call on the Irish in Britain to stop supporting Labour as it 'sponsored the desires of Tories' to insert the clause in the bill, *Hibernian Journal*, November 1949, p. 84.

²¹⁴ *Hibernian Journal*, July 1949, pp. 45-9.

²¹⁵ The Anti-Partition of Ireland League supported the declaration of the republic in 1948, but was also supportive of the anti-partition lecture tour de Valera embarked upon after the election of the Inter-Party government. Handbill – 'Ireland Divided – We Demand Re-Union' - Meeting- Trafalgar

external association and, writing to the historian Nicholas Mansergh, he was unhappy that the declaration of a republic entailed a Commonwealth exit.²¹⁶ As President of the Paddington branch, he called for an ‘indispensable’ amendment to be added to the Ireland Bill that a plebiscite of Northern Ireland would decide if it left the United Kingdom rather than leaving the decision to the Stormont parliament.²¹⁷ Harrison later became disenchanted with the League, however, and resigned in December 1949.²¹⁸

It was clear that former Home Rulers were far removed from the fall of the Irish Party by this time. 1918 was a lifetime ago and individuals undoubtedly drifted onto different paths. Alfie Byrne could still be forgiven a certain rueful reminiscence though. Faced with the partition question when addressing the 1949 Commonwealth conference, Byrne returned to the ‘moderate’ third Home Rule Bill which looked to end the ‘age-old quarrel for independence and a united Ireland’.²¹⁹

Remembering Parnell and Redmond

As the state traced its path to a republic, the ascendancy of Fianna Fáil for most of the 30s and 40s seemed to coincide with the end of one discrete period in the historiography and memory of the later Irish Party. While Stephen Gwynn and others had ensured John Redmond was much discussed in the 1920s, Diarmaid Ferriter has characterised Denis Gwynn’s 1932 biography of John Redmond as ‘a last blast defence of Redmondism in the same year Fianna Fáil came to power, marking the beginning of an era when the history of Redmond and the IPP became increasingly marginalised.’²²⁰ Although Redmond and the IPP were not completely forgotten either, while Henry Harrison strove to rehabilitate Parnell and published *Parnell*,

Square Sunday 16th October, NLI Harrison Papers Ms. 8755; Handbill for 9 April 1949 Paddington branch meeting, NLI Harrison Papers Ms. 8755.

²¹⁶ Harrison to Mansergh, 16 June 1949, UCDA de Valera papers P150/2580.

²¹⁷ Handbill- ‘The Ireland Bill- One Amendment Obviously Indispensable’, NLI Harrison Papers Ms. 8755.

²¹⁸ He later wrote that the cause was ‘sold down the river’ by Dublin nationalists, Irish and British Labour, Irish Republicans and the Mansion House Committee Harrison to Liam Martin, 23 January 1952, NLI Harrison Papers Ms. 8755.

²¹⁹ Speech by Alfie Byrne at Commonwealth Conference, 13 September 1949, Little Museum Byrne Papers AB/CW/1949/0005.

²²⁰ Ferriter, *A Nation and Not a Rabble*, p. 58.

Joseph Chamberlain and Mr Garvin in 1938, no further study of Redmond followed until the 1990s.²²¹

There were structural reasons why the party did not receive academic treatment until later. *Irish Historical Studies* rejected articles on twentieth-century history while the thirty year rule on archives was not introduced until 1975, which meant that academic study on the revolutionary period was impeded. As Colin Reid has argued, the fall of the IPP had also been seen as an historical inevitability like the ‘Gibbonesque decline of the Roman Empire’. Any account of Irish history which had 1916 as its foundation stone was likely to overlook Redmond and the Irish Party.²²²

With the exception of William O’Malley’s 1933 memoir and John P. Boland’s *An Irishman’s Day* (1944), old Nationalists published little in the 1930s and 40s. Frank MacDermot moved into the writing of history and produced a biography of Wolfe Tone in 1939.²²³ William Fallon was an assiduous recorder of the old party, but did not write anything on the latter day IPP until 1958.²²⁴ Stephen Gwynn’s profile had declined considerably and his publications no longer detailed the era of the Redmondite party.²²⁵ Denis Gwynn remained a defender of the Redmondite tradition; however, he was outside the Moody-Dudley Edwards circle and never published or spoke before the Irish Historical Society.²²⁶

²²¹ A counter-point to Harrison’s efforts arrived in the form of Maeve Healy Sullivan, *No Man’s Man* (Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1943). Another Parnell biography to emerge in this period was Joan Haslip, *Parnell: A Biography* (London: Cobden-Sanderson, 1936).

²²² Reid, ‘Redmondism in the Irish Free State’.

²²³ O’Malley’s bitterness at the fall of the Irish Party was visible throughout the book, William O’Malley, *Glancing Back: 70 years’ Experiences and Reminiscences of a Pressman, Sportsman and Member of Parliament* (London: Wright & Brown, 1933);

John P. Boland, *Irishman’s Day: A Day in the Life of an Irish M.P.* (London: MacDonald & Co., 1944). Modern Tone biographer Marianne Elliott felt MacDermot’s work was ‘balanced’, but noted that it suffered attack at the time, Marianne Elliott, *Wolfe Tone: A Prophet of Irish Independence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), pp. 418-419. The book was described as ‘Senator MacDermot’s masterpiece of misunderstanding’ in the *Catholic Bulletin*, no. 29 (June 1939), pp. 409-411. However, it did receive a positive review in *Studies*, *Studies*, vol. 28, no. 110 (June 1939), pp. 323-5.

²²⁴ *Hibernian Journal*, April 1958, p. 15; Prof F. X. Martin was keen for Fallon to publish these articles in later years, Martin to Fallon, 16 September 1964, NLI Fallon Papers Ms. 22,589.

²²⁵ Stephen Gwynn, *Henry Grattan and His Times* (Dublin: Browne & Nolan, 1939); *Aftermath* (Dundalk: Dundalgan Press, 1946).

²²⁶ Reid, ‘Redmondism in the Irish Free State’. Reid has described Stephen Gwynn’s 1939 biography of Grattan as bearing the ‘unmistakable imprint of the Redmondite tradition’, Reid, *The Lost Ireland of Stephen Gwynn*, p. 227.

In this era of Fianna Fáil dominance, public discussion of the IPP was often negative. In 1935, Frank Gallagher was succeeded as editor of the *Irish Press* by another veteran O'Brienite journalist, John Herlihy. Herlihy had long been hostile to the AOH and the Irish Party having published a pamphlet *Through Corruption to Dismemberment: A Story of Apostasy and Betrayal*.²²⁷ In an echo of old Redmondite-O'Brienite rivalry, this enmity reached a new pitch after James Dillon declared in the Dáil on 19 November 1936, that the Irish Party had rejected permanent partition in 1914 and 1916. The *Irish Press* responded that the IPP was warned about partition from 1912 and accused the party of hiding the true facts from the Irish people.²²⁸ John Dillon Nugent, James Dillon and Tom Condon wrote to the newspaper subsequently, demanding that it produce proof that the Irish Party had assented to partition.²²⁹

The claims of the *Press* that Redmond hoped to return to Ireland 'in triumph' with a 'truncated bill to a dismembered nation' galvanised Nugent. In the *Hibernian Journal* of January 1937, he likened the conduct of the *Press* to that of the *Times* of London over the Piggott forgeries and cited recent works on Edward Carson and C.P. Scott to support his claim (which was correct) that the Irish Party had never agreed to permanent partition. Nugent complained that the *Press* had refused to print letters from himself and fellow ex-MP John Muldoon, and wrote to Éamon de Valera personally. De Valera demurred that he did not interfere in the affairs of the *Press*. However, the formerly Redmondite *Cork Examiner* did publish Muldoon's letter subsequently.²³⁰ Nugent and the AOH then resolved to publish the entire correspondence in pamphlet form. The whole controversy therefore had 'one magnificent effect' in Nugent's view; it allowed him to circulate the record of the

²²⁷ In this era of Fianna Fáil dominance, public discussion of the IPP was often negative. The AOH and its national secretary John Dillon Nugent clashed with the *Irish Press* over an editorial from Frank Gallagher which attacked Nugent personally on 10 February 1934. In the piece, Gallagher lambasted Nugent's secretary's letter in the *Hibernian Journal* of the previous November, arguing that Nugent had maligned 'every party in Ireland, but the Blueshirts' and that his alarmist portrayal of political violence in the Free State resembled that of an 'anti-Irish and anti-Catholic organ', *Hibernian Journal*, March 1934, p. 31; *Irish Press*, 10 February 1934; *Hibernian Journal*, May 1937, p. 46.

²²⁸ *Hibernian Journal*, January 1937, p. 1. *A "Challenge" and what came of it: Irish Press Boomerang – Crushing Vindication of John Redmond, John Dillon and Joseph Devlin* (1937), AOH Pamphlet Collection NAI BR/LOU 13/14/8.

²²⁹ *A "Challenge" and what came of it*.

²³⁰ Nugent's letters were published in the *Press* with accompanying editorial comment, *Irish Press*, 23, 25 November; 3, 4 December; *Cork Examiner*, 9 December 1936. The old Devlinite journal the *Irish News* in Belfast also published Nugent's letters.

