PhD Thesis

‘Right Behind Mr. Redmond’ : Nationalism and the Irish Party in Provincial Ireland, 1910-14

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Summary

The Irish party, comprising both its MPs and affiliated organisations in Ireland, went from dominating nationalist politics in 1914 to almost total electoral oblivion in 1918. The goal of limited Home Rule, constitutionally achieved within the empire, appeared to die with it. Given the speed and extent of the party’s disgrace, it has generally been seen as being so decayed as to make death inevitable, while also being fundamentally out of touch with the ‘new’ nationalism which succeeded it. Though such assumptions have been challenged, there has been no detailed study of the Irish party and its relationship to provincial nationalism in the immediate pre-war period.

This study is local, focused on the five adjacent counties of Leitrim, Longford, Roscommon, Sligo and Westmeath. At its core is an analysis of eighteen weekly, local newspapers over the five years 1910-14, a range sufficiently wide to offset the distortions, often obsessive, which characterised the news coverage and editorial values of each individual newspaper. It has been possible to:

- construct a reliable local narrative;
- analyse elites, organisations and political rhetoric; and
- assess the impact of national events on local opinion.

Far from being ‘rotten’, the Irish party was representative of provincial opinion and not only intact but still capable of self-renewal and change. However, Irish nationalism was characterised by an intensity of grievance and a pervasive anglophobia which came rapidly to the fore as the Home Rule crisis climaxed in 1914, creating a ‘great wave’ of mass, paramilitary mobilisation. Though the party was sufficiently disciplined to remain loyal to its leader, John Redmond, who epitomised nationalist moderation, it did so at the cost of slumping cohesion, enthusiasm and activity, leaving it unable to withstand the events of uprising and repression by which it was imminently to be assailed.
I should like to thank all those whose support has made this work possible, but especially St. Mary’s College for ‘taking me in’ following my complete change of career and return to the study of Irish history after a gap of more than twenty years. I am also indebted to the librarians and archivists of the British Library, the London Library, the Bodleian Library, the Public Record Office in Kew, the National Library of Ireland, the National Archives of Ireland, Trinity College Dublin, University College Dublin, the West Sussex Record Office, Liverpool University and the National Library of Scotland. In particular, I am grateful to the British Library Newspaper Library whose staff responded to my interminable requests with patience and consistent efficiency. In the five counties of provincial Ireland studied here, I am indebted to the librarians and archivists of the Leitrim, Longford, Roscommon, Sligo and Westmeath county libraries, to the Athlone public library and to the Elphin diocesan archive. Nicholas Nally (John Hayden’s successor as editor of the Westmeath Examiner), Lucius Farrell (J. P. Farrell’s grandson and himself a former editor of the Longford Leader) and Patrick McKenna (who shares his grandfather’s name) were kind enough to be interviewed by me. The staff at the Leitrim Observer, Longford Leader, Roscommon Herald and Sligo Champion were consistently courteous and helpful. In Mullingar, John Wylie helped me in the search for Laurence Ginnell’s diaries, which I could not have seen without the generous co-operation of Charles Kelly and the kind permission of Philip Ginnell.

During the researching and writing of this study my co-supervisors at St. Mary’s, John Fulton and Jane Longmore (the latter now at Greenwich University), have been unstinting in their support and advice. Two good friends provided much-needed practical support: Tony Smith saved me immeasurable time by introducing me to the luxury of a reliable, accessible, working database, while Janet McCurrie has been the most patient and persistent of proof-readers. I am also indebted to those historians who have been generous with their time and suggestions; to Fergus Campbell, Roy Foster, Marie-Louise Legg, Patrick Maume, James McConnel and Alan O’Day. Above all, I would like to thank two individuals. First, Paul Bew, who whatever other pressures he faced has given me unfailing support, insights and encouragement. Secondly, my wife Liz, who spurred me in the first instance to attempt a doctoral thesis and has ever since had to live with the consequences. Without such backing this study would never have happened.
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<td>AFIL</td>
<td>All for Ireland League</td>
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<td>AOH</td>
<td>Ancient Order of Hibernians (Board of Erin)</td>
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<td>C&amp;L</td>
<td>Cavan and Leitrim Light Railway</td>
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<td>CDB</td>
<td>Congested Districts Board</td>
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<td>L&amp;L</td>
<td>Land and Labour Association</td>
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<td>PRO CO</td>
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<td>RAEC</td>
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<td>RDC</td>
<td>Rural District Council</td>
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<td>RIC</td>
<td>Royal Irish Constabulary</td>
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<td>TCD</td>
<td>Trinity College, Dublin</td>
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<tr>
<td>UCD</td>
<td>University College, Dublin</td>
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<tr>
<td>UDC</td>
<td>Urban District Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>UIL</td>
<td>United Irish League</td>
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<td>UVF</td>
<td>Ulster Volunteer Force</td>
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Autumn 1914 - Behind Mr. Redmond

In the autumn of 1914, the Irish party embarked on what, with hindsight, was to be its final successful, nation-wide campaign. Across Ireland, committees, officers and companies of the Irish Volunteers were assembled and exhorted to back John Redmond, the 'chosen general of Irishmen the world over' in his support for England in the European war and his call for Irishmen to take their place 'in the firing line' as recruits for the British army. This campaign, largely concluded by November 1914, appeared on the surface to be outstandingly successful. Not only did the party claim an 'extraordinary manifestation of popular regard' for Redmond, but it also took control of the Volunteer movement - re-named the National Volunteers - across most of provincial Ireland. In the large majority of Volunteer companies, 'factionists' and 'Sinn Feiners' who openly opposed Redmond’s policy were outvoted and ousted from committees, with their places taken by Irish party stalwarts. At most, only 12,000 Volunteers were believed to sympathise with the party’s ‘Sinn Feiner’ opponents, while over 170,000 followed Redmond’s lead - the inveterate plotter and Irish Republican Brotherhood organiser Bulmer Hobson later wrote that Redmond’s active opponents were left at no more than 3,000.

A meeting of Volunteers from across County Sligo on 29th September was part of the Irish party's campaign. It was organised by John Jinks, mayor of Sligo town, United Irish League man, Hibernian and founder of many of the county’s Volunteer companies, in order to swing support behind Redmond and create a formal, county-wide command structure. It was attended by representatives of no fewer than twenty-six ‘corps’, by the county’s two MPs (John O’Dowd for Sligo South and Thomas Scanlan for North) and by an array of leading clergymen. Thomas Scanlan MP, Sligo-born but now living and working mostly in London, expressed the ‘Redmondite’ view of recruiting as a moral duty. Ireland was fighting with her ‘co-religionists’ for the rights of small nations, as a fully-fledged member of the British Empire with the same rights as Australia, South Africa and Canada. The passage of the Home Rule Act had created a union of the British and Irish democracies and had recreated Parnell’s

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1 Roscommon Messenger, 3rd October 1914.
2 Westmeath Examiner, 24th October 1914.
‘Union of Hearts’. Obligation now bound Ireland to the empire in its great fight, and Ireland’s place was with all freedom-loving people on the side of the Allies.4

However, his fellow Sligo MP, the ex-Fenian chairman of Sligo county council John O’Dowd, was rather more guarded. Though he did say that Ireland would only be safe from attack by taking her place in the empire, he also emphasised that ‘he did not come here for the purpose of preaching recruiting.’ Even more cautious was Rev. Brian Crehan - one of the most respected Gaelic scholars and temperance men in the county who had recently left Sligo town to become the parish priest in Grange. An active supporter of the Volunteers, Crehan was distinctly uneasy at the thought of them defending anything other than ‘that portion of the Empire called Ireland’. Only when Ireland had its own distinct army, like the Boers or Canadians, should it consider sending men to the Front. The Volunteers should not be ‘swallowed’ into the British army. Crehan cautioned against ‘turning ourselves into recruiting sergeants’.5

However, all the speakers at the meeting pledged allegiance to the man Crehan called ‘our leader Redmond’.6 Whatever his misgivings, Crehan’s priorities were still clear: ‘I am on the side of unity and against dissension, wherever it comes from.’ For John Jinks, the party boss of Sligo town and North Sligo, the matter at hand was simply one of loyalty, the crisis had been created by a few factionists, Redmond was ‘the great Irish leader and statesman’ and ‘we are at the back of the Irish parliamentary party’. The keywords used throughout the meeting were ‘discipline’, ‘loyalty’ and ‘unity’. Party unity basically held firm, and while their distance behind their leader might vary, those present were still overwhelmingly Redmond’s followers. One of the younger politicians present, Henry Monson, more than once addressed the issue of being behind Redmond. For Monson, a Hibernian and Sligo Corporation member who had risen to become a provincial director of the Connaught Hibernians, Redmond’s back was in danger of being stabbed by a clique of ‘Sinn Feiners’. The leader

4 Sligo Champion, 3rd October 1914.
5 Ibid.
6 The meeting was not completely packed with party loyalists. One of the attendees was Alex McCabe (Sligo Champion, 3rd October 1914), already an IRB man, who as the Sinn Fein candidate in 1918 would unseat O’Dowd as MP for South Sligo.
faced no such threat from the Hibernians. They were, he declared, ‘right behind Mr Redmond’.\(^7\)

The party’s victory was, however, illusory. Not only did the newly-controlled National Volunteers rapidly disintegrate in its hands, but the party’s own standing and support declined almost uninterruptedly from then onwards. Over the next four years the party was virtually destroyed. It became discredited in the opinion of most nationalists, its leaders were humiliated and its organisation collapsed. Even its symbols, flags, anthems and ceremonials were replaced by newer nationalist inspirations.\(^8\) Its Sinn Feiner opponents, whom Redmond in 1915 could still declare ‘do not amount to a row of pins as far as the future of Ireland is concerned’,\(^9\) took over the ‘copyright’ of nationalism.\(^10\) The Irish party, which in different guises had dominated Irish politics for nearly fifty years, slumped to electoral oblivion in the general election of December 1918.

In Sligo, the descent from victory in 1914 to heavy defeat in 1918 was just as steep. In 1914 only three out of 44 Volunteer companies and 280 out of nearly 5,000 Volunteers sided with the Sinn Feiners.\(^11\) In 1918 Scanlan lost his seat to Sinn Fein by 9,030/4,242 votes and O’Dowd lost his by the crushing margin of 9,113/1,988. Of other speakers at the September 1914 meeting, Jinks surrendered the mayoralty of Sligo (the Corporation would imminently become bankrupt) to a Sinn Feiner as early as January 1917. Rev. Crehan continued to be a respected parish priest and Gaelic scholar, but by 1918 had ceased to be the president of the Grange United Irish League.\(^12\) Instead he was president of Grange Sinn Fein.\(^13\) As for Henry Monson, who after the September 1914 meeting helped to set up a Hibernian company of the National Volunteers,\(^14\) he was by the beginning of 1917 seconding Jinks’s Sinn Fein successor as Sligo’s mayor and campaigning against the Irish party in the Roscommon by-

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\(^7\) *Sligo Champion*, 3\(^{rd}\) October 1914


\(^10\) It was the Liberal chief whip, the Master of Elibank, who described the Irish party as owning the ‘copyright’ of the national movement in a March 1910 paper on Irish politics (memorandum dated 31\(^{st}\) March 1910, Elibank papers, National Library of Scotland, Ms. 8802 f 39).