Irish Party which had, he wrote, ‘dethroned landlordism, smashed foreign rule, (and) emancipated the farmers’.²³¹

Such apparent neglect and negativity contrasted with the decision of the *Irish Times* in May 1940 to publish a series of articles charting the lives of the surviving IPP MPs. Reporter J.R. Molloy contacted more than twenty living former MPs seeking their memories of representing the party at Westminster and their views on subsequent political developments on both sides of the border.²³² The articles were published between 3-6 August along with an introduction which reflected on the trajectory of various Irish political leaders and opined that the case of Redmond might be the ‘most tragic case of all’.²³³ The purpose of the articles was, however, not to recount the ‘stormy period’ which saw the Irish Party fall, but to recall ‘some of the outstanding events’ of its near fifty year existence. The following two articles then profiled twenty-seven of the twenty-nine surviving members of the party (it omitted Harrison and Patrick Whitty, apparently in error). However, most ex-MPs eschewed Molloy’s opportunity to share their reflections on recent political developments. Michael Flavin still held that the 1912 Home Rule Bill would have delivered 32 county self-government while William Duffy was consoled that the *Times* was showing such interest in the IPP, lamenting that ‘for the last twenty years the priceless work of the Irish Party was scarcely mentioned, except with scoff and jibe’.²³⁴ John Lalor-Fitzpatrick, elected for Ossory on Easter Week 1916, was the only ex-MP to write an article.²³⁵ Lalor-Fitzpatrick’s account captured something of the hopes and expectations Home Rulers harboured before the outbreak of the First World War: ‘I grew up, thinking that if we could get home rule every other problem would solve itself’. Ironically, the events of that year ensured Lalor-Fitzpatrick’s time in the Commons would be brief, yet he spent much of his time ‘securing the release of friends and supporters of mine, Sinn Féiners, who had been arrested and interned in England’.²³⁶

²³¹ *Hibernian Journal*, January 1937, p. 2.

²³² Letter from J.R. Molloy, 7 May 1940, NLI O’Donnell Papers Ms. 15,466 (6).

²³³ *Irish Times*, 3 August 1940.

²³⁴ *Irish Times*, 5 August 1940. Daniel O’Leary confined himself to comment that farmers had been treated badly in recent years.

²³⁵ *Irish Times*, 7 August 1940.

²³⁶ *Irish Times*, 7 August 1940. Lalor-Fitzpatrick also repeated the claim that the home rule settlement was better than the Treaty from a financial view point, because it gave Ireland a ‘foremost place in the Commonwealth’ and because it would have been led by the experienced leaders of the Irish Party.

While references to the righteousness and achievements of the Irish Party became less frequent, the *Hibernian Journal* was generally conscientious in marking the passing of former MPs.²³⁷ The death of the Order's president Joe Devlin on 18 January 1934 attracted significant public attention on both sides of the border. De Valera was represented at the funeral by his son Vivion while ministers Thomas Derrig and Seán MacEntee also attended.²³⁸ His death was lamented by the *Cork Examiner* and the *Irish Press* too was respectful noting, as it did with Capt. Redmond's passing, that Devlin's death marked the end of an era. Its editorial suggested that Devlin was probably more 'forceful' and important than the other leaders of the late Irish Party and acknowledged the atmosphere of oppression in which Devlin was raised in Ulster and that he later opposed. However, the *Press* also echoed Sinn Féin condemnations of the AOH and the 'religious test' it put upon nationalists, arguing it was 'one of the principal causes for the decline of the influence of the Irish Parliamentary Party among the nationalist majority'. The paper added that Devlin 'will also be associated with partition' and repeated that he was deceived by Lloyd George on whether partition would be temporary or permanent in 1916.²³⁹

Devlin was replaced as AOH President by Canon John McCafferty. In the aftermath of Devlin's death, anniversary events to mark the date became a feature of the Order's calendar north and south of the border.²⁴⁰ The death of National Secretary John Dillon Nugent on 1 March 1940 also saw numerous comments on Nugent fill the pages of the *Hibernian Journal* including tributes from Alfie Byrne, W.T. Cosgrave, John A. Costello, John F. O'Hanlon, Cecil Lavery, Senator Patrick F. Baxter, and John Lymbrick Esmonde among others.²⁴¹

²³⁷ *Hibernian Journal*, November 1937, p. 95, December 1938, pp. 70-71; January 1941, p. 3; August 1943, pp. 31, 34-5. William Field passed away in 1935; for his obituary see *Drogheda Independent*, 18 May 1935.

²³⁸ *Irish Press*, 20 January 1934.

²³⁹ *Irish Press*, *Cork Examiner*, 19 January 1934.

²⁴⁰ *Hibernian Journal*, February 1938, p. 13. The Irish High Commissioner in London John Dulanty gave an address on Devlin on Raidió Éireann on the sixth anniversary of his death, *Hibernian Journal*, January 1940, p. 1. A vote of sympathy for Devlin was also passed at a meeting of the General Purposes Committee of Fine Gael, Minutes of Meeting 18 January 1934, UCDA Fine Gael Papers P39/2.

²⁴¹ *Hibernian Journal*, April 1940, pp. 22-30. A shrine was erected to Nugent at Holy Ghost Fathers in Kimmage, Co. Dublin *Hibernian Journal*, November 1940, pp. 68-71. There were occasional nods to the IPP. Limerick Municipal Art Gallery received busts of Devlin and T.P. O'Connor in 1939,

A more practical example of neglect than the lack of historical publications was the straitened financial circumstances experienced by many former MPs in this period. James Dillon raised this issue in the Dáil, calling on the Government to do something for old MPs in a November 1938 debate on the Ministerial and Parliamentary Offices Bill. On this occasion, Dillon's plea was supported by many in the Dáil as MacEntee admitted there was 'an historic obligation' to the former MPs. The matter also attracted press attention (especially from the *Cork Examiner*) and tribute was paid to the IPP, yet no formal pension scheme was instituted.²⁴² Cork solicitor Eoin O'Mahony was among others who sought to provide for former MPs. In May 1939, the former Parnellite MP Matthew J. Kenny suggested that some prominent ex-MPs such as Hugh Law, Tom O'Donnell or Stephen Gwynn approach the Minister for Finance.²⁴³ Kenny, who was a judge at this point, went cold on the idea when the *Cork Examiner's* James Crosbie warned it could be seen as a 'dole for broken down old men' which would detract from their past services to Ireland. However, Kenny still hoped the leaders of the two major parties could come together and agree some measure.²⁴⁴ Dillon made further appeals, but with little success and he also sought to raise funds privately.²⁴⁵ The AOH supported Dillon's Dáil speeches on the matter. In April 1941, the *Hibernian Journal* described the old MPs as 'Ireland's forgotten soldiers' while in July 1942, it complained that there were the Military Service Pensions for those who took part in the revolution, and schemes for those who had fought for Britain in the First World War, but nothing for former MPs.²⁴⁶

D. George Boyce has argued that 'denying legitimacy' to Redmond's movement was part of the discouragement of Great War commemoration under Fianna Fáil.²⁴⁷ However, as Cumann na nGaedheal had allowed, but not embraced commemorations in the 1920s, David Fitzpatrick has suggested that de Valera's rise to power in 1932

Hibernian Journal, July 1939, p. 46; Brian Donnelly, 'Michael Joyce: Squarerigger, Shannon Pilot and MP', *The Old Limerick Journal* (Autumn 1990), p. 44.

²⁴² *Dáil Debates*, vol. 73, col 1147, 30 November; col. 1353, 7 December 1938; *Cork Examiner*, 1, 9 December 1938.

²⁴³ Matthew J. Kenny to Eoin O'Mahony, 24 May 1939; Hugh Law to O'Mahony 25 May 1939, NLI O'Donnell Papers Ms. 15,466 (6).

²⁴⁴ Kenny to O'Mahony, 30 May 1939, NLI O'Donnell Papers, Ms. 15,466 (6).

²⁴⁵ Manning, *James Dillon*, pp. 142-3.

²⁴⁶ *Hibernian Journal*, April 1941, p. 18; July 1942, p. 25.

²⁴⁷ Boyce, "'No lack of ghosts'", p. 154.

actually ‘had strikingly little effect on official attitudes towards Irish commemoration of the Great War’.²⁴⁸ Tensions wrought by Armistice Day events and republican protests had dissipated by the 1930s. Commemorations of World War I, in part due to the intimidation suffered in the 1920s, became smaller and generally moved outside town and city centres.²⁴⁹ The imbroglio over the unveiling of the Tom Kettle eventually ended, as by 1937, the inscription was made on the pedestal and the portrait bust of Kettle was returned by the National Gallery.²⁵⁰ Although Mary Kettle clearly took issue with the prevarication over the memorial under Cumann na nGaedheal, she apparently had no issue with the simple inscription on the base of Thomas Kettle ‘Poet - Essayist - Patriot’ after the details of his birth and death. Kettle was satisfied that this was all that would be placed on the memorial except for the famous verse on the base,

Died not for Flag, nor King, nor Emperor
But for a dream born in a herdsman’s shed,
And for the secret Scripture of the poor.²⁵¹

The memory of Irishmen (whether Redmondite or not) who had fought in the Great War also received some succour with the completion of the Irish National War Memorial in 1938. The project had received generous government funding, but the threat of war in 1939 saw de Valera cancel its official dedication and Remembrance Day events suffered against the backdrop of neutrality as events were heavily censored.²⁵² The wartime atmosphere did much to obscure World War I commemoration and the Government’s decision to ban the 1945 Remembrance Day march ‘ostensibly on the grounds of public order’ drew strong criticism from James

²⁴⁸ Fitzpatrick, ‘Commemoration in the Irish Free State: A Chronicle of Embarrassment’, McBride (ed.), *History and Memory in Modern Ireland*, p. 194.