\(^11\) Monthly report of the Sligo RIC county inspector, October 1914 (PRO CO 904/95).

\(^12\) *Sligo Champion*, 23\(^{rd}\) September 1916.

\(^13\) Ibid. 11\(^{th}\) May 1918.

After he was suspended as the AOH’s Connaught regional director - the Sligo town AOH division was also suspended by August 1917 - Monson continued to campaign politically at the back of Mr Redmond, but now at the side of those Sinn Feiners who were, in Monson’s imagery of 1914, ‘stabbing’ his former leader.

Historians and the Irish Party
The local basis of this study, the period covered by it, its key definitions (particularly of ‘the Irish party’), the study’s geographic extent and sources used are analysed below. However, the scope of the study cannot be defined without first addressing the historical treatment of Redmond’s soon-to-be- doomed party, that party’s presumed decay and its failure to connect with, let alone lead, contemporary nationalist public opinion.

The decline of Redmond’s party was so rapid and so total that it has become a commonplace to see it as something that was bound to happen. Moreover, its condition prior to its demise had to be something profoundly rickety and decayed - in Tom Garvin’s phrase, the Easter Rising of 1916 ‘merely administered a final push to an edifice that was already on the verge of collapse’. The party has variously been described as stale, tired, ossified, bourgeois, corrupt, ageing, incapable of self-renewal and unattractive to the young. As the contemporary editor and conscience of Irish nationalism, D.P. Moran, wrote in July 1916, ‘extremists of some kind were a long-felt want in the Party and the machine had become rotten’. One of the more unrelenting historical critiques of the party was supplied by E. Rumph and A.C. Hepburn. For them, the party was the upholder of the status quo, run nationally by ageing men and locally by publicans, shopkeepers and larger farmers. Considered to be synonymous with ‘wire-pulling’ and jobbery, ‘its long-term deficiencies left it ill-equipped to cope’ with the crises of the years 1912-16. It was unattractive to the young, to the educated young in particular, to urban populations, to labour unions, to younger farmers’ sons and to rural labourers. So consistent was this portrait of the party’s unattractiveness that one could ask how it retained any popular support at all. The question was posed by the

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16 *Sligo Nationalist*, 1st September 1917.
Roscommon/Westmeath newspaper editor Jasper Tully, who repeatedly ascribed the party’s support solely to the power of venality and patronage. As he once asked of one of the party’s inner leadership, T. P. O’Connor: ‘Can freedom come from such ungodly hands?’

The party’s organisation has also been portrayed as being in severe decline before the war. The theme for such studies was set over fifty years ago by F. S. L. Lyons, who in his pioneering work on the party in parliament believed that its disintegration was well under way long before 1910 and its unity and cohesion broken from 1890. Later studies of the party outside parliament have also exposed structural weakness. Marie Coleman and John Noel McEvoy, in their studies of County Longford and King’s County respectively, show the party’s leading local organisation, the United Irish League, to be in pronounced, endemic decline in the pre-war years. Even Paul Bew, who is more sympathetic than many towards the party, portrayed an organisation locally riven by class, sectional and personal feuds. The ‘Ranch War’ of 1906-09, far from uniting the party behind a robust agrarian campaign in those years, further exacerbated its weaknesses. Though differing in some particulars as to how the Ranch War was actually fought, Bew’s work has been substantially confirmed by Fergus Campbell’s study of Land and Politics in Connacht, particularly in relation to County Galway.

Contemporary belief in the party’s decay often went hand in hand with an analysis that it was fundamentally out of touch with the ‘new’ nationalism of ‘Irish Ireland’. As the journalist, nationalist and labour man W. P. Ryan put it in 1913, the party ‘threw the weight, or rather the dead-weight, of its influence against independent thought and criticism, political and social’. The party was quite separated from the ‘youthful and reconstitutive forces’ of Ireland, the Gaelic League, the Irish Industrial Development Association, the suffragists and cooperatives. This hypothesis has been advanced in the work of historians such as Patrick...

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20 Midland Reporter, 28th March 1912. Tully demonised O’Connor as the party’s chief ‘wire-puller’; another of O’Connor’s many sins in Tully’s eyes was his irreligion.
O’Farrell and John Hutchinson, the former accentuating the gulf between ‘Redmondism’ and the assertive Catholic nationalism of turn-of-the-century Ireland; the latter between the ‘political nationalism’ of the party and the ‘cultural nationalism’ pervading Irish Ireland. For O’Farrell, the party was ‘losing contact with the dynamic forces within Irish society’, particularly the Catholic church and the burgeoning cultural and temperance movements. For Hutchinson, the outlook of party politicians was quite different from that of ‘cultural nationalists’ - religious, linguistic, academic, literary, athletic and/or teetotal. It was the latter who were to underpin the imminent Irish revolution and who were seen almost as a new breed who would inherit the earth - or at least twenty-six thirty-seconds of Ireland - on the extinction of the party’s dinosaur. The failure of the party to relate to the new Ireland was comprehensive. According to the historian Philip Bull, the Irish party lost the capacity to inspire with enthusiasm those on whom its future depended. For Bull, it had no distinctive policy other than agrarianism, no vital appeal other than to sectarianism and no basis of cooperation with ‘Irish-Ireland’. In the words of F.S.L. Lyons, the party’s leadership was ‘no longer swimming with the stream’ of modern Irish nationalism. If anything, they were throwing ‘a barrier across the course of the current’ and were swept subsequently into the ‘limbo of forgotten things’.

This view of an Irish party beyond redemption has, nevertheless, come to be challenged. David Fitzpatrick, the author of what is still the most influential study of local Irish politics in the early twentieth century, of County Clare in the years 1913-21, has noted that if anything the party gained in authority after the two general elections of 1910, in which it captured the parliamentary balance of power and dramatically increased the probability of Home Rule. For Fitzpatrick, constitutional nationalism under Redmond was ‘vigorous and eclectic’ at least up to 1913, and ‘militant nationalism still appeared as securely saddled by Redmond as by Parnell in all his pomp’. Moreover, the party continued to represent a remarkably broad spectrum of Irish opinion. In Fitzpatrick’s view the Irish ‘Cause’ could accommodate both...

the “hand of friendship” [to England] and commemorations of the 1867 rising against “tyranny and oppression”. Structurally, the party was a federation of interlocked local organisations and was, as the historian Patrick Maume has observed, anything but a ‘centrally-controlled monolith’. Some party affiliates thrived as others declined. In Clare, the United Irish League was waning while the other main affiliate, the Ancient Order of Hibernians, flourished - ‘the revived AOH was almost a carbon copy of the UIL; and as the one shrank the other spread.’ Local politics, dominated by these affiliates, formed ‘an integral part of social life’. The party’s affiliated organisations were still the primary channels for a ceaseless local jostling for power and influence.

Rumph and Hepburn may have listed an array of groups to whom the party, supposedly, did not appeal, but the roots of party support in rural middle-class life were still sufficiently deep for the historian L.P. Curtis to cite a formidable catalogue of party supporters in his snapshot of Ireland in 1914:

Catholic merchants and shopkeepers, newspaper and hotel proprietors, lawyers and doctors, minor civil servants, clerks, publicans, journalists and commercial agents. Their allies and social analogues in the country were strong farmers, cattle-traders and graziers…men well versed in the value of land, livestock and dowries.

Such propertied, professional and commercial groups can be argued to have dominated Irish political life, at least outside Dublin, for much of the twentieth century. It seems improbable that a political movement backed by such groups in 1914, even if it subsequently and rapidly lost support, could have been both terminally moribund and out of touch with the religious and cultural orthodoxies of provincial Ireland. Indeed, Alan O’Day has described the party on the eve of war as still strong, a multi-issue movement and organ of social integration, with no credible rivals and a middle-class base corresponding to the realities of rural life. For Paul Bew, the party in parliament was not some decrepit edifice waiting to be blown over, but rather represented ‘the accumulated political capital of an increasingly self-confident, middle-class Ireland’. Moreover, for all the class and sectional divisions identified by Bew, ‘the

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30 Fitzpatrick, Politics and Irish Life (Gregg revivals edition), p. 91.
32 Fitzpatrick, Politics and Irish Life, p. 98.
33 Ibid. pp. 94-98.
overwhelming impression is that it was representative of the mass of the nationalist population and its sentiments. 36

The concept of a ‘representative’ Irish party still begs the question of why it failed so totally over the next four years. Some have emphasised almost a ‘deus ex machina’ or, in Theodore Hoppen’s phrase, ‘a bizarre congeries of accidents’,37 of world war, political misjudgements and government policy mistakes. For others, it was not so much the party that was out of tune with nationalist feeling as its leader, Redmond. ‘Redmondism’ in this view, though accommodated under the broad nationalist umbrella of the party, was deeply socially-conservative, wedded to parliamentary forms, conciliatory to unionists, sympathetic to England, ‘Whiggish’ and imperialist. It could be an uneasy bedfellow with the strident Catholic sectarianism, land radicalism, anglophobia and nationalist assertiveness that also came within the party’s embrace. Whereas in September 1914 Redmond’s wartime loyalty to the cause of England and her allies was instinctive, that of many of his followers, even if they declared their support for him, was not. It was, in this view, Redmond’s policy that came to be comprehensively discredited by 1918. As Alvin Jackson has stated, what died in 1918 was not Parnellism but Redmond’s version of it.38

The fact that the vast majority of Redmond’s party was ‘right behind’ him in the autumn of 1914 meant that subsequently it faced the choice of going down with him, abandoning politics or, like Rev. Crehan and Henry Monson in Sligo, making the transition to Sinn Fein, which by 1918 was the new ‘umbrella’ national movement. Whatever the course followed, ‘the Irish party’ as an organisation died. Was it, however, almost immediately reincarnated? David Fitzpatrick has been one of the clearest exponents of the case for continuity between the party and its Sinn Fein successor. Such continuity - of ideologies, organisational methods and personnel - would be consistent with the belief that the party had indeed been representative of middle-class, nationalist Ireland’s ‘accumulated political capital’ before the war. The party’s mantle passed during the extreme discontinuities of world war to Sinn Fein.