²⁴⁹ McGarry, “‘Too Damned Tolerant’”, pp. 80-81.

²⁵⁰ Report of Tom Kettle Memorial Committee and Abstract of Accounts, July 1938, NLI Fallon Papers, Ms. 22,598 (1); Francis Devine to Fallon, 13 October 1936, NLI Fallon Papers Ms. 22,598 (3). *Irish Press*, 16 September 1937.

²⁵¹ Mary Kettle to Francis Devine, 26 June, 1936, NLI Fallon Papers Ms. 22,598 (3).

²⁵² Keith Jeffery, ‘Commemoration: “Turning the 11th November into the 12th July”’, Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War*, pp. 120-123, 134-5; Ó Drisceoil, *Censorship in Ireland*, p. 109.

Dillon, who referenced Kettle in the Dáil, and James Coburn who condemned the Government on the grounds of free speech.²⁵³

The exclusively Redmondite commemorations to John and William Redmond declined too. In 1935, only those from the south-east took part, and though there was little decline in the enthusiasm of those who wore mourning badges with portraits of Redmond senior and junior on them, it was unquestionably a merely local affair with James Coburn delivering the oration. Although the crowd was reported to be larger again the following year when speakers like Hayden emphasised the need for unity and reconciliation among Irishmen, these events had faded badly by the late 1930s.²⁵⁴ Dedicated individuals maintained 'Ivy Day' events marking Parnell's death in Dublin every October while there were often also some memorial events in Cork. Although these events were relatively low-key and attracted smaller crowds than the Redmond events (150 people in 1934), there was unquestionably a sense in which Parnell was better remembered than Redmond or indeed any of the Chief's lieutenants.²⁵⁵

This continued interest owed much to the mystique and heroism associated with Parnell, but also the intrigue surrounding the divorce scandal and his untimely death. Parnell's charisma and tragic fall echoed through the work of James Joyce and W.B. Yeats's 1938 poem 'Come Gather Round Me Parnellites' while Parnell was also the subject for a number of plays staged in Dublin's Abbey and Gate theatres in the 1930s.²⁵⁶ Perhaps the most successful of these dramatic efforts was Elsie T.

²⁵³ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 98, cc. 1240-1247, 15 November 1945; Girvin and Roberts have suggested that it was banned because the Government did not want any expression of Allied support, Brian Girvin and Geoffrey Roberts, 'The Forgotten Volunteers of World War II', *History Ireland*, vol. 6, no. 1 (Spring 1998), pp. 46-51.

²⁵⁴ *Munster Express*, 3 May 1935; 24 April 1936.

²⁵⁵ *Cork Examiner*, 9 October 1933; *Irish Press*, 8 October 1934. The crowd had diminished to 40 by 1938, *Cork Examiner*, 10 October 1938. There were only half a dozen at the Parnell monument by 1949, *Irish Independent*, 10 October 1949.

²⁵⁶ The most explicit reference to Parnell by Joyce is to be found in *Dubliners*, but references are also to be found in *Ulysses*. James Joyce, 'Ivy Day in the Committee Room', in *Dubliners* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 91-106; Joyce, *Ulysses* (London, Flamingo, 1994). For discussion of Joycean perspectives on the Irish Party, see McConnell, *The Irish Parliamentary Party and the Third Home Rule Crisis*, pp. 11-14. In October 1934, the Abbey Theatre showed *Parnell of Avondale* by W.R. Fearon while three years later, the Gate Theatre put on *The Uncrowned King* written by V.A. Pearn and Brindsley MacNamara, *Irish Press*, 12 May 1937; *Irish Independent*, 9 October 1934. Lennox Robinson's 1918 play *The Lost Leader* was reprised in the Abbey with twelve and eleven performances in 1937 and October 1943 respectively, www.abbeytheatre.ie/archives/play-detail/10807 accessed 4 February 2016.

Schauffler's play which opened on Broadway on 11 November 1935. A critical and commercial success, the rights to the production were bought by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer in 1936. The big-budget motion picture which followed, starring a beardless Clark Gable in the lead role, was a major disappointment however. The action strayed closer to melodrama than a serious historical piece and Gable was clearly uncomfortable in the role; the film made a loss of \$637,000 and was criticised heavily in the United States.²⁵⁷ In Ireland, the film attracted some attention, but most verdicts appear to have been benign with most comment devoted to Gable's lack of facial hair.²⁵⁸

From a political perspective, Parnell's memory outshone that of Redmond because it potentially had a more universal appeal and could be appropriated by more advanced shades of nationalism as well.²⁵⁹ Although Paul Bew and other Parnell biographers have made the case for him as an intrinsically conservative politician, he had attracted as much admiration from Arthur Griffith as from latter day IPP members.²⁶⁰ Foster and Jackson have noted the 'public distance' Parnell kept from Fenians during most of his career before the appeal to the 'hillside men' in his last year which was then repaid by Fenians who venerated Parnell's memory 'whereas the post-Parnell parliamentary party were collaborationist hacks'.²⁶¹ William Michael Murphy has alternatively argued that the true Parnell myth in Irish politics is based on Parnell's 'public posture': his ability to project a sense of independence and national dignity. In Murphy's view this form of leadership was not replicated until de Valera came to power in 1932.²⁶²

²⁵⁷ Information from Howard Dietz Collection at the AMPAS Library cited in *Parnell* (1937), Notes <http://www.tcm.com/tcmdb/title/2488/Parnell/notes.html> accessed 11 February 2016.

²⁵⁸ *Irish Independent*, 15, 19, 22, 29, 30 July 1937; *Cork Examiner*, 16 July 1937.

²⁵⁹ Organisers of Ivy Day in the 1930s sent notices to all newspapers and called for the 'support of all sections of the community', Niall C. Harrington to Editor of *Evening Herald*, 6 October 1934; draft Harrington to Editor *An Phoblacht* (1934), NLI Harrington Papers Ms. 40,648.

²⁶⁰ Bew, *Enigma: A New Life of Charles Stewart Parnell*, p. 189; Lyons, *Charles Stewart Parnell*, p. 610; Cruise O'Brien, *Parnell and His Party*.

²⁶¹ Foster and Jackson, 'Men for All Seasons?', p. 420.

²⁶² Murphy, *The Parnell Myth*, pp. 3, 161-2.

In the 1930s, de Valera's party was certainly content to give Parnell credit which was not so forthcoming in Redmond's case.²⁶³ Frank Gallagher's 1933 *Irish Press* editorial praised Parnell for his 'daring' and his 'recognition of the need for full national independence' before quoting Patrick Pearse's claim that Parnell's instinct was 'separatist'.²⁶⁴ The *Press* printed Ivy Day articles on Parnell by Capt. Niall Harrington (son of the late MP Tim, War of Independence veteran, Free State soldier, and a tireless defender of Parnell's memory) in 1935 and 1936.²⁶⁵ In an editorial on the fiftieth anniversary in 1941, the paper praised Parnell as 'a phenomenon' who did away with the 'begging and place hunting' which preceded him in the parliamentary movement, and later credited him for 'bringing war to Westminster'.²⁶⁶ The generous subscriptions to the fund established by the Parnell Memorial Committee (which included Bridget Redmond, J.J. Horgan and John Hayden along with Harrington and others) to maintain Parnell's grave plot at Glasnevin included donations from de Valera and Douglas Hyde. The subscriptions financed the fifteen tonne granite headstone bearing the simple insignia 'Parnell'.²⁶⁷

Plans for marking the fiftieth anniversary of Parnell's death in 1941 appeared to flounder at first as Hayden, the Chairman of the Parnell Grave Memorial Committee, told Eoin O'Mahony in July 1941 that some members of the Committee felt any celebration in the current time would be 'inexpedient'.²⁶⁸ However, in spite of such concerns, 1941 saw a 'Parnell Anniversary week' celebrated between 6-12 October organised by the Dublin Wicklowman's Association. Parnell's place in the public memory was partially if not fully elevated to the level of the revolutionary generation; a temporary exhibition on the former leader was opened beside the permanent 1916 display in the National Museum. There was a degree of official

²⁶³ Parnell's invocation that 'no man has the right to set the boundary to the march of a nation' was frequently quoted on Fianna Fáil platforms making them 'the inheritors not of Parnell's policies, but of Parnell's promise', Bowman, *De Valera and the Ulster Question*, p. 29.

²⁶⁴ *Irish Press*, 6 October 1933.