For Fitzpatrick, ‘the political culture of nationalist Ireland re-emerged, draped in a tricolour that barely obscured the outline of a golden harp’. 39

There are, therefore, two contrasting portrayals of the Irish party, in shorthand ‘rotten’ or ‘representative’, on the eve of its destruction. Variations of both concepts are still very much in print. Michael Laffan, writing in 1999, though he acknowledged the boost to the party’s status after the elections of 1910, believed that in the pre-war period a minority of nationalists were irrevocably against the party’s ‘bland acquiescence in an improved version of the status quo’. The party was faction-ridden with a weak local organisation, was becoming conservative and was seen as increasingly irrelevant to Ireland’s needs. Its habit of seeking British support had become ingrained and ‘by the outbreak of the First World War, many intelligent and ambitious young people felt frustrated and resentful’.40 By contrast Patrick Maume wrote in the same year of his inclination to the view that the new Irish state was built on ‘the achievements of the Irish party and on local continuity between old and new elites’.41

Neither conception can be credible unless the party’s pre-war condition is assessed without the benefit of hindsight. The party should not be considered beyond hope in 1914 simply because it almost immediately expired; nor should it be deemed healthy because of any later continuity to successor movements. In the pre-war years, the imminent traumas of war, death, uprisings and republican revolution were not anticipated by contemporaries. R.F. Foster has written of the early twentieth century that the ‘expected future’ was instead one of ‘Home Rule, constitutionally achieved’.42 Senia Paseta has described these years as a period of ‘preparation, not for independence but for Home Rule and a central place in the Empire’.43 The heightened political tensions and mass paramilitary mobilisation encompassed in the Home Rule crisis had by August 1914 sorely tested such confidence, but the imperialist, conservative John Redmond was still the ‘Leader of the Irish Race’ and his party seemed to be right behind him. Just how far they were behind him and how far they were or were not

39 Fitzpatrick, The Two Irelands, p. 69.
‘swimming with the stream’ of Irish nationalism, before being swept into the ‘limbo of forgotten things’, is the subject of this thesis.

Localism

If the questions asked in this study are ‘national’, its focus is unashamedly local. An analysis of the pre-war Irish party is meaningless unless it looks at the party at its roots, the array of local organisations and interests that so dominated the party and from which the large majority of its MPs and activists originated. As Theodore Hoppen has emphasised time and again, the norm of Irish politics was for it to be dominated by ‘dances around local gods’, the result of ‘a penetrating and tenacious political culture in which limited goals and local priorities could, more often than not, count for more than heroic principles and dramatic brilliance’. Alliances that appeared to be based on social class, ideology or political principle were the product more often than not of personal, family or parochial interests. Rivalries between leading citizens, dynasties, farmers, tenants, businesses and/or newspapers were the common driving force behind enduring, ‘national’ political disagreements. As Fitzpatrick wrote in his Clare study, certain key questions relating to any history of popular politics - concerning the social status of participants, their motivation, the interconnections of political groups and the processes whereby they won or lost local popular support - must be addressed through local study.

Despite the example set by Fitzpatrick, detailed local studies of the Irish party immediately before its demise remain rare. General narrative histories of politics in County Sligo and Meath have been published, but these have not focused on the issue of the Irish party and its pre-war health. As noted before, the unpublished theses of Marie Coleman and J.N. McEvoy have charted the decay of the party’s largest affiliate, the United Irish League, in County Longford and King’s County and have constructed local political narratives for both counties covering both the pre-war and wartime years. Fergus Campbell’s thesis, focused primarily on County Galway, stops with the easing off of the Ranch War in 1909, though an appendix does address the issue of later continuity - or in Campbell’s view the lack of it - between party and Sinn Fein personnel.

\[44\] Hoppen, Ireland Since 1800, p. 129.
\[46\] Fitzpatrick, Politics and Irish Life, p. x.
Far and away the most important ‘local’ work on the pre-war Irish party is Paul Bew’s *Conflict and Conciliation in Ireland*. While writing anything but a county study, Bew created a narrative of the Irish party’s agrarian struggle in the middle and west of Ireland and illustrated both the sheer density of local interests and their relationships to national agrarian/political campaigns in the 1900s. Nevertheless, Bew’s work concluded with the winding down of the Ranch War and the 1910 general elections. His later work, analysing nationalism and unionism in the years 1912-16, did not take forward his local work on the middle and west of Ireland. Therefore, despite the local and county studies that have complemented Fitzpatrick’s work of twenty-five years ago, there remains a gap in Irish historical studies - a detailed study of the state of the Irish party locally, and of provincial, nationalist politics, in the immediate pre-war period.

**Timescale - From the Ranch War to the Great War**

This study begins effectively where Paul Bew’s *Conflict and Conciliation in Ireland* left off, with the winding down of the agrarian campaign known as the Ranch War, the passage of the 1909 Land Act in November of that year and the general elections of January and December 1910. These elections gave the Irish party the balance of power in parliament and restored to the forefront of politics the idea that Home Rule could actually be achieved. The following years are usually seen as being dominated, across Ireland, by the ‘Home Rule crisis’, a period in which local pre-occupations were subsumed into a protracted, deeply-polarised, national political struggle. For over four years, Irish nationalists and their Protestant, unionist opponents were supposedly swept into a vortex of threats, drilling, public disorder, extravagant rhetoric, sectarian bitterness, government vacillation, arms procurement and paramilitary mobilisation. Though starting out with the whip hand over its Liberal allies, the Irish party effectively lost the parliamentary battles that it fought in this period, being forced to accept a series of compromises, delays and disappointments simply to keep the Home Rule bill alive. It still remains to be seen, however, just how far this sense of crisis was felt outside Dublin and Ulster, in ‘middle Ireland’, and how far the Irish party was discredited.

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48 *Bew, Conflict and Conciliation in Ireland*.
49 *Bew, Ideology and the Irish Question*.
The Home Rule crisis peaked in the late spring and summer of 1914. When the Home Rule bill passed in the House of Commons for the last time, in May 1914, it still faced the prospect of further truncation, the exclusion of at least four Ulster counties and an uncertain date of operation (probably mid-to-late 1915, quite possibly after the Liberal government had lost a general election to the unionists). The belief that Home Rule was being betrayed, linked to events as dramatic as the Curragh mutiny or the Larne gun-running, compounded the crisis. Across Ireland, there was a degree of popular ‘political’ mobilisation unseen since the Land League and the ‘Parnellism’ of the early 1880s. Moreover, this new mobilisation was into paramilitary organisations. On the eve of the First World War over 250,000 Irishmen had joined either the Irish or Ulster Volunteers; i.e. nearly an eighth of all Irish males at the 1911 census and over a quarter of active, adult males. The imminent parliamentary passage of Home Rule was expected by both sides, but so too was a further intensification of the crisis and, at the least, serious popular disorder.

The study of the Irish party could therefore end abruptly on the outbreak of war, with the Home Rule crisis at its peak and before the ‘deus ex machina’ of war had had a chance to upset the course of Irish politics. Indeed, the immediate impact of the war was to defuse the crisis - Irish concerns were temporarily dwarfed by the perceived drama, horror and scale of the European conflict. However, such a cut-off would exclude what would be the party’s last, successful national campaign, to back Redmond’s war policy and to control the Irish Volunteers. This campaign, in the autumn of 1914, proved to be the final point at which the position of the Irish party could be assessed before its rapid descent to oblivion. Just how decayed or robust was the party as it embarked on what it did not know would be its ‘last hurrah’? As a consequence, this thesis extends into the opening months of the war and covers five full years of politics in provincial Ireland, from December 1909 to December 1914.

Though chronologically the study ends at December 1914, the question of continuity between the Irish party and wartime Sinn Fein is discussed in Appendices A and B. Additionally, the three case study chapters in the main body of the thesis (analysing localism in County Roscommon, North Westmeath and Sligo town) each conclude with a section on ‘War and Sinn Fein’, going beyond December 1914 to show the impact of local allegiances on the wartime affiliations of pre-war politicians, whether to the Irish party, abstention or Sinn Fein.
The nine central chapters of this thesis analyse:

- the state of popular political activity and elites in the aftermath of the Ranch War.
- the condition of political, cultural, sporting and social organisations,
- the nature of contemporary, popular political language,
- three case studies - of County Roscommon, North Westmeath and Sligo town,
- the pre-occupations of provincial, nationalist opinion during the earlier ‘Home Rule crisis’ years of 1910-1913,
- the creation, mobilisation and control of the Irish Volunteers during the climax of the Home Rule crisis, from the autumn of 1913 to the outbreak of war and
- the outbreak of war, the formation of Redmond’s war policy and the takeover of the Volunteers, through to December 1914.

Definitions

A number of terms are used consistently throughout this study and are outlined below:

The Irish Party. It is essential, in defining ‘the party’, to distinguish between:
the Irish parliamentary party, consisting of pledge-bound, nationalist, Westminster MPs,
the ‘nationalist’ or ‘national’ movement, embracing virtually all Irish nationalists, and
the ‘Irish party’, comprising both the pledge-bound MPs and local members of their network of affiliated organisations.

For contemporaries, the term ‘the Irish party’ could mean either the parliamentary party or the wider body of MPs, affiliated organisations and supporters in the country. Just to confuse things, during the first world war the general body of ‘Irish party’ supporters came to be called ‘Redmondites’. However, before the war the beliefs of the broad body of party supporters were not necessarily synonymous with support for an ideology of ‘Redmondism’. ‘Redmondism’ is now used by historians to describe the socially-conservative, conciliatory and imperialist strands of John Redmond’s thought.
For consistency, the thesis will use the following terms:

'Parliamentary party' for the pledge-bound MPs;

'Irish party' for the wider body of organised public support for the parliamentary party, including members of the United Irish League (UIL) and Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH);

'Nationalists' and 'national movement' for any Irish nationalists, of any faction or party;

'Redmondite' for exponents of a specific rhetoric, 'Redmondism', primarily used by the Irish party's leader, John Redmond, advocating support for the empire, conciliation with unionists and the wooing of men of property to help lead the independent nation.

**Hibernians.** The Ancient Order of Hibernians was still split in the years 1910-14 into the AOH (Board of Erin), loyal to the Irish party, and the AOH (Irish-American Alliance), effectively an adjunct of Sinn Fein. The latter were, however, non-existent in middle Ireland and when contemporaries referred to 'Hibernians', 'the AOH' and 'the Order', they referred to the organisation supporting the Irish party, as will this thesis.

**Sinn Feiners.** Supporters of Sinn Fein in the years 1910-13 and 'Sinn Feiners' in the autumn of 1914 were two quite different groupings. 'Sinn Fein supporters' were a dwindling band of followers of Arthur Griffith's Sinn Fein party and advocates of abstention from Westminster. They were just one of a range of nationalist 'kickers, cranks and insurgents' or 'factionists', including the followers of William O'Brien's All for Ireland League (AFIL), who were sniping at the Irish party in the pre-war years. By contrast, the term 'Sinn Feiners' in the autumn of 1914 rapidly came to encompass all advanced nationalist opponents of Redmond's war policy. To keep the distinction clear, Griffith's pre-war followers will be referred to as 'Sinn Fein supporters' and the Irish party's wartime, advanced nationalist opponents as 'Sinn Feiners'.

**The Irish Volunteers.** The Volunteer movement of 1913-14, prior to its split in September 1914, was variously called by contemporaries 'the Volunteers', 'the Irish Volunteers,' or 'the Irish National Volunteers'. The more commonly used terms were, however, the first two. After the split, those loyal to Redmond rapidly assumed the title of 'National' or 'Irish National' Volunteers, while those under John MacNeill who opposed Redmond's war policy took, or as they saw it kept, the title of 'Irish Volunteers'. In this study, the terms
'Volunteers' and 'Irish Volunteers' will relate to the movement before its split; 'National Volunteers' to those loyal to Redmond after the split and 'MacNeillite Volunteers' to those opposing Redmond's war policy.