²⁶⁵ *Irish Press*, 7 October 1935; 10 October 1936. Niall C. Harrington joined the IRA in 1919, and having fought in the War of Independence, later made his career in the Free State Army, see Noel Kissane, 'Harrington, Niall Charles', in James McGuire and James Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish Biography*. (Cambridge, 2009).

(<http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a9263>) 15 August 2016.

²⁶⁶ *Irish Press*, 6, 8 October 1941, 27 June 1946.

²⁶⁷ The fund was oversubscribed to the tune of £200, *Irish Press*, 4 October 1941. For a full account of the committee's work on funding the gravestone, see Harrington- H.P. Boland correspondence, NLI Harrington Papers Ms. 40,648-9.

²⁶⁸ Hayden to O'Mahony, 28 July 1941, NLI O'Mahony Papers Ms. 49,614.

recognition too as Ceann Comhairle Frank Fahy opened the NMI exhibition and, members of the FCA were authorised to take part in the Parnell procession on 12 October.²⁶⁹ Fahy credited Parnell with bringing Ireland far on the road to independence and giving the farmers their land, even claiming ‘had it not been for Parnell and the work done by his generation, there would not have been a 1916’.²⁷⁰ De Valera laid a wreath at Glasnevin and though Hayden delivered the official oration, de Valera also spoke asserting that it if it was not from the work of Parnell, the farmers would still be serfs.²⁷¹ Henry Harrison gave the Parnell anniversary lecture in the Gresham Hotel on 8 October. Combining his Parnellite loyalties with his broad affinity for the de Valera government, Harrison claimed Sinn Féin sprung from the ashes of the Parnellite movement. He also urged loyalty to the Government’s policy of neutrality, citing the case of Parnell as an example of the damage disunity can cause.²⁷²

The centenary in 1946 of the births of both Parnell and Michael Davitt offered another opportunity to mark the old Irish Party. Twelve months on from the state commemoration of the centenary of Thomas Davis’s birth, de Valera replied to a Dáil question from Alfie Byrne that the Government had considered it would not organise another official commemoration so soon again for the centenaries of Parnell and Davitt. However, he added this was not a slight and that Dublin Corporation would organise a Parnell event while a local committee in Mayo were already planning Davitt celebrations.²⁷³

In fact, the Davitt centenary attracted much attention in Mayo, but also elsewhere as local authorities and individuals contacted Davitt’s son and daughter Cahir and

²⁶⁹ *Irish Press*, 3, 8 October 1941. Parnell was ‘the only constitutionalist admitted within the holy circle by the revolutionary ideologue of the 1916 Rising’, Foster and Jackson, ‘Men for All Seasons?’, p. 421.

²⁷⁰ *Irish Independent*, 8 October 1941. The procession itself included a motley crew of participants led by the Lord Mayor P.S. Doyle and Henry Harrison and including various bands, the Wicklowman’s Association, the Commemoration Committee, the Craobh na hAiséirighe branch of the Gaelic League, the IRA veterans organisation, the GAA, Gaelic League and the Irish National Foresters, *Irish Press*, 11 October 1941. Craobh na hAiséirighe was a branch of the Gaelic League which was organised by Gearóid Ó Cuinneagáin, a former civil servant with decidedly Fascist sympathies. Ó Cuinneagáin hoped to convert the entire Gaelic League to his cause, but was unsuccessful and then founded the far-right party Ailtirí na hAiséirighe instead, Douglas, ‘Ailtirí na hAiséirighe’, pp. 40-44.

²⁷¹ *Irish Independent*, 7 October 1941.

²⁷² *Irish Press*, 9 October 1941; *Irish Independent*, 10 October 1941.

²⁷³ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 99, cc. 2449-2450, 14 March 1946. Marley has argued that ‘the ecumenical Davis’ was ‘more serviceable’ to Fianna Fáil than Davitt, Marley, ‘Anomalous Agitator?’, pp. 172-3.

Eileen about prospective events.²⁷⁴ There were parades around the country organised by farmers' organisations and town tenants' leagues²⁷⁵ while Muintir na Tíre was keen to mark Davitt's centenary; its founder Fr John Hayes, had himself been born in a Land League hut.²⁷⁶ Among those with Home Rule connections, the AOH happily obliged requests for memorial masses to be held in Derry, Armagh, Belfast and Down.²⁷⁷ Davitt biographer Laurence Marley has argued that 'Davitt's "ghost" did not prove serviceable in the contested public histories of the main political traditions' even though the Land League could be invoked as a broad trope in the 1930s. As he has pointed out, Fianna Fáil abandoned radical land redistribution by the mid-1930s and Davitt's affinity with both moral force and the 'implied threat of violence' jarred with some Fine Gael intellectuals who turned to the O'Connell tradition after the fall of O'Duffy.²⁷⁸ It was thus predictable in Marley's view that the Fianna Fáil government focussed on Davitt's achievements in the Land War at his centenary in 1946. This was arguably true of both Parnell and Davitt in 1946 as the events throughout the country were far more concerned with the commitment of both to agrarian agitation than parliamentarianism.

Indeed, politics tensions arose over the commemorations at Davitt's birthplace of Straide. Opposition leaders Richard Mulcahy, Joseph Blowick (Clann na Talmhan), and James Dillon objected to being asked to submit their speeches one week in advance by the state broadcaster Raidió Éireann. The Government's claims this was standard procedure for such broadcasts did little to ease their concerns.²⁷⁹ Blowick and Mulcahy did not then address the meeting at Straide while Dillon attended the Mass, but left before the parades and speeches.²⁸⁰ In their absence, the major celebration in Straide on 9 June entailed a memorial mass, a decade of the rosary, songs, parades, a reading of Davitt's 1880 speech at Straide and speeches by de

²⁷⁴ James Rollins to Eileen Davitt, 25 February 1946; Dermot Scanlon to Eileen Davitt, 1 April 1946, TCD Michael Davitt papers Ms. 9655/1; 9655/3.

²⁷⁵ *Irish Press*, 12 June 1946.

²⁷⁶ Thomas Morris to Eileen Davitt, 29 April 1946; John Hayes to Cahir Davitt, 8 December 1946, TCD Davitt Papers Ms. 9655/5; 9659e/39.

²⁷⁷ James A Nugent to O'Rourke, 6 March 1946, TCD Davitt Papers Ms. 96593/7. Such co-operation would not be forthcoming from another home rule bulwark however; Liam Rafter of Waterford Corporation apologised that any Davitt celebration in the city would be a 'complete failure' owing to the controversial 1891 by-election where Davitt was beaten by the Parnellite candidate John Redmond, Liam Rafter to O'Rourke, 9 July 1946, TCD Davitt Papers Ms. 9659e/29.

²⁷⁸ Marley, 'Anomalous Agitator?', pp. 170-172.

²⁷⁹ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 101, cc. 1314-1318, 5 June 1946; vol. 110, cc. 2106-2110, 19 June 1946.

²⁸⁰ *Irish Press*, 10 June 1946.

Valera, Healy, Conor Maguire and Northern MP Hugh Delargy, attracting over 12,000 people.

It was an occasion when Davitt's memory was fitted neatly into the broader story of the risen Irish Catholic people. Despite Davitt's sometimes strained relations with the Church (particularly over education), the local parish priest Fr Ambrose Blaine recalled Ireland's seven centuries in bondage and spoke of Davitt's motto of 'Faith and Fatherland'.²⁸¹ Blaine described Davitt as 'a sturdy Catholic not merely devout, but militant' and pointed to instances when Davitt came into conflict with 'free-thinking and irreligious students' while lecturing in England and that he had 'profound contempt' for any Catholic student unwilling to defend his faith.²⁸² The *Irish Press* editorial the following day praised Davitt's role in the Land League, the strength he gave the people and hailed him as the greatest democrat of his time. The piece made no reference to the Irish Parliamentary Party and also insisted Davitt was 'too deeply imbued with a love of individual liberty to have socialistic leanings'. However, de Valera was more generous to the broader Home Rule movement. Addressing the memory of Davitt, he told the crowd:

When one movement is succeeded by a rival it often happens that the achievements of the first are overshadowed and minimised. There was this tendency when some thirty years ago the Volunteer and Sinn Féin movements won the support of the people from the Irish Parliamentary Party. But without the Land League, without the destruction of the powers of the landlords, without the political education given by, and the enthusiasm engendered in the early days of the Parnellite Movement, the success achieved by the Volunteers and by Sinn Féin and its successors would have been much more difficult.²⁸³

De Valera was careful to reserve his praise for the Land League and the Parnellite party rather than the latter day Redmondite incarnation. However, the credit he offered to the previous generation strayed close to Stephen Gwynn's argument,

²⁸¹ Davitt was opposed to denominational education, Marley, *Michael Davitt*, pp. 212-216.

²⁸² Fr Blaine's discourse at Michael Davitt Memorial Mass, 9 June 1946; Ambrose Blaine to Eileen Davitt, 24 June 1946, TCD Davitt Papers Ms. 9655/10.