**Spellings and place names.** Contemporary spellings and place names will be used in the study, with the exception of a more limited use of capital letters than was practised in the period.

**Geography - Five Counties in ‘Middle Ireland’**

Five neighbouring counties have been selected for study, forming a geographic block with overlapping and interlocked political elites. From Connaught they are Leitrim, Roscommon and Sligo and from Leinster the neighbouring counties of Longford and Westmeath. At the time of the 1911 census their combined population was 340,389, or 7.8% of the total Irish population. Overwhelmingly, these counties were Catholic and nationalist. In the census, 93.1% of their population was declared to be Catholic and in no county did this figure fall below 90%. Politically, the counties had been dominated for over thirty years by nationalists, normally members of the Land League, the Irish National League, the Irish National Federation or the United Irish League - the successive, sometime competing, organisations supporting nationalists in parliament. All of the counties’ MPs were nationalists, nearly all of them elected unopposed. County and district councils across the region had been controlled by nationalists since the reform of local government in 1898.

By contrast, the political and economic power of Protestants locally had been in decline for years. Only in Sligo town, the largest town in the region, was there still a significant concentration of Protestant economic power and influence. In four of the counties, Protestants (overwhelmingly in the Church of Ireland) formed between 7.9% and 8.8% of the population, with a slightly higher representation in the northern counties of Sligo and Leitrim. Numbers in Westmeath were boosted by the military garrisons stationed in Athlone and

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50 A detailed occupational analysis of the 1911 census, county by county, by T. Galloway Rigg, was published by D.P. Moran in *The Leader* during 1913-14. The county analyses used here are for Sligo (6th December 1913), Leitrim (20th December), Roscommon (27th December), Westmeath (2nd May 1914) and Longford (20th June 1914).

51 Sligo’s Protestant professional and commercial elite is best described in Michael Farry’s *The Aftermath of Revolution: Sligo 1921-23* (Dublin 2000).
Mullingar. In Roscommon, however, there were only 2,082 Protestants in 1911 (2.3% of the population) compared with over 16,000 in 1861. This prompted the contemporary writer T. Galloway Rigg to remark: ‘It is just possible that Protestant prospects in Roscommon, as in the other Connaught counties, may brighten a little under Home Rule. They can hardly become any worse!’

The counties were also overwhelmingly agrarian. For the census, no less than 44,525 people recorded their occupation as farmers and graziers, and to this number should be added farm workers, farm servants and dependent family members. Well over half of the population derived their income directly from the land. Agriculture was in turn overwhelmingly dependent on livestock farming, and in particular the rearing and fattening of cattle. For the RIC county inspector in Roscommon, who had recently arrived in 1911 and who was completing yet another detailed monthly report on the state of his county, the prospect (from his window?) was quite uniform: ‘This is a grass county, grass as far as the eye can reach.’

Though the three Connaught counties were, after the 1909 Land Act, included in the ambit of the Congested Districts Board (CDB), they were not ‘congested’ in the way that so many believed the west of Ireland still to be. The secretary of the CDB, William Micks, ‘talking to people who have never been to the West of Ireland’, mocked them for imagining that ‘the people live in hovels with little potato-patches in the midst of great bogs and moors’. East Connaught in particular was quite different from the notion of a conventional ‘congested’ district, with numerous small holdings, much good land and almost entirely devoted to the cattle trade. Counties Leitrim, Roscommon and Sligo - at least south of Donegal Bay - were included in Micks’s definition of East Connaught. All five counties studied here had been massively depopulated in the last sixty-five years and relentless emigration had shrunk their population by a further 6.5% in the ten years since 1901. The dominance of livestock farming meant that all were far more ‘empty’ than congested, with the landscape frequently described as a ‘desert’ or a ‘prairie’. The nationalist writer William Bulfin in 1907 described the Connaught plains west of the Shannon as having ‘no woodlands, no groves, scarcely any trees at all. There is no agriculture - the fertile desert is uncultivated from end to end’. Here there

53 Monthly report of the Roscommon county inspector, November 1911 (PRO CO 904 85).
was ‘nothing but pasture and sheep and stone walls and the Western winds and loneliness’.

Further east, while the plains of Meath lacked this ‘bleak monotony’, with a much more varied landscape of woods and hedges, the land was still ‘a verdant, fertile desert from which man has banished himself, and into which he had sent the beasts to take his place’.

However, these apparently deserted grasslands were now enjoying what was to be a protracted spell of relative prosperity, driven primarily by rising farm incomes. They were characterised less by isolated ‘hovels with little potato patches’ than by improved and purchased farms, better buildings, healthy bank balances, public investment in roads, agriculture and housing, and sometimes bustling small towns. David Seth Jones has analysed the sophisticated commercial relationships underlying the cattle trade and the land market at this time which took the region way beyond the stereotype of ‘peasant’ farming. The 1911 census identified over 3,000 individuals directly involved in ‘commerce’ in the five counties, whether as merchants, brokers and factors, bank workers, auctioneers, commercial travellers, commercial clerks, publicans and hoteliers, grocers, drapers or general storekeepers.

Though trade was periodically interrupted - by rail strikes in 1911; foot and mouth disease in 1912 - monthly police reports sent in to Dublin Castle repeatedly commented on a general prosperity, underpinned by livestock prices. ‘Industries’ - the docks and mills of Sligo, the woollen mill in Athlone, coal mining at Arigna on the Roscommon/Sligo/Leitrim border - might be few and far between, but for the Sligo RIC county inspector, they were ‘flourishing’ and ‘farmers are doing well’ (November 1910). In Leitrim, livestock prices were buoyant and farmers were having ‘a good time’ (January 1911), and in Roscommon (though industries here were languishing) ‘the farming class are well satisfied with the prices obtainable in stock’ (April 1911). In a guide to Ireland published in 1913, the London Times wrote of ‘thousands of neat and well kept labourers’ cottages’, ‘a change of spirit’, ‘not a discouraged or down-hearted people today’ and ‘a great improvement in the material surroundings of the

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56 Ibid, pp. 87-89.
58 T. Galloway Rigg in *The Leader*, December 1913-June 1914.
59 Monthly reports of the Sligo, Leitrim and Roscommon county inspectors, November 1910, January and April 1911 (PRO CO 904/82 and 83).
people'. It contrasted material reality with popular misconceptions: 'Things are much better than they have been or than most people have any idea that they are.'

No town in the five counties was large - Sligo, the biggest, had a population just over 11,000. Indeed, there were only five towns with more than 2,000 inhabitants: Sligo (11,163 in the 1911 census), Athlone (7,472), Mullingar (5,539), Longford (3,760) and Boyle (2,691). However, in contrast to their rural hinterlands, their populations had stabilised in recent years and were often growing. Moreover, L.P. Curtis has emphasised that the ranks of these 'towns', defined in the census as having more than 2,000 people, should be increased by those with populations of over 1,000, which were also 'urban' with a variety of churches, schools, judicial petty sessions, police barracks, post offices, town halls or newspapers.

Carrick-on-Shannon, Castlerea, Granard, Manorhamilton, Moate and Roscommon all fell into this category, making eleven credible 'towns' in the area. The five counties also boasted a further thirty-five of what Curtis called 'semi-urban' communities, with populations of 120-1,000. However, many of these were patently not towns and some, deprived of good road or rail links, were a tale of woe. Thus the people of Drumkeerin in County Leitrim, admittedly to back their demand for a rent cut, painted a picture of their village characterised by no rail link, no town fairs, falling trade, depopulation and crumbling buildings. That said, other communities (Mohill with a population of 755; Strokestown with 801) were sufficiently vigorous to support even their own newspapers and were indistinguishable from their slightly larger urban neighbours.

Again, popular perceptions and reality did not always coincide. Towns were still often portrayed as decaying, particularly by neighbours and rivals. For the Athlone-based *Westmeath Independent* in 1911, Roscommon town was a 'tattered patch of cabins'. In 1914 it was 'the poorest looking parody of a county town there is to be found in the thirty-two', with only four large buildings - church, courthouse, poorhouse and Masonic lodge. It was,

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60 The Times, *The Ireland of Today* (London 1913), pp. 4, 5 and 11.
61 Curtis, 'Ireland in 1914'. in Vaughan (ed.), *A New History of Ireland Vol. VI*, p. 150.
62 Ballaghaderreen (pop. 1,317), was included in the area of County Roscommon after the reorganisation of local government in 1898. It elected a Roscommon county councillor, but politically was tied far more to county Mayo, falling within the East Mayo parliamentary constituency of the town's leading citizen, John Dillon. Its ties to 'Roscommon' politics were far weaker and it has not been included in this study.
63 *Leitrim Observer* 9th March 1912.
from the Athlone perspective, 'a very nice place to live out of'. In fact Roscommon (pop 1,858) boasted recent investment in its 'Harrison Hall', waterworks, labourers' cottages, post office and steam-rollered streets, as well as its Catholic church. Moreover, in 1912 it registered entries in a leading commercial directory for no fewer than forty grocers and spirits merchants, eight drapers, five hardware merchants, four publicans, five solicitors, five stationers and newsagents, four hoteliers and five victuallers, together with chemists, bakers, booksellers, corn, egg, hide and wool merchants, a dentist, hairdresser, coach-builders and auctioneers. The town supported not one but two newspapers (fierce commercial rivals) and possessed a medley of social, cultural and political societies, including the United Irish League, Gaelic Club (and football team), Gaelic League, Physical Culture Club, Social Club, old age pensions committee, Race Committee, volunteer fire brigade, 'commercial dancing class', Juvenile Dramatic Club, commercial and woodwork classes, Trade and Labour Association, church co-fraternity, Roscommon Associated Estates Committee and Mikado Opera Company.

Athlone itself, at least to the eyes of a small boy, was a model of busy activity. The writer Patrick Shea, brought up there before the Great War as the young son of an RIC head constable, remembered the bustle of the town, its weekly market in the square and the annual horse fairs and dealers with their 'strange, hard dialects of the Northern counties'. Athlone was frequented daily by the country gentry in shiny carriages, by farmers, shopkeepers, soldiers, tinkers and vagrants. Artillery salutes were fired for British celebrations and 'Foresters' in plumed hats 'walked sedately in procession through the town' on nationalist memorial days. Band parades, sports meetings, regattas and swimming galas were constant occurrences, with a major race meeting held twice a year. Everywhere, remembered Shea, goods were carried by donkeys pulling small carts.

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64 Westmeath Independent, 22nd April 1911; 9th May 1914.
65 Roscommon Messenger, 29th November 1913.
66 MacDonald's Irish Directory and Gazetteer (Edinburgh 1912). Care must be taken, though, with such directories, as several local traders made multiple entries, inflating the level of 'activity' in any one town. One trader in Roscommon, Hugh Flynn (a 'grocer'), could advertise in the press that he sold spirits, tea and coffee, jewellery, fancy goods, hardware, musical instruments, agricultural equipment, bicycles and manure (see advertisements in Roscommon Journal).
67 Roscommon Messenger, 11th December 1909; Roscommon Journal, 4th November, 1911.
County Roscommon, geographically close to the centre of Ireland, has in many ways formed the centre of this thesis. It alone bordered all of the other counties studied and in 1911 had by far the largest population (93,956). It had provided the location of the first cattle drive of the Ranch War and was one of the most disturbed areas during that campaign. The county was run for years by a monolithic Irish party machine that appeared deeply entrenched and secure in its loyalty to Redmond and the parliamentary party. Yet in 1917 Roscommon, ‘believed to be so peaceful and so free from Sinn Fein and the rebellion taint’, would also see the imported, elderly Count Plunkett, father of an executed Easter rebel, swamp the Irish party’s long-established local candidate in the North Roscommon by-election, a defeat that initiated the party’s electoral obliteration.

In fact the county’s politics, beneath the surface control exercised by two party ‘bosses’ - John Hayden the MP for South Roscommon and John Fitzgibbon the chairman of Roscommon county council - were riddled with unending ‘parish pump’, personal disputes. Families, newspapers, farmers, ‘ratepayers’ and road contractors, job-hunters and turbulent priests sniped at each other throughout the pre-war years. In particular, the county was riven by the feud, dating back to at least the early 1880s, of two prominent nationalist families, the Tullys and the Haydens. This rivalry extended from Roscommon town in the south of the county to Boyle in the north. In Roscommon town William Tully, owner of the Roscommon Journal, had clashed regularly with the brothers Luke, Joseph and John Hayden, each of them in turn owners of the town’s other newspaper, the Roscommon Messenger. In Boyle William’s nephew Jasper Tully, owner of the Roscommon Herald, led the charge against John Hayden and John Fitzgibbon, whether they were Parnellites (in the 1890s) or leaders of the county’s reunited Irish party from 1900 on. This political and newspaper war was bitter and protracted - the feud effectively lasted from the 1880s through to Jasper Tully’s death in 1938 - and the county’s contending newspapers as a result published a wealth of material on local dissensions and splits. Moreover, Jasper Tully’s expulsion from the United Irish League in 1903 meant that from then on the Herald was one of a tiny band of pre-war, local, nationalist newspapers published by an unremitting enemy of the Irish party. In these years it provided the perfect contrast to the steadfastly loyal Roscommon Messenger, its journalistic and editorial bias equal and opposite to that of the Haydens’ paper.

The political feuds and alliances of Roscommon permeated through to its neighbouring counties. Athlone, ‘an appendage to the tail between two counties’, was nominally in Westmeath and the largest town in that county, but extended west over the Shannon into John Hayden’s constituency and had been part of County Roscommon until the 1898 local government reorganisation. More directly, the Hayden/Tully feud was duplicated almost exactly, with the same principals, in Mullingar in North Westmeath. Here, the Westmeath Examiner had been owned by John Hayden since the early 1880s and for nearly twenty years had faced the bitter rivalry of the Midland Examiner, run by no less than Jasper Tully and his brother George W. Tully. When Hayden in turn fell out with the nationalist MP for North Westmeath, Laurence Ginnell, nothing could be more natural than that Ginnell and the Tullys should be allies, not only in Westmeath but in electoral contests in Roscommon.

The Roscommon Herald did not just report on Roscommon and Westmeath affairs, but covered news from Leitrim, Longford and Sligo. Indeed Tully was the MP for South Leitrim from 1892 to 1906 (the last three years as an independent). J.P. Farrell, the MP for North Longford and owner himself of the Longford Leader newspaper, started his journalistic career as the Longford correspondent of the Roscommon Herald, and with Hayden, Fitzgibbon and Ginnell was one of the leading instigators of the Ranch War across the area. In 1910, Farrell and Jasper Tully were in turn to be co-defendants against charges that their newspapers incited agrarian violence against ‘land-grabbers’ in Longford (Farrell) and Leitrim (Tully). Longford, Westmeath and Leitrim politics were themselves intertwined. One of the leading Irish party men in Westmeath, Patrick McKenna, originated from Longford and by 1909 had become a bitter opponent of J.P. Farrell. McKenna went on in 1910 to stand as the Irish party candidate in the January general election in North Westmeath, where John Hayden had ‘watched me in my political cradle’. He was defeated by Ginnell. There were also close ties between several Longford and South Leitrim men. The Longford Independent and the Leitrim Advertiser (the latter published in Mohill) were owned by the same family, the Turners. J. P. Farrell and T.F. Smyth, Tully’s successor as South Leitrim’s MP, were related.

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70 Westmeath Independent, 5th July 1913.
71 McKenna was speaking of his Westmeath (and Roscommon) mentor Hayden at a meeting at Newtownforbes, County Longford, which was in turn reported in the Leitrim Advertiser of 7th October 1909. McKenna returned to Longford politics in the South Longford by-election of May 1917. Here he was to stand, again for the party, as a local man and he lost again, this time to Sinn Fein.
by marriage,\textsuperscript{72} while Smyth was himself Longford-born and educated, as was Farrell, at St Mel’s College.

Leitrim had also seen the one major, recent electoral scare experienced by the Irish party locally, when in 1907 the MP for North Leitrim, Charles Dolan, defected to the Sinn Fein party and triggered a by-election. Though the Irish party candidate, F.E. Meehan, won the election in 1908, he did so after a protracted and heated campaign organised by the then MP for North Sligo, P.N. McHugh.\textsuperscript{73} McHugh, who himself originally came from Leitrim, was leader of the party in Sligo town and owner of the \textit{Sligo Champion}, still the largest and widest-read newspaper in this part of Ireland. The \textit{Champion’s} local coverage, and McHugh’s influence, extended beyond Sligo town to all of County Sligo, to Leitrim and to North Roscommon. Sligo town was itself the prime source of professional and commercial services for the county, for Leitrim and North Roscommon. It was the location of the Catholic see covering much of the region - the diocese of Elphin, which extended over virtually all of counties Leitrim, Sligo and Roscommon (the other principal diocesan areas were Meath, based in Mullingar, and Ardagh, based in Longford). Sligo town also provided local examples of a thriving mass labour movement and, as noted, of a still vigorous, politically vocal, Protestant commercial class. The latter had its own newspaper outlets in the \textit{Sligo Independent} and the \textit{Sligo Times}, both of which were published in the town.

For all the interconnections between the five counties, it would be a mistake to believe that their politics were perfectly homogeneous. Leaving aside the distinctive strengths of labour and Protestant politics in Sligo town and the existence of a formal political schism into two nationalist parties (led by Hayden and Ginnell) in North Westmeath, the multitude of strictly local issues that did not count beyond a single county, town or village ensured that easy generalisation across counties is not possible. The ‘case study’ chapters of this thesis have therefore been focused on the particular conditions of County Roscommon (localism), North Westmeath (the Ginnellite split) and Sligo town (the relationship between the Irish party and labour). Significant differences between and within these counties, and Leitrim and Longford, probably ensure that no single one of them was ‘typical’ during the final years of

\textsuperscript{72} Farrell’s wife was Smyth’s cousin. (\textit{Longford Leader}, 21\textsuperscript{st} October 1911).

\textsuperscript{73} This campaign is described by Ciaran Dubhír in \textit{Sinn Fein : The First Election 1908} (Manorhamilton 1993). McHugh died in 1909.
union with Britain. Nevertheless, the wider coverage attempted here, across a broad area of ‘middle Ireland’, does provide useful insights into the experience of provincial nationalists, and the condition of Redmond’s party, on what they still believed to be the eve of Home Rule.

Sources - The Use of Newspapers
A range of primary sources - police records (particularly the monthly reports on their counties prepared by RIC inspectors), correspondence, archives and, to a limited extent, diaries - have been used in this study and are outlined in the Bibliography. However, research for this thesis has consisted primarily of the reading of eighteen weekly, provincial newspapers published in the five counties over the five years 1910-14. The eighteen newspapers studied are summarised below:

**Leitrim Advertiser.** Politically independent. Published in Mohill, Leitrim and owned by the Turner family. Four broadsheet pages. News coverage local (Leitrim and Longford) and national. The two centre pages were frequently printed off the same plate as the paper’s sister, the *Longford Independent*. Advertising content normally 1 1/2 - 1 3/4 pages. Full series of archived copies read for 1910-14.

**Leitrim Observer.** Nationalist and loyal to the Irish party. Published in Carrick-on-Shannon, Leitrim. Acquired by Patrick Dunne at the end of 1910 and expanded from four to eight broadsheet pages. However, four pages every week consisted of syndicated magazine pieces from the British press - fashion, society gossip, ‘humour’. Of the residual, advertising typically took up to two and a half pages a week. News coverage local, focused on Carrick, with intermittent coverage of national news. Full series read for 1910-14.

**Longford Independent.** Independent. Published in Longford and owned by the Turner family. Four broadsheet pages. News coverage local, with significant duplication of content with the *Leitrim Advertiser*. 40% or more of the paper advertising. The Turners were consistently hostile to the North Longford MP J.P. Farrell. Full series read for 1910-14.

74 ‘National’ stories are here defined as any news story of direct interest to Ireland, whether originating in Ireland or in Britain.
**Longford Journal.** Unionist. Published in Longford and owned by W.T. Dann. Eight tabloid pages. However, only one page of local/national news, with up to seven pages taken up by syndicated magazine pieces from the British press and by advertisements. Low advertising content of under two pages. Full series read up to August 1914 when the archived series terminated.

**Longford Leader.** Nationalist and party-loyal. Published in Longford and owned by J.P. Farrell MP. Eight broadsheet pages. News coverage local (Longford and South Leitrim) and national. High advertising content, at up to three and a half pages. Archived series incomplete for 1910-11 but full series read thereafter.

**Midland Reporter.** Nationalist but hostile to the Irish party. Published in Mullingar, Westmeath. Owned by George W. Tully, brother of Jasper. Eight broadsheet pages, though often widened to fit in 10 columns to a page. Local (North Westmeath, Longford and Roscommon) and national news, with frequent editorials on international events. Low advertising content at one to one and a half pages. Full series read for 1910-14.

**Roscommon Herald.** Nationalist but hostile to the Irish party. Published in Boyle, Roscommon. Owner and editor Jasper Tully. Eight A0 pages each week, with ten columns per page. Detailed coverage of and comment on local, national and international events. Local coverage of counties Roscommon, Longford, Westmeath, Sligo, Leitrim and Mayo (Ballaghadereen). Low advertising content (usually no more than two and a half pages a week), and much of that for businesses in Carrick-on Shannon, Sligo and Dublin. Full series read for 1910-14.

**Roscommon Journal.** Nationalist, loyal to Redmond, but hostile to the town’s UIL. Published in Roscommon and owned by William Tully. Eight pages. News coverage local (South Roscommon) and national. Advertising content typically two to three pages. Full series read for 1910-14.

**Roscommon Messenger.** Nationalist and party-loyal. Published in Roscommon and owned by John Hayden MP after the death of his brother Joseph in December 1909. Eight broadsheet pages. News coverage local (South Roscommon, Athlone and North Galway) and
national, with editorials on international events. Advertisements three to three and a half pages. Full series read for 1910-14.