²⁸³ *Irish Press*, 10 June 1946.

excoriated in the *Catholic Bulletin* of the 1920s, that the Irish revolution truly began with the Land War.²⁸⁴ De Valera, in fact, had contemplated being even more generous as earlier drafts in his private papers contain remarks that the sympathy won for the cause by the IPP was crucial to Sinn Féin and that without their work, the victory of Sinn Féin would have been ‘impossible’.²⁸⁵ While Davitt’s request that no monument to him be erected after his death frustrated the hopes of some, the Government issued a stamp of both Davitt and Parnell while Cabra Road was also renamed Davitt Road in his honour.²⁸⁶

Just over two weeks after the Davitt event, President Seán T. O’Kelly attended a Parnell centenary event on 27 June along with the Lord Mayor of Dublin when a lecture on Parnell was delivered by P.S. O’Hegarty in the absence of Prof Robert Dudley Edwards who was ill.²⁸⁷ On 30 June, de Valera travelled to Avondale to unveil a plaque to Parnell. Acknowledging the achievements of a fellow leader of a mass nationalist party, de Valera declared that Parnell ‘built up a party equally remarkable for the brilliance of its members and for the rigidity of the discipline it enforced upon itself.’²⁸⁸ Such a statement of admiration would seem to add weight to the comparisons in their leadership styles. De Valera continued his endorsement of Parnell that December when he accepted the invitation of a local committee in Creggs, Co. Galway who intended to erect a memorial at the site where Parnell addressed his final public meeting in 1891.

Patrick Murray has argued that ‘more than any twentieth-century Irish politician’, de Valera exploited the memory of former leaders for contemporary gain and that ‘one of his more congenial manifestations was as the new Parnell’ at Creggs in 1946.²⁸⁹ De Valera was joined in Galway by Frank Fahy and by local TDs from both of the

²⁸⁴ Reid, *The Lost Ireland of Stephen Gwynn*, p. 212.

²⁸⁵ Drafts of speeches for Michael Davitt Centenary, UCDA de Valera Papers P150/3575.

²⁸⁶ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 101, cc. 1958-9, 18 June 1946; P.J. Thomas to Cahir Davitt, 6 December 1946, Ms. 9659e/36. Events were also held in Davitt’s native Haslingden and the actual centenary of Davitt’s birth on 25 March was marked with a lecture by Prof T.W. Moody of Trinity College in the Mansion House while a play was also staged on the life of Davitt, Niall Hartnett to Cahir Davitt, 12 April 1946, TCD Davitt Papers Ms. 9659e/17.

²⁸⁷ O’Hegarty claimed that Parnell brought Ireland within sight of the promised land, *Irish Independent*, 28 June 1946.

²⁸⁸ *Irish Independent*, 1 July 1946.

²⁸⁹ Patrick Murray, ‘Obsessive Historian: Éamon de Valera and the Policing of his Reputation’, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*. Section C: Archaeology, Celtic Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature, vol. 101C, no. 2 (2001), p. 45; Ferriter, *Judging Dev*, p. 12.

major parties. De Valera's speech stuck to the story of the Land League, recalling how Parnell marched on the shoulders of the Fenians just as de Valera's generation took up the work from the 'great generation which ended the power of the landlord and made it impossible for a foreign parliament to rule us'. The Taoiseach concluded that the twenty-six counties had achieved all that Parnell wanted 'and more than he felt it expedient to demand in his day'.²⁹⁰

Although Alfie Byrne and Bridget Redmond attended Parnell events in 1941, James Dillon had not done so. Dillon was clearly uncomfortable with the appropriation of Parnell's memory for what he felt were party purposes. He refused the invitation to attend the Creggs event due to de Valera's presence, arguing the unveiling should have been conducted by a non-political figure such as the President.²⁹¹ The appropriation of Parnell by Fianna Fáil and its supporters did not rest easy with the formerly Redmondite *Cork Examiner* either. On the fiftieth anniversary of Parnell's death, the *Examiner* hoped the events would ignite interest in the IPP, arguing home rule 'became practical politics and would have come into power, but for the interference of a world war'. The paper also hoped the commemorations 'will not attempt to claim Parnell as a protagonist of any movement, but parliamentary constitutionalism'.²⁹² By 1943, the newspaper adopted an angrier tone stating:

It was now fashionable amongst the quasi-informed to sneer at the National Party that was dethroned in 1918, but some day historians - real historians - would arise who will set the country right as to what it gained through the labours of the old Parliamentarians, the Parnells, Redmonds, Dillons and the men from remote towns and villages.²⁹³

On the occasion of the Parnell centenary, the *Examiner* acknowledged that Parnell had allied with Fenians, but asserted that 'to argue that Parnell was at any time a convert to physical force as is now something of a fashion, is absurd'. The *Examiner*

²⁹⁰ *Irish Independent*, 30 December 1946. Murray has argued that de Valera's appearance and speech was also to counter-act the influence of Clann na Poblachta locally, Murray, 'Obsessive Historian', pp. 46-7.

²⁹¹ *Irish Independent*, 30 December 1946; Tom Kettle's brother Laurence also attended the P.S. O'Hegarty lecture in 1946.

²⁹² *Cork Examiner*, 6 October 1941.

²⁹³ *Cork Examiner*, 6 October 1943.

declared ‘with certainty’ that there would no parliament in Dublin if it was not for Parnell, but added that the memory of O’Connell, Devlin, Dillon, Redmond, O’Brien and Healy deserved honour too for ‘it was they who laid the foundation for the independence of Ireland, economic as well as political’.²⁹⁴ In 1946 in an editorial ‘Why Not Study History!’ the paper reflected that the Davitt and Parnell commemorations attracted some interest, but also ‘a little apathy’. The *Examiner* lamented that many did not know anything about history prior to 1916, blaming the press and schools for the neglect. It further criticised de Valera’s Creggs speech, arguing he had clearly done little reading on Irish political or economic history between 1877 and 1916. The paper lambasted the Taoiseach for ignoring the work of the men who followed Parnell completely. Such a speech completely justified the stand taken by James Dillon according to the *Examiner*.²⁹⁵

Against the backdrop of such complaints, the accession to power of many individuals from Home Rule backgrounds in the Inter-Party government might have been expected to aid the public memory of the party. In his retirement, W.T. Cosgrave expressed private appreciation for John Redmond and former Irish Party supporters who joined the Treatyites, yet there were few official nods.²⁹⁶ In 1948, J.J. Horgan had published *Parnell to Pearse* – part personal memoir, part political reminiscence – but clearly an unrepentant defence of Redmondism which reflected on the fall of the Irish Party with continued bitterness and pointed to the failings of its successors.²⁹⁷ The republic came into being on Easter Monday 1949, matching the date of the 1916 insurrection.

However, speaking in his native Longford in May 1948, the Minister for Justice and War of Independence veteran Seán MacEoin declared himself pleased to see ‘members and supporters of the old Irish Party and the AOH’ as well as old comrades to welcome him. MacEoin told the crowd that there had been,

²⁹⁴ *Cork Examiner*, 27 June 1946.

²⁹⁵ *Cork Examiner*, 31 December 1946.

²⁹⁶ See W.T. Cosgrave correspondence with Stephen Gwynn, 22 January 1944 and J.J. Horgan, 24 January 1944, Royal Irish Academy W.T. Cosgrave Papers P285/132-3.

²⁹⁷ Horgan, *Parnell to Pearse*.

... no dispute between the Nationalists of this country and us on the question of ideals. The only dispute we had was on methods, and looking back over 30 years I do not know whether they were so wrong after all. We will have to leave that to history to judge. I can assure you of this that we all did our best, and we did it for Ireland.²⁹⁸

Such a declaration from the storied 'Blacksmith of Ballinalee' was extraordinary, notwithstanding any desire to appeal to the broader base of contemporary Fine Gael support. However, like the appreciative nods to the Irish Party occasioned by Dillon's Dáil appeal, it was a transitory tribute and would not see Redmond's party brought to the fore of the republic's collective memory.

Conclusion

As discussion around the memory of the Irish Party demonstrates, assessing the true ethos of the IPP was no easy task. The sweep of the party's history could encompass everything from Parnell's vigorous parliamentarianism, a Fenian tinge, Catholic sectarianism as well as the imperial sensibilities of Redmondism so often synonymous with the party subsequently. After the formation of the Fine Gael party, any distinct old Irish Party identity ceased to exist in everyday politics. Political exigencies forced the remaining Irish Party standard bearers into the Treatyite party, the painful embarrassment of the Blueshirts, and a long period in opposition. While there were still individual politicians from Home Rule backgrounds (and they occasionally displayed loyalty to such heritage), there were fewer self-conscious references back to the historical IPP. Roles in politics were often individual stances perhaps informed by a background outside the majority Civil War view, but not necessarily peculiar to the amorphous pre-1918 Irish Party illustrated by McConnel, Wheatley and others.²⁹⁹ Former Home Rulers could continue to defend John Redmond's 1914 strategy. However, if the opposition of James Dillon and Frank MacDermot to neutrality in the 1940s was to be examined in the context of the pre-Rising Irish Party, it was ironically perhaps a stance closer to Redmondism than

²⁹⁸ *Irish Independent*, 17 May 1948.

²⁹⁹ McConnel, *The Irish Parliamentary Party and the Third Home Rule Crisis*; Wheatley, *Nationalism and the Irish Party*.