**Sligo Independent.** Unionist. Published in Sligo and owned by the Gilmour family. Edited by T. Boyd. Eight broadsheet pages. Local (Sligo), national and international news. Typically over three pages of advertising. Full series read for 1910-14.

**Sligo Nationalist.** Nationalist and party-loyal. Published in Sligo and owned by Bernard McTernan, who founded the paper in 1910 after he resigned as general manager of the *Champion*. Eight broadsheet pages with coverage of local (Sligo), national and international news. High advertising content - sometimes up to five pages. Archived series only begins in June 1913, with significant gaps up to the end of 1914.

**Sligo Times.** Unionist. Published in Sligo and owned by Robert Smyllie, who founded the paper in 1908. Increased in 1909 from eight to twelve broadsheet pages. Local (Sligo) and national news coverage. Over seven pages of advertisements in 1911, but the paper's overall size was reduced to eight - ten pages in 1912. Paper plagued by bad debts, the loss of its account books and a fire, closing in 1914. Full series read up to January 1914, when the archived series ended.

**Strokestown Democrat.** Nationalist and party-loyal. Published in Strokestown, Roscommon, owned by P. Morahan and established in 1907. 4 broadsheet pages. News coverage local (Roscommon) with editorials on national events. Over 60% of the paper's content advertising. Archived series only starts in March 1913, with significant gaps through to the end of 1914.


Westmeath Independent. Nationalist and party-loyal. Published in Athlone. Owned by the Chapman family (led by the nationalist Westmeath county councillor, Thomas Chapman) and edited by Michael MacDermott-Hayes. Eight A0 pages. Local (Westmeath, Roscommon, Longford and King’s), national and international news. Advertisements up to three and a half pages. Full series read for 1910-14.

The political affiliations of these papers were clearly flagged: until the outbreak of war, twelve were nationalist (ten supporting the Irish party and two enemies of it); two independent and four unionist. The eighteen titles ranged from significant weekly papers, selling to a wide catchment area and still striving to be the prime source of news and opinions for their readers, to ‘miserable sheets’ struggling to exist. In the former category were the Roscommon Herald, Sligo Champion, and Westmeath Independent, while in the latter category were six titles:

75 The phrase ‘miserable sheet’ is that used by David Fitzpatrick to describe similar papers in Clare (Politics and Irish Life, p. 90).
- the *Leitrim Advertiser* and *Longford Independent*, four pages only and doubling up on content,
- the *Leitrim Observer*, with half of its content ‘magazine’ material from Britain and over half of the rest advertisements,
- the *Longford Journal*, with up to seven out of eight pages advertisements and ‘magazine’ material from Britain,
- the *Strokestown Democrat*, four pages with only minimal news coverage outside its immediate area, and
- the *Westmeath Guardian*, four pages only and no view of the world beyond North Westmeath.

In between these two extremes, though, were nine other newspapers, typically each of eight pages, covering local and national news, sometimes editorialising on international events, and still constituting significant local media for the dissemination of news and views.

Contemporary circulation figures for these newspapers are lacking, as internal records no longer exist and the last government-collated figures were for 1892. However, benchmarks for circulation in the pre-war years can be derived from the 1892 figures using:

a) the *Sligo Champion*, which had an 1892 circulation of 11,000 (though this included copies printed for free circulation), serviced the largest town in the area and at least three surrounding counties. It presumably had still by far the largest local circulation before the war,

b) the *Roscommon Messenger*, which had an 1892 circulation of 696, but which was publicly claimed to have been trebled by Joseph Hayden between 1897 and 1909. This could give a pre-war circulation for the *Messenger* of close to 2,000.

It is possible that ‘middle-ranking’, nationalist papers such as the *Messenger*, serving towns of 1,000-2,000 and their hinterlands, sold between 1,000 –2000 copies; the local ‘miserable sheets’ well under a thousand copies; the three more substantial papers anything in excess of

76 1892 circulation figures were collated in Dublin Castle and published by Marie-Louise Legg, in *Newspapers and Nationalism: The Irish Provincial Press 1850-1892* (Dublin 1999). p.127.
77 *Roscommon Messenger*, 11th December 1909.
78 This is confirmed by Nicholas Nally, the editor who succeeded John Hayden at the *Westmeath Examiner* in the 1950s, who believed that the pre-war circulation of the *Examiner* also below 700 in 1892, was around 2,000 (conversation with Nicholas Nally. 15th November 2001). Lucius Farrell, grandson of J.P. Farrell, and a former editor of the *Longford Leader*, believed that that paper’s pre-war circulation was also around a couple of thousand (conversations with Lucius Farrell, 14th and 15th November 2001).
2,000-3,000 copies. Athlone’s population of over 7,000 provided a major support for the *Westmeath Independent*, and the *Roscommon Herald* was widely sold outside Boyle, across North Roscommon, Leitrim, Longford and South Sligo. 79 At the top of the tree stood the *Sligo Champion*.

The local press remains a key primary source for what the historian J.J. Lee has called ‘the study of contemporary perception and opinion’. However, as Lee has stated in a recent *cri de coeur*, ‘vast tracts of the newspaper press remain virtually terra incognita to the historian. The press did not, and still does not, enjoy the status of an archival source in the minds of many historians.’ 80 In large part this was the result of a blatant and transparent bias which so suffused the local press that it appeared to lack any objectivity or value as a source. Local owners and editors for years had seemed to see their role, in the best or worst traditions of late-Victorian ‘new journalism’ 81 as being politically-aligned but self-appointed leaders and moulders of local opinion. For the historian Marie-Louise Legg, a late-Victorian Irish newspaper was ‘a lever on local affairs...conducted by the proprietor as a preacher in a pulpit in a church addresses the congregation’. 82 This ‘preaching’ permeated leader writing, news reporting and the editorial selection and weighting of news stories. It could also be co-ordinated across a number of papers; for many nationalist papers, there was a clear Irish party ‘line’ which was also laid out in syndicated columns supplied by the party’s Irish Press Agency, most notably in ‘Home Rule Notes from the Campaign’.

Blatant bias meant that any one newspaper was of limited value as a source. Some news stories were genuinely considered uninteresting by editors but others were played down or completely omitted because they were politically embarrassing. Throughout early 1914, as the prospects for peaceful Home Rule went from bad to worse, John Hayden’s two papers week after week printed leaders, supplied by Hayden from London, repeatedly proclaiming its imminent, glorious, parliamentary success; coverage of reverses, and there were many, was minimal. Another party-supporter, the *Stroketown Democrat*, avoided all mention of the

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79 The 1892 circulation of the *Westmeath Independent* was reported by the government to be only 150. This seems ludicrously low, and in any case the Chapman family bought and rescued the title afterwards.
82 Legg, *Newspapers and Nationalism*, p. 172.
Ulster unionist Larne gun-running of April 1914 - it could be said to have focused only on local news, until it became clear the same edition that ignored Larne played up a fictitious, nationalist arms-landing in Donegal. Among the party’s enemies, Jasper Tully maintained a blacklist of people he would not cover. As a result, Boyle’s Gaelic League and, for several months in 1914, its Irish Volunteer company were simply not reported on. As for the Westmeath Independent, it could both suppress news (it did not once mention the dissident Laurence Ginnell in 1912), and make it up. In October 1913 it created wildly bogus accounts of thousands of ‘Midland Volunteers’ parading through Athlone. No one paper, however voluminous its prose or dense its coverage, was a reliable mirror of what was actually happening or of the state of local opinion. It is not surprising that Marie Coleman, in her study of County Longford, could dismiss the Longford Leader, owned by J.P. Farrell MP and the leading newspaper in the town, as ‘little more than a propaganda sheet for the Irish parliamentary party’.

These are significant reservations, but they do not invalidate the use of the local press as a contemporary historical source of ‘published opinion’. Though local editors and owners may have seen themselves as men of great local influence, the economics of their trade were such that they could not stray too far out of line with popular beliefs and orthodoxies. If they did, virtually every one of them faced the prospect of losing readers, advertisers and/or printing work to their competitors, in the same town, in the same county or across counties. The Victorian journalist W.T. Stead wrote of the mandate of the press being renewed every day, with the ‘electorate’ registering their votes by their daily purchases. The same applied, on a weekly basis, in provincial Ireland. Roscommon, Boyle, Mullingar, Longford and Sligo all witnessed direct competition between papers within the same town and Sligo saw an additional, parallel fight between two unionist papers. Newspapers in Strokestown, Carrick, Mohill and Longford had to face the ever-competitive Roscommon Herald (and in the two

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83 Stroketown Democrat, 2nd May 1914.
85 Westmeath Independent, 25th October 1914.
86 Coleman, County Longford 1910-1923, pp. 28-29.
87 The distinction between published opinion and public opinion was made by Tom Harrison, of the second world war’s ‘Mass Observation’, quoted by D. George Boyce in ‘Public Opinion and Historians’ History, June 1978, Vol. 63. p. 215.
Leitrim towns the *Sligo Champion*; Athlone’s *Westmeath Independent* competed with papers from Roscommon town and Mullingar. The cost of entry for new competitors was not high and local advertising and printing revenues could be both quickly established and just as quickly lost to rivals. The *Kerryman* in 1902, for example, was set up with capital of £500 and had a first-year turnover as high as £900.\(^{89}\) When Laurence Ginnell and Jasper Tully contemplated buying another local paper in Westmeath in 1909, sums modestly in excess of £500-600 were considered.\(^{90}\) In Ireland as a whole, the number of newspapers had increased from 109 in 1853 to 230 by 1913,\(^{91}\) and in the five counties four of the papers studied - the *Sligo Nationalist*, *Sligo Times*, *Stokestown Democrat* and *Western Nationalist* - had all been established only since 1907. A fifth, the *Leitrim Observer*, was purchased in 1910.

Though new titles were still being launched, some local weeklies were succumbing to competition. Several Protestant papers were in steep decline - those in Mullingar and Longford had become ‘miserable sheets’ and the newly-launched *Sligo Times* failed in 1914. Nationalist weeklies also faced increasing competition from the Dublin press, in particular from the rapidly growing and efficiently-distributed *Irish Independent*. The *Independent* did not yet arrive sufficiently early in the day to make the local weeklies’ coverage of anything but local news unnecessary, but it was now regularly delivered on the day of printing. Moreover its own weekly edition competed directly with the provincial press. Local papers adopted different strategies to survive. Several acted as local correspondents for the Dublin paper. Others cut back on coverage of international and even national news, on the assumption that their readers had already read about it in the dailies.\(^ {92}\) However, the impact of the Dublin papers, while it would intensify, should not be overstated. For all local news, and much national news, the provincial weeklies remained the primary medium for informing local opinion and transmitting its views. Even on the outbreak of war, when the circulation of the *Irish Independent* shot up by 40% to over 100,000, the local papers were not threatened. Nearly all of them produced voluminous, and very un-local, war coverage. In Athlone and other midlands towns, the Dublin papers still arrived only at around 9.00am and the

\(^{89}\) Oram, *The Newspaper Book*, p. 78.