Dillonism. John Dillon's aloofness from recruiting between 1914 and 1918 would not necessarily have aided his son's arguments against neutrality.³⁰⁰

Dillon and MacDermot were also men of strong personal conviction as was the great Parnellite survivor, Capt. Henry Harrison, who supported the Government's wartime policy. Individuality in the figures and organisations discussed here should not be underestimated; as its political influence declined, the AOH was motivated as much by its Catholic ethos as by any policy of the old Irish Party. It was true that defenders of a home rule settlement were instinctively better disposed to Commonwealth membership than republicans now in government in Fianna Fáil; yet, many ex-Sinn Féiners in Fine Gael had been prepared to work within the Commonwealth, even if they did not display the enthusiasm of Dillon and MacDermot for it. All these sentiments were cast aside in 1948 when Costello declared a republic. In spite of some of its personnel, there was little sign of a Redmondite tinge to the Inter-Party government. For those whose names or support bases were still associated with the Irish Party, contemporary politics sometimes entailed the kind of awkward situation that Redmond and Dillon encountered when endorsing the republic. The legacy of the Irish Party did not seem to be large enough, or felt sufficiently keenly, to influence policy in a meaningful way by 1948. This was unsurprising given the party's public memory; sentiments like those expressed by MacEoin were generous, but remained rare and were ephemeral in their impact. While Davitt and Parnell received recognition, their successors in the IPP were ultimately remembered in opposition to the victors of the Irish revolution and their memories suffered commensurately. Devotion to the Irish Party, and particularly Redmond's 1914 vision, was destined to remain a minority political inheritance.

³⁰⁰ McConnel, 'Recruiting Sergeants for John Bull?', pp. 422, 427-9.

CONCLUSION

They sacrificed Irish unity for Irish sovereignty and attained neither

J.J. Horgan discussing the Sinn Féin generation in *Parnell to Pearse: some recollections and reflections* (1949)

On 30 September 1956, the veil of neglect that the *Cork Examiner* identified as hanging over Redmond and the latter day Irish Party was briefly lifted. To mark the centenary of Redmond's birth, loyal followers in the south-east and others, including the indefatigable Eoin O'Mahony, organised a symposium to the memory of the former IPP leader in Wexford town. Éamon de Valera attended in his capacity as Chancellor of the National University of Ireland, and chaired a session featuring historians Denis Gwynn, F.S.L. Lyons and Mary Donovan O'Sullivan. There was also a mass, a procession, and the unveiling of three tablets to Capt. William Redmond, his father John, and his uncle at the Redmond monument in the town.¹ Redmond was later the subject of a special commemorative stamp; however, the event did not trigger any sustained resurgence in interest in the Irish Party.²

Prior to the fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising, Prof F. X. Martin was among those interested in the Irish Party perspective as part of his research on the rebellion. Martin engaged in correspondence with veterans such as William Fallon, Frank MacDermot and J.J. Horgan as well as Denis Gwynn.³ Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, the rise of revisionism in the academy did not necessarily imply resurrection of Redmond's memory, at least not initially. It was only as the Northern Irish peace process dawned in the 1990s that Redmond was claimed as an advocate of peace and even a 'forerunner of the Good Friday Agreement' while within academia, it was left to Paul Bew to examine the 'Redmond world-view'.⁴

¹ De Valera to O'Mahony and Thomas Leacy, 16 August 1956, UCDA de Valera Papers P150/3591. *Irish Independent*, 3 September; *Cork Examiner*, 4 September; *Free Press*, 14 September, 5 October 1956; John Redmond Centenary Programme, NLI Fallon Papers Ms. 22,719.

² There was, however, a memorial mass held in Wexford town on the fiftieth anniversary of Willie Redmond's death in 1967, Denman, *A Lonely Grave*, p. 136.

³ Martin to Denis Gwynn, 25 April 1961; Martin to William Fallon 25 March, 1 April 1963; Martin to J.J. Horgan, 12, 20 March 1966; Martin to MacDermot, 19 June; MacDermot to Martin, 11 July 1969, UCDA Martin Papers P189/285.

⁴ John Lynch interview with Paul Bew, 'Ceasefire in the Academy', *History Ireland*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (Winter 1994), p. 12; Walter Forde, 'John Redmond: Forerunner of the Good Friday Agreement?', *History Ireland*, vol. 15, no. 2 (March-April 2007), pp. 5-6.

The persistence of Home Rulers

However, as this thesis has demonstrated, the persistence of former Irish Party supporters and activists ensured that the memory of Redmond and the party could not be simply erased from the public mind in the Irish Free State. The statements of individuals like John Dillon and William O'Malley may often have been the bitter musings of the dispossessed, but they highlight that political opinion in the 1920s reached further than merely Civil War divisions. Enduring Irish Party loyalty was an integral part of the party fragmentation which the Free State experienced in common with many newly independent states.⁵ As agrarian movements had provided the backbone of the Home Rule movement, it was hardly surprising that many former local organisers found a home in the Farmers' Party. The ITGWU built on the old networks of the Irish Land and Labour Association in Munster, allowing some absorption of O'Brienites into the Labour party while prominent ex-Home Rulers joined the ranks of the independent deputies.

The distribution of representatives with Home Rule roots again underscores the political variety amongst Irish counties - a trend illuminated by the local histories which have followed David Fitzpatrick's pioneering study of Clare. In some areas where strong Irish Party loyalty persisted, Home Rulers retained a number of county council seats while in other counties, it seems some veteran councillors survived either by transferring allegiance to Sinn Féin after the Rising, or because of their personal popularity and ability to serve their local constituents.

However, the strength of Redmondite and AOH organisation in the south east and border respectively proves that there was more behind the electoral support of Redmond, Dillon and others than merely Garvin's 'revolutionary charisma'.⁶ The AOH remains an organisation in need of further scholarly investigation beyond its persistence in the twenty-six southern state and the extant research on its role in Northern Ireland. Its continued presence in the south provided an important link with nationalists in the north, many of whom had remained loyal to the Irish Party beyond

⁵ Coakley, 'The Rise and Fall of Minor Parties in Ireland', p. 60; Reich, 'The Evolution of New Party Systems'.

⁶ Garvin acknowledges regional variations in his analysis but referred more to socio-economic cleavages and the presence of agrarian parties than any Irish Party organisation (as distinct from party personalities), Garvin, 'Continuity and Change'.

1918. However, this connection, so conspicuous at Hibernian rallies, did little to undermine the reviled border. As the AOH in the Free State waned, it became more a social club and was certainly less influential than other Catholic action groups with whom it shared many of the same concerns. However, it remained faithful to the Irish Party and its continued vitality in the border counties had a political importance, providing Fine Gael with TDs until 2002.⁷

The adoption of the IPP's methods by its opponents and successors has been examined in this work, particularly, in the case of Cumann na nGaedheal. Ciara Meehan's characterisation of Cumann na nGaedheal as taking up the 'tradition of constitutionalism' from the IPP has been described as a 'loaded statement'.⁸ While it may be argued Meehan is correct in many ways, it has been shown that many Irish Party supporters found the conversion of former Sinn Féiners to constitutional politics difficult to stomach. It did not follow that all Treatyites were closet Home Rulers or that former Home Rulers could always be easily accommodated in the new governing party. While John M. Regan's 'counter-revolutionary' thesis encompassed the absorption of former Irish Party followers into Cumann na nGaedheal (and the conversion of former Unionists), it was testament to the tenacity of distinct Irish Party loyalty that many ex-Home Rulers refused to be simply assimilated into a new constitutional nationalist party for so long.⁹

The post-1918 careers of Irish Party members and activists examined here have highlighted different evolutions in nationalist political support in the late revolutionary and formative years of the state. Most individuals from Home Rule backgrounds entered Treatyite politics at key pressure points. Some Home Rulers moved into Sinn Féin prior to 1918 and then took the pro-Treaty side; others decided to back the Treaty in 1922 as a welcome return to constitutionalism. Followers of the National League left the party after it became discredited in the autumn of 1927; many then joined Cumann na nGaedheal with Capt. Redmond in 1932 to unite against the threat of Fianna Fáil government. Finally, others like Dillon, MacDermot

⁷ The last AOH member to sit in Dáil Éireann was Brendan McGahon who retired in 2002. Other Hibernian TDs since 1949 include George Coburn and Paddy Donegan.

⁸ Meehan, *The Cosgrave Party*, p. xvi; Jason Knirck review of *The Cosgrave Party: A History of Cumann na nGaedheal, 1923-33* (review no. 1120) <http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/1120> Date accessed: 14 April, 2016.

⁹ Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution*, pp. 232-3, 244, 265.

and Coburn joined Fine Gael/UIP when the middle ground had become squeezed by the Economic War.

The broad-based nature of the Irish Party proved an impossible formula for the National League to replicate as it tried to revive old networks. The League shared the problems of other minor parties in its acute lack of funds while its rapid collapse after the proposed coalition in August 1927 would be an experience mirrored by those who actually entered coalition in later decades. However, the National League remains significant for a number of reasons. It did not represent one whole sector of society or explicitly articulate an ideological view point in left-right terms as its primary badge of identity. It instead attempted to sell itself as a broad-based populist national party. While its policies were broadly conservative, it drew almost exclusively on individuals and support organisations associated with the Irish Party and even attempted to re-use the old party's nomenclature, slogans and ephemera.

The League suffered for this backward-looking approach. Voters and politicians content with Cumann na nGaedheal or other parties did not simply rush back to a Redmondite banner. Even where the party could call on old supporters, the differing priorities and perspectives of sometimes disparate networks created difficulties, as seen in attitudes to the AOH. There was no room for a broad based nationalist pro-Treaty party unless it could supplant the governing Cumann na nGaedheal. However, the League helped to wound the Government at a time when it was vulnerable, it took a strong stand on constitutional and security issues in the aftermath of Kevin O'Higgins's assassination, and ultimately, it came within a casting vote of government.¹⁰ The National League showed both the extent and limits of persistent Irish Party loyalty in the Free State. When Redmond's party over-extended itself and made tactical errors, the shaky grounds for a revived Irish Party crumbled forever. Instead, the variety of opinion in the rump of old Home Rulers revealed by the Jinks affair would allow people like Tom O'Donnell and Daniel O'Leary to join Fianna Fáil in later years as the majority drifted towards the Treatyite party.

The place of former Irish Party activists and supporters provides a unique prism

¹⁰ Glackin, 'Home Rulers in a Free State', pp. 36, 42.

within which to examine many of the parties which emerged in the early decades of independence. While part of the IPP's dynamism was based on the centrality of the land question, this preoccupation did not disappear with independence.¹¹ Many tenants had still not become owners of their land and looked to the 1923 Land Act and subsequent legislation to achieve their aims; others who had obtained their holdings were left to pay the Annuities, a source of much controversy in the 1930s. This thesis echoes Tony Varley's arguments that all three agrarian parties in post-independence Ireland bore an echo of the IPP in appealing to all classes of farmers on land redistribution.¹² However, both the Farmers' Party and Centre Party also drew on individuals explicitly associated with the Irish Party itself as well as its methods. In spite of their best efforts, both also became associated with stronger classes of farmers. Founded shortly after the 1932 election, the National Centre Party was a product of its time and was not a neo-Redmondite party *in toto* like the National League. Instead, it reflected elements of Home Rule loyalty in its leadership along with continued emphasis on agrarian priorities – an issue upon which the Irish Party had, of course, been based.

Although it included many who were never explicitly Home Rulers, the Centre Party provided James Dillon and Frank MacDermot with a platform to air their personal policy convictions. MacDermot, especially, was out of step of the prevailing orthodoxies of the day, but both men were committed to Commonwealth membership and protecting the rights of the substantial farming community. In Dillon's case, this involved defence of the grouping his father's party had striven to emancipate in the previous century. In common with other small parties of the era, the Centre Party could not last; Fianna Fáil's success and the tensions in the country forced the opposition forces to coalesce. Although the United Ireland Party moniker and the rhetoric of Dillon and MacDermot clearly attempted to cast the new party founded in 1933 as a step forward from the Civil War politics that they despised, it came at the additional price of Eoin O'Duffy's leadership. However, his erratic behaviour helped to expose the contradictions surrounding the IPP and Land League legacies as Dillon and MacDermot could not sustain support for both direct action by farmers and strict constitutionalism. When O'Duffy attempted to favour the former,

¹¹ McConnel, 'The View from the Backbench', pp.194-6.

¹² Varley, 'The Politics of "Holding the Balance"'.

Dillon clearly aligned himself with the Cumann na nGaedheal constitutionalists.

Nevertheless, the opinions of Dillon and MacDermot help to illuminate the debates on the state's constitutional status in the 1930s and later, highlighting contrary views to progression from Free State to republic. Their initiatives in forming the Centre Party and Fine Gael also helped (however unintentionally) to shape the cleavage between the two major parties. The traits and differences identified between Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil – larger farmer/smaller farmer, pro-Commonwealth/republican are steeped in the Economic War divide as much as in the Civil War dispute.

Meehan has written that the legacy of Cumann na nGaedheal was uncomfortable for Fine Gael.¹³ However, it could be argued that its Redmondite tinge was also uncomfortable for the party. The ex-Irish Party section of the party influenced perceptions of both the old party and Fine Gael itself, problematizing the latter's image as the party of Collins and Griffith. While taking into account a certain multiplicity of past political identities, this study has revealed the extent of distinctly ex-Home Rule heritage in both Cumann na nGaedheal and Fine Gael. In the 1930s and 40s, such figures remained a substantial presence in Fine Gael as between a fifth and a third of the party's TDs had traceable Home Rule roots.¹⁴ While these numbers contained only a handful of ex-MPs or parliamentary candidates, the increase in the number of parliamentary representatives in independent Ireland and the transfer of 'softer' Irish Party support at local level manifested itself in the number of former councillors, guardians or activists finding their way onto the backbenches of the Treatyite party.

Nevertheless, by the 1930s and 40s, distinct Home Rule identity faded from everyday politics as the independent Irish state developed against the backdrop of economic and political turbulence in Europe. The preoccupation of Dillon and MacDermot with the state's constitutional status and later their unease and opposition to Irish neutrality clearly marked both out as individuals outside the political mainstream. However, as discussed in Chapter Six, we should be cautious

¹³ Ciara Meehan, 'Fine Gael's Uncomfortable History: The Legacy of Cumann na nGaedheal', *Éire-Ireland*, vol. 43, no. 3 & 4 (Autumn, 2008), pp. 253-266.

¹⁴ See Tables 6.1, 6.2 and 6.8 (Chapter Six).

in attempting extrapolate Home Rule identity from their actions and beliefs decades later. Politicians with Irish Party heritage had more freedom to take independent policy stands, but not all did; Dillon and MacDermot were also conditioned by personal convictions and contemporary political circumstances. As it turned out, the memory of John Redmond had another resonance for those in government during the Second World War, serving as a warning not to repeat his actions of 1914 and risk political catastrophe.

The weakness of any distinctly Redmondite agenda in contemporary politics was perhaps best illustrated by the acceptance of John A. Costello's controversial declaration of the republic in September 1948. Recourse to what a home rule Ireland may have looked like is not necessary to argue that the republic was quite a different scenario from anything envisaged by the Irish Party before 1918. Bridget Redmond admitted as much in the Dáil, yet by that point, even Dillon had apparently reconciled his beliefs to acceptance of the constitutional clarity provided by a move which satisfied the majority of the Dáil. The politics of independent Ireland had by then entered a new phase as a coalition government assumed office. Home Rule heritage in Irish politics was still just visible in such a picture, but no longer exerted the distinct influence it retained in party politics prior to the foundation of Fine Gael.

A legacy of political behaviour?

In December 1928, former MP and then TD Hugh Law observed that the Dáil was an ineloquent chamber compared to the House of Commons.¹⁵ While Law may have had a point, there were other ways in which the Dáil did resemble the Commons and examination of the different elements of Irish Party behaviour and whether they persisted among later parties opens many avenues for exploration. This thesis has built on other studies by utilising the IPP legacy as bridge between Irish politics on either side of the revolutionary decade.

Attention has been drawn to the IPP's role in politicising Irish people and establishing norms surrounding democratic representation.¹⁶ Along with the

¹⁵ *Irish Independent*, 17 December 1928. Stephen Gwynn shared Law's perspective describing the Dáil as a 'drab assembly', Reid, *The Lost Ireland of Stephen Gwynn*, p. 223.

¹⁶ Laffan, 'Constitutionalism: Eclipsed and Reborn', *Irish Times*, 25 April 2012.

influence of British rule, the party helped to form part of the political culture, as it existed up to 1918.¹⁷ Indeed, just as McConnel identified the dual role assumed by MPs elected on a Nationalist ticket who also engaged in a local service role, the case of the Free State suggests TDs often fulfilled similar dual national and local functions.¹⁸ The advent of multi-seat constituencies under a PR-STV voting system did not institute localism, but it certainly did not impede the tendency to express voting preferences in terms of both national issues and personal or local concerns. By the 1970s, the phenomenon of localism in Irish politics was a subject of a serious case study by the American scholar Paul M. Sachs. However, it was the machine politics of Neil Blaney, the son of an IRA commander, and a Fianna Fáil TD that was under scrutiny.¹⁹ In the 1930s, 40s and 50s, politicians from various party backgrounds found themselves facing the same accusations of jobbery as IPP representatives faced in former years. The contribution of the Irish Party to the wider processes of politicisation and democratisation in Ireland may thus be seen as mixed (though certainly no less important for that).²⁰

Such conclusions could, of course, only be strengthened by further research on parliamentary behaviour in independent Ireland, especially on the role of the backbench TD.²¹ While elements of localism have been visible in Irish politics for a long time, the Irish Party was the first centralised party exercising powerful parliamentary discipline upon its representatives. Such an achievement raises an obvious discussion point in relation to the observation, often framed as a complaint, that Dáil Éireann is a weak parliament and that the whip system stultifies TDs.²²

As Fitzpatrick demonstrated, Sinn Féin in 1918 had already acquired a range of support organisations with an outward appearance akin to the Home Rule movement

¹⁷ On this point, see Coakley, 'Society and Political Culture', pp. 54-6; Kissane, *Explaining Irish Democracy*.