\(^{90}\) Extracts from the unpublished diaries of Laurence and Alice Ginnell, p. 72 (9th April 1909), p. 75 (15th and 16th April 1909).


\(^{92}\) In covering the Dublin strikes of 1913, the *Sligo Nationalist* actually referred its readers to news reports in the Dublin dailies ‘which reach most of our readers’ (30th August 1913).
Westmeath Independent proposed the production of a daily ‘war telegram’ to fill the perceived void in its readers’ service. On the same day the Western Nationalist noted that the Dublin dailies were still simply not read in country districts.93

On any assessment, the provincial press’s coverage of both local and national stories was extensive throughout the pre-war years. Virtually every major national story was reported and commented on by several titles. Deficiencies in local coverage by any one paper were offset by the compensating coverage, and often the equal and opposite bias, of its rivals. Not only can the coverage of ‘head to head’ rivals in a particular town be aggregated and compared, but also that of whole groups - newspapers in one county against those in another, nationalists against unionists or Irish party supporters against their nationalist enemies.

Moreover, though highly selective in their editorial bias, local journalists still followed the practice of taking verbatim notes of a wide range of local meetings, which were then reproduced in detail. Political rallies, council meetings and court proceedings were all voluminously written up, with long lists of attendees and of resolutions passed, and with the speeches made clearly attributed to each speaker. Local societies, and particularly political societies, also submitted their own reports of meetings for inclusion - the volume of such reports provided another indicator of an organisation’s health or decline. This plethora of verbatim reporting had the effect, in the opinion of the contemporary writer Padraic Colum, of making the Irish provincial press ‘probably the worst-written in any European language. The sheets are filled with reports of meetings of Boards of Guardians and proceedings at petty sessions.’ ‘Yet’ he continued, ‘a good deal of national expression gets into a local paper’.94

Writing in the 1920s, the unionist historian W. Alison Phillips believed that local papers were more valuable as a historical source than those in Dublin, because of ‘the more intimate light they threw on the life of the people’.95 This study attempts to show that contemporary newspapers were not just megaphones for the egomaniacal prejudices of their owners and editors, but did indeed provide an accurate, contemporary reflection of the beliefs of their

93 Westmeath Independent; Western Nationalist, 8th August 1914.
readers. By studying a broad range of local newspapers across five Irish counties it has been possible to:

a) construct a reliable narrative of local events;

b) assemble information on elites, organisations and political language; and

c) assess the impact of national events on local opinion.

In this way, perhaps, the local, political ‘life of the people’ can be recreated and a long-neglected primary source given proper recognition.
Chapter 2: The Waning of Popular Politics

Apathy

The discussion of ‘apathy’ was never far from political debate in pre-war nationalist Ireland. In 1908 it was given expression by the French political economist and observer of Irish affairs L. Paul-Dubois (translated into English by the Irish party MP Tom Kettle). In *Contemporary Ireland*, Paul-Dubois described:

> the fatalism, the lethargy, the moral inertia and intellectual passivity, the general absence of energy and character, of method and discipline, which we remark in the Ireland of today.¹

Though he ascribed this, as did others, to English degradation of the Irish ‘national mind’, there was also a widespread contemporary belief that all was not well, in particular, with Irish politics. The alleged inactivity, ossification, decline and even corruption of the national movement provided recurring themes both for contemporaries and for later historians.

According to the historian Philip Bull, the 1903 Land Act was a watershed in this process of nationalist political decay. The old impetus given to nationalism by tenant farmers was dying and the farming class now had new problems and aspirations. Mass land agitation gave way to local machine politics. Efforts to ginger up the Irish party and its ideas were met with distrust. The Irish party was ensnared within the legacy of an increasingly irrelevant and outdated agrarian policy and its only remaining vital element was sectarianism.² As Paul Bew has described, the one later, serious land campaign to occur, the Ranch War of 1907-09, far from reinvigorating nationalists exacerbated structural weaknesses and class divisions among them.³ Bew has written of the loss of momentum experienced after the divisive Ranch War: ‘In effect, in the 1912-14 epoch we are dealing with the confused side effects of the stabilisation of revolutionary fervour.’⁴

A lack of enthusiasm, of any compelling cause to mobilise popular opinion, was regularly commented on by contemporary writers in the five counties studied. At the beginning of the

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¹ L. Paul-Dubois (translated by T. M. Kettle MP), *Contemporary Ireland* (Dublin 1908), p. 368.
³ See Bew, *Conflict and Conciliation in Ireland*.
period, ahead of the first 1910 general election, the Western Nationalist asked of the Liberal Chancellor of the Exchequer, David Lloyd George:

could even he, with all his great powers, waken up the people of Ireland from the lethargy into which they seem to have fallen?...Criticism and complaint, grudging acknowledgement of good services, and more or less quiet grumbling if another victory is delayed is the contribution of the Irish farmer of the present day to the cause of his own emancipation.5

On the same day, the Westmeath Independent could only exhort in hope rather than expectation that 'the people should be up and doing. Apathy should disappear and enthusiasm should be aroused.'6 Attacks on apathy, and refutations of the unionist claim that it demonstrated a lack of nationalist enthusiasm for Home Rule, were to form the staple content of nationalist comment throughout the years 1910-13.

Equally recurrent were the succession of monthly police reports describing the inactive state of local politics. Reports from all five counties in these years observed that things were quiet, that there was no stir in local politics, that political societies were inactive, that there was no interest in elections, or no recent political activity.7 There were, of course, exceptions. The March 1912 report on Roscommon stated that ‘political and other societies are in a fairly flourishing condition’,8 but far more typical was the report from Westmeath for August 1913, that ‘political societies have only a nominal existence’.9 The symptoms of this inactivity, manifesting themselves as a lack of both people and funds, recurred in the local press.

Writing of the forthcoming 1912 municipal elections, the Longford Leader noted that there had for some time been a difficulty in getting men to accept public office,10 while two months later the Sligo Champion wrote: ‘However worthy of support the cause may be, it is

5 Western Nationalist, 16th October 1909.
6 Westmeath Independent, 16th October 1909.
7 See monthly reports of the county inspectors for:
   Leitrim: November 1910 (PRO CO 904/82)
   Longford: October 1911 (PRO CO 904/85)
   Roscommon: December 1910 (PRO CO 904/82), August 1911 (PRO CO 904/84), September 1911 (PRO CO 904/85)
   Sligo: February 1910 (PRO CO 904/80), July 1910 (PRO CO 904/81), December 1910 (PRO CO 904/82)
   Westmeath: December 1910 (PRO CO 904/82), September 1911 (PRO CO 904/85), December 1911 (PRO CO 904/85).
8 Monthly report of the Roscommon county inspector, March 1912 (PRO CO 904/86).
9 Monthly report of the Westmeath county inspector, August 1913 (PRO CO 904/90).
10 Longford Leader, 30th November 1911.
notorious that people do not rush to the collectors with their contributions, and circulars appealing for funds are liable to be mislaid and neglected.\textsuperscript{11} Even if elected, district councillors and poor law guardians commonly did not bother to attend meetings, which not infrequently failed to make a quorum. Thus in 1913 just one guardian attended 45 meetings of the Roscommon board of guardians, another attended 27 and one 24. Five others managed 10 or more, but the other thirty made it to less than 10 meetings.\textsuperscript{12}

The RIC Inspector General remarked regularly on the quiet of nationalist Ireland, and at the end of 1912 summed up his perception of reduced political fervour:

In rural Ireland generally political enthusiasm is not very marked. Purchased tenants are constantly improving their farms, while those who have not yet bought their holdings appear to devote all their energies to expediting land purchase.\textsuperscript{13}

Only in districts where there was agitation about the use or ownership of land was there any measurable nationalist political activity.\textsuperscript{14} The recurring refrain, whether from the Inspector General, the \textit{Western Nationalist} or Philip Bull, is thus that the role of farmers in provincial Irish politics did change fundamentally during the 1900s. The great tide of agitation was ebbing, leaving the Irish party stranded and producing a withdrawal from politics, and a shrinkage of the active political class, that explained the incessant cries of ‘apathy’. Central to such analysis in the five counties studied would be the question of whether land tensions, which had appeared to burgeon again during the Ranch War years, had really dissipated.

\textbf{Land - The End of the Wars?}

Contemporary police statistics did not show a total cessation of agrarian hostilities in the five counties in the years 1909-14. However, with significant county variations, they did provide convincing evidence of a marked decline. Thus the ‘Intelligence Notes’ compiled in Dublin Castle showed the following annual data for cattle drives (the main manifestation of serious disputes since 1907), for unlet and unstocked farms, and for boycotts:

\textsuperscript{11} \textit{Sligo Champion}, \textit{2\textsuperscript{nd} March 1912}.
\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Roscommon Journal}, \textit{31\textsuperscript{st} January 1914}.
\textsuperscript{13} Monthly report of the Inspector General, November 1912 (PRO CO 904/88).
\textsuperscript{14} See monthly reports of the Inspector General, January 1913 (PRO CO 904/89), February 1913 (PRO CO 904/89) and May 1913 (PRO CO 904/90).
Table 1: Cattle Drives in the Five Counties 1907-14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1907</th>
<th>1908</th>
<th>1909</th>
<th>1910</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Longford</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roscommon</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sligo</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westmeath</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
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Table 2: Unlet and Unstocked Farms mid-1908 to mid-1914 (grazing farms unlet, unstocked or partly-stocked as a result of UIL activity)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1908</th>
<th>1909</th>
<th>1910</th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>1912</th>
<th>1913</th>
<th>1914</th>
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<tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roscommon</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westmeath</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
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Table 3: Boycotts end-Jan 1909 to end-Jan 1915 (all boycotts—‘total’, ‘partial’ and ‘minor’)

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1909</th>
<th>1910</th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>1912</th>
<th>1913</th>
<th>1914</th>
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<td>Leitrim</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Longford</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Westmeath</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
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<td>2</td>
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15 Compiled from the annual ‘Intelligence Notes’ for 1907/08 (PRO CO 903/14, pp. 32 and 140); 1909 (PRO CO 903/15, p. 116); 1910-11 (PRO CO 903/16, pp. 153 and 157); 1912 (PRO CO 903/17, p. 45) and 1913-14 (Brendan Mac Giolla Choille (ed.). Intelligence Notes 1913-16 (Dublin 1966), pp. 62 and 124).

16 Ibid, 1908 (PRO CO 903/14 p. 64); 1909 (PRO CO 903/15 p.107); 1910 (PRO CO 903/16 p.135); 1911 and 1912 (PRO CO 903/17, p. 45); 1913 and 1914 (Intelligence Notes 1913-16, pp. 68 and 130).