¹⁸ McConnel, 'The View from the Backbench', pp. 280-281.

¹⁹ Sacks, *The Donegal Mafia*.

²⁰ See McConnel, 'The View from the Backbench', conclusion. On the three levels of the political system (including attitude to the state; understanding of the rules of the political game; and attitudes to policy), see Almond quoted in Coakley, 'Society and Political Culture', p. 38.

²¹ One exception is Martin Ejnar Hansen, 'The Parliamentary Behaviour of Minor Parties and Independents in Dáil Éireann', *Irish Political Studies*, vol. 25, no. 4 (2010), pp. 643-660. However, Hansen's statistical analysis only begins in 1937 and deals exclusively with voting divisions and how minor parties and independents correlate to government voting behaviour.

²² Chubb, *The Government and Politics of Ireland*, pp. 151-67; Elaine Byrne, 'Balance of Power must shift from Government to the Dáil', *Irish Times*, 16 March 2010.

at its zenith. Cumann na nGaedheal and Fianna Fáil drew on this tradition and solidified party branches throughout independent Ireland.²³ However, it is ironic that while Fianna Fáil absorbed far fewer politicians from Irish Party backgrounds than either incarnation of the Treatyite party, it was the organisation which resembled the Irish Party more closely. Even if Fianna Fáil did not consciously look to the IPP for guidance, de Valera attained a level of respect and obedience not shown to any individual leader since Parnell while his party's discipline in parliament, apparent interest in local issues while in opposition, and ability to construct durable constituency networks within a 'national movement' had the appearance of the formidable Irish Party machine to a far greater extent than Cumann na nGaedheal or Fine Gael ever did.

The politics of memory and commemoration

As the current 'Decade of Centenaries' marking the period 1912-23 dawned, former Taoiseach John Bruton began a spirited campaign for the achievements of John Redmond and the Irish Party to be acknowledged alongside those of the Sinn Féin and/or physical force traditions which remained the primary historical root for Bruton's own Fine Gael party. Bruton may not have been fully satisfied by the Government's response and he faced a range of criticism for his views that home rule would have eventually led to full independence by peaceful means.²⁴ However, in spite of the discord often seen between ostentatious Redmondite defences based on counter-factual arguments and more traditional nationalist narratives, the passage of time has seen the memory of Redmond and his party revived. Redmond occupies a far more prominent place in the public lexicon than he did in the 1960s. Government ministers have recently paid tribute to Redmond's party and the centenary of the passage of the Third Home Rule Act in 2012 was an integral part of

²³ Fitzpatrick *Politics and Irish Life*, pp. 128-130; Mel Farrell has argued that though Cumann na nGaedheal displayed some characteristics of a cadre-party, it was actually a mass party like Fianna Fáil, albeit a far less effective one, Farrell, 'Few Supporters And No Organisation?', p. 290; cf. Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State* (London: Methuen, 1969). pp. 63-71.

²⁴ Bruton's views were criticised by de Valera's grandson and Fianna Fáil TD Éamon Ó Cuív and Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams amongst others, *Irish Times*, 4, 6 August 2014; *Irish Examiner*, 7 August 2014. Ronan Fanning argued that commemorating the Third Home Rule Bill would be unwise, *Irish Times*, 16 August 2014.

the menu of commemorative events.²⁵ Just before the anniversary of the Rising itself, the old Irish Parliament building on College Green was adorned by a huge 'Ireland 2016' banner with portraits of Grattan, O'Connell, Parnell and Redmond on either side. This move was controversial certainly; however, the political sensitivities and imperatives which affected the memory of both the IPP and the 1916 Rising in the period discussed in this thesis once again remind us that commemoration is always influenced by contemporary concerns. Such concerns about the winners and losers of the Irish revolution did not begin with either the Northern Irish Troubles or the reconciliation desired after the Peace Process.²⁶

Examining the views of Irish Party members and followers in its aftermath illustrates that the bruising nature of Sinn Féin's victory left many old Home Rulers defeated and embittered. This was betrayed by the note of defiance at Redmondite anniversaries in the 1920s. The memory of the Irish Party and the First World War also serves to complicate the narrative of Great War memory in Ireland to some extent. Just as Keith Jeffery has shown that the war was well commemorated in the Free State, this thesis has shown that the same could be said about John Redmond and the Irish Party.²⁷ However, in some ways, Irish Party veterans fell between the two poles of republican antipathy to the memory of the war, and imperially-tinged endorsement of it. It could be argued that the memory of Tom Kettle, whose memorial was so long delayed, fared worse than that of John Redmond initially in the state's early years.

²⁵ Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht Jimmy Deenihan addressed an official event to mark the centenary of the Third Home Rule Bill hosted by Waterford City Council on 11 April 2012, <http://www.ahg.gov.ie/100412-minister-deenihan-marks-centenary-anniversary-of-the-introduction-of-the-third-home-rule-bill-for-ireland-in-westminster-parliament/> accessed 14 April, 2016 ; 'Speech by the Taoiseach Mr Enda Kenny TD at 2016 Commemoration Launch, Wednesday 12th November 2014' - http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/eng/News/Taoiseach's_Speeches/Speech_by_the_Taoiseach_Mr_Enda_Kenny_TD_at_2016_Commemoration_Launch_Wednesday_12th_November_2014.html#sthash.Baj9GUFZ.dpuf accessed 14 April, 2016. Redmond and his old adversary were also the subject of a joint commemorative stamp in 2014, *TheJournal.ie*, 28 May 2014 accessed at: <http://www.thejournal.ie/home-rule-leaders-brought-together-on-a-stamp-1490739-May2014/> In August 2015, it was announced that portraits of former Home Rule leaders were to hang in Leinster House, *Irish Times*, 11 August 2015.

²⁶ For an examination of the political sensitivities surrounding the fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising, see Roisín Higgins, *Transforming 1916: Meaning, Memory and the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Easter Rising* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2012).

²⁷ Jeffery, 'Irish Varieties of Great War Commemoration', p. 117.

In the case of Parnell, Henry Harrison's faithful efforts to defend his Chief's honour bore fruit in 1951 as the *Times* of London eventually 'set the record straight' and admitted its role in the case of the Piggott forgeries.²⁸ However, in the 1930s and 40s, Parnell's memory had already fared far better than that of Redmond. Part of Sinn Féin's election propaganda in 1918 had focussed on how Dillon and Redmond had betrayed Parnell's message. From the 1930s, Parnell's memory was acknowledged and respected by the new political establishment and supporters of Fianna Fáil. Although Davitt and Parnell were hardly remembered on the same level as the leaders of the Rising or the War of Independence, their careers could be assimilated into a narrative that reached its heroic conclusion in the years 1916-21. Even if it received occasional plaudits, the same could never be true for the latter day Irish Party.

Parnell's association with Fenianism separated him from any notion of Westminster apostasy (even if many of his followers who later served under Redmond sprung from such a background).²⁹ In conveying a sense of vigour on the national question, de Valera was uniquely blessed as a surviving 1916 commander. However, there were also elements in his leadership which echoed Parnell. It was little surprise that he could praise the discipline of Parnell's parliamentary party while scrupulously drawing a distinction between the demands of the old party and the achievements of his own. In Foster and Jackson's view, de Valera and his party went further than this, arguing that Fianna Fáil cast itself as representing 'the Parnellite values of independence' while tarring 'their political opponents with the associations of privileged grazier farmers and collaboration with the British imperial ethos – exactly the image of the old post-Parnellite Nationalist party'.³⁰ While Treatyite speakers also invoked Parnell and the Land League, a view of Parnellism as being close to Fianna Fáil appeared implicit in articles on Parnell in the *Irish Press*. The latter day Irish Party, already posited in contradistinction to the Easter Rising, was now also associated with the opposition; such a combination did not lend itself to generous commemoration.

²⁸ Henry Harrison to Stanley Morrison, 7 July 1951; Morrison to Harrison, 1 July 1951, NLI Harrison Papers Ms. 8755. Niall Harrington's efforts to educate the public about Parnell saw a room at Avondale opened to the public in 1971. This exhibition was later expanded and the property became the site of the annual Parnell Summer School.

²⁹ McConnel, 'Fenians at Westminster'.

³⁰ Foster and Jackson, 'Men for All seasons?', p. 422.

Yet, as this study has evidenced, it would be a mistake to assume that the Irish Parliamentary Party has had to be re-claimed entirely from the ether. In addition to the party's role in developing the parliamentary tradition in the country, the proliferation of events devoted to the Redmond family, the presence of former Irish Party members in politics and the ways in which they influenced party politics demonstrated the shadow of the Irish Party over Irish political life. It was often an uncomfortable shadow and undoubtedly a dubious inheritance for those entering politics from a Home Rule background. However, their very presence sheds light on the continuities between pre- and post-independence Ireland, underlining the influence of former movements on those that succeeded them, and the tenacity of certain modes of thinking and ideas of identity. The debates fostered and developed in the 1920s, 30s and 40s clearly belied the more extreme notions surrounding Redmond and his followers – that they were completely forgotten in the new state, but also the alternative view that they were so readily rehabilitated that they could easily retake their place at the very forefront of the Irish political establishment.

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