17 Ibid, 1909 (PRO CO 903/14 p.176); 1910 (PRO CO 904/15 p.116); 1911-12 (PRO CO 903/16 p.162). For 1913-15 data were collated from the January monthly reports of the relevant county inspectors (PRO CO 904/89/92/96).
The tables indicate that in Leitrim the Ranch War was largely a non-event. Moreover, there was little agrarian tension thereafter. As will be seen, the boycotts of 1909-10 related almost entirely to only one dispute. The agitation in Longford was also a relatively small affair; after limited driving in 1907-08, boycotting was the main local tactic and this was not sustained beyond 1911. Roscommon, Sligo and Westmeath, which had witnessed major cattle driving activity in the years 1907-08, all saw their agitations slump in later years. In Roscommon, cattle driving fell away drastically after 1908, though some tensions - expressed in unlet farms and low-level boycotts - appeared to persist. Boycotting of individuals and farms fell to an even greater extent in Sligo, but in terms of drives Sligo seems to have been more persistently disturbed; they partially revived here in 1910 and again in 1914, in which year they were largely absent elsewhere. Westmeath saw the most sustained cattle-driving activity in the years 1910-11, but thereafter it fell off rapidly.

Attempts to portray increasingly sporadic agrarian incidents as a continuation of the Ranch War appear unconvincing in the light of such statistics, at least in the five counties studied. Throughout the period, though incidents were reported in detail as they flared up, there was no sense of ‘land campaigning’ in the local nationalist press, and only minimal reporting of land issues in unionist papers which had never hesitated to report nationalist lawlessness in the past. The plethora of white gloves awarded to circuit judges as a token for presiding over ‘crimeless’ quarter sessions and assizes also bore witness to the ebbing of agrarian tensions. At the end of the period, during 1914, white gloves were awarded to judges sitting in Carrick-on-Shannon, Longford, Manorhamilton, Mullingar, Roscommon and, despite the revival of driving, even Sligo - a ‘full set’ of the counties researched.

The successful purchase of their land-holdings by former tenant farmers was held to be central to the ‘pacification’ of the countryside. In 1913, the handbook The Ireland of Today published a county-by-county table showing the total acreage purchased up to the end of March 1912 under all Land Acts from 1870 onwards, plus the total of land in each area (excluding land under water, buildings etc but including mountain land, woods, bogs and marsh). For the five counties the purchased percentages derived from these figures were:

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18 For example, though primarily focused on Mayo rather than Longford and Roscommon, see Clare C. Murphy 'Conflict in the West: The Ranch War Continues 1911-12, Part 1' Cathair na Mart, Journal of the Westport Historical Society: No.15, 1995. pp. 85-100.
Table 4: Land Purchase to end-March 1912\(^19\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Acres Purchased</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leitrim</td>
<td>45.4%</td>
<td>(160,059 out of 352,336)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longford</td>
<td>55.3%</td>
<td>(132,502 out of 239,255)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roscommon</td>
<td>54.9%</td>
<td>(313,004 out of 569,457)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sligo</td>
<td>32.2%</td>
<td>(132,251 out of 419,597)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westmeath</td>
<td>39.8%</td>
<td>(163,326 out of 410,243)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leinster</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
<td>(1.772m out of 4.602m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connaught</td>
<td>37.8%</td>
<td>(1.509m out of 3.990m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All-Ireland</td>
<td>38.2%</td>
<td>(7.368m out of 19.290m)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The figures were of acreage rather than holdings and did not include uncompleted but agreed sales. Furthermore, the percentages understated the rate of purchase because the total of ‘land’ in each county included non-farming land. To illustrate the degree of contemporary confusion over the rate of purchase, the Leitrim county inspector - in easily the least agitated of the five counties - reported at the end of 1909 that over 80% of tenants had purchased and were now ‘thrifty and contented’.\(^20\) In three of the counties, Leitrim, Longford and Roscommon, *The Ireland of Today* figures did, however, show clearly that the rate of purchase was well above both provincial and national averages. Slower progress in Sligo and Westmeath appeared to correlate to the greater persistence of tensions there after the Ranch War.

In other counties, however, land purchase failed to remove all discontents and could instead foment new tensions. In his work on Galway and Mayo up to 1909, Fergus Campbell has emphasised that the ‘western problem’ - the juxtaposition of overpopulated, impoverished settlements next to vast tracts of underpopulated, ‘untenanted’ grass lands - was still anything but an abstraction.\(^21\) Here land purchase appeared to widen the gap between large farmers, normally the first to purchase, and landless men and smallholders. The unsatisfied demands of smallholders, ‘congests’ and landless men for enlarged holdings had provided a fundamental, redistributive impetus from below to the outbreak of the Ranch War.\(^22\) Basic conflicts of interest between large ‘shopkeeper/gaziers’ and ‘small’ men further split the UIL

\(^{19}\) The Times, *The Ireland of Today*, p. 273.
\(^{20}\) Monthly report of the Leitrim county inspector, December 1909 (PRO CO 904/79).
\(^{22}\) Ibid, pp. 186-195, 247 and 256.
during the Ranch War and generated open conflict locally in Galway in the years 1910-14.\textsuperscript{23} In police reports Galway, with a higher rate of land purchase than Sligo (35.0\% in \textit{The Ireland of Today}), remained materially more disturbed and one of the most troubled areas of Ireland.

In Eastern Connaught only muted echoes of Galway’s tensions were heard in the years 1910-14. Unsurprisingly William Micks, the long-standing secretary/member of the Congested Districts Board, wrote that there was a hunger and ‘jealousy’ for land, but, as noted above (page 22), he stated that the countryside in Roscommon, Leitrim and Sligo south of Donegal Bay was much less poor than the congested districts further west, with numerous small livestock farmers keen to acquire their tenancies and much good land.\textsuperscript{24} In Roscommon, the worry of many ‘small’ men related to the 1909 Land Act’s definition of a ‘congest’, entitled to additional land - i.e. as a holder of land with a rateable value of £7 p.a. or less. This low threshold had the effect of excluding most Roscommon smallholders from being ‘congests’ and generated a fear that when the CDB restructured estates, land that ‘should’ go to Roscommon men would instead go to ‘migrants’ from outside the county. From the end of 1909 a rash of UIL resolutions denounced the possibility of migrants - primarily Mayo families - coming into the county, with the lead coming from the Tulsk UIL branch.\textsuperscript{25} The thrust of this agitation was critical of John Fitzgibbon, the most powerful UIL man in the county and from the beginning of 1910 a CDB board member. However, complaint did not turn into outright opposition. There were no reported instances of any actions against ‘small’ migrant congests, though Fitzgibbon had to appeal to Roscommon smallholders not to be selfish.\textsuperscript{26} The issue did not die, however, and even in April 1914 required the intervention of the South Roscommon MP, John Hayden, to quash a proposal to bring Mayo migrants into the south of the county.\textsuperscript{27}

When a ‘migrant’ dispute did arise, at Ballybeg farm in South Roscommon from October 1910 into 1911, the intruder, Mr. Payne, was in fact a Protestant large farmer from Galway, in possession of Estates Commission land against the wishes of the locals, who happened to be

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{23} Ibid, pp. 233-248.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Micks. \textit{An Account of the Constitution, Administration and Dissolution of the Congested Districts Board}. p. 8.
\item \textsuperscript{25} Report of the Roscommon county inspector, December 1909 (PRO CO 904/79); February 1910 (PRO CO 904/80); Roscommon Messenger, 4th December 1909, 5th February 1910; Roscommon Journal, 21st May 1910.
\item \textsuperscript{26} Roscommon Messenger, Roscommon Herald, 7th May 1910.
\item \textsuperscript{27} Westmeath Independent, 21st March 1914.
\end{itemize}
the Tulsk UIL. The arrival of Payne, who had previously been a target of Roscommon’s ranch warriors in 1907-08, provided the ideal opportunity for Fitzgibbon and Hayden to take over the agitation and reaffirm their radical credentials with the Tulsk UIL. Payne’s arrival was a clear breach of the ‘unwritten law’ against which all could unite. Fitzgibbon addressed a Tulsk rally in October, with no irony, as ‘fighting John Fitzgibbon of former times’. Hayden, taking particular care not to fall foul of incitement provisions of the Crimes Act, told the rally that he could not advise publicly how to act under circumstances which had not yet arisen. However, he said, it was pointless to tell parliament there was turmoil unless ‘that discontent finds expression in words and acts’. The first major cattle drive, complete with a police baton charge of the crowd, duly took place in November 1910. As the county inspector reported in early 1911 on continuing agrarian disturbances: ‘They have possibly got a hint to take up this attitude’. Though the Ballybeg agitation persisted, with drumming parties, ‘groaning’ at Payne and resolutions to prevent him from hunting, it fizzled out in 1911 with Payne still in possession. Locally, resentment was caused by the political leadership’s perceived abandonment of Tulsk. Nearly three years later, a poem sent to the Roscommon Journal on ‘The Battle of Ballybeg’ accused the ‘great Mr Fitz’ of coming in, raising hopes and then leaving ‘the congests’ alone.

Ballybeg was Roscommon’s only major top-down agitation in the years 1910-14, but underlying tensions remained. The police wrote periodically of the prevalence of the UIL’s ‘unwritten law’ on land matters, and its very effectiveness seems to have reduced the need for, and thus the incidence of, actual intimidation. They also wrote throughout the period of continuing land hunger in the county - thus in June 1910:

> The proceedings with reference to the numerous farms in this county...are still, so to speak, under the microscope. Every move by the occupier who wants to retain the land is closely scanned by the small farmers who desire to occupy the land.

Again the subject came up in May 1912:

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28 Monthly report of the Roscommon county inspector, November 1910 (PRO CO 904/82). The inspector also believed that the UIL leadership wished to choke off an incipient O’Brienite revival in the county.
29 Roscommon Messenger, 29th October 1910.
31 Monthly report of the Roscommon county inspector, January 1911 (PRO CO 904/83).
33 Monthly report of the Roscommon county inspector, April 1910 (PRO CO 904/80).
34 Ibid, June 1910 (PRO CO 904/81).
Land is the great question in this county and people seem to think that if they had a little bit of land their ideal of happiness would be reached.\[35\]

Disputes persisted, taking the form of:
- withholding rents, to force landlords to sell,
- stopping auctions, when the wrong people looked like outbidding the CDB, or
- intimidation, when '11 month' graziers,\[36\] on estates that had been sold to the CDB pending redistribution, refused to budge.

However, they had the characteristics of local, mopping-up operations after the major change. A fundamental shift to land purchase, had already taken place. The frequency of disputes declined gradually and in January 1914 the county inspector made his first nil monthly return, with no land agitation, no 'drumming' (outside the premises of those intimidated) and no boycotting.\[37\]

In Leitrim, there was only one significant dispute over the whole five-year period, with a cattle drive and police charge right at the beginning, on January 1\textsuperscript{st} 1910. Two Protestant brothers named MacNeill occupied the farm, at Aughavas on the Leitrim/Cavan border, of a local 'evicted' man. The dispute had rumbled on for two years, but a heavy boycott was effective from late 1909, covered friends and suppliers of the MacNeills and spilled over into County Cavan, where they had to go for supplies. It persisted through to April 1911, when the MacNeills left for Ulster.\[38\] Thereafter, Leitrim was much the quietest of the five counties. This could be ascribed to the extent of land purchase, to universal acceptance of the 'unwritten law', or both. From late 1910 onwards police reports tended to be that the county was peaceable and free of crime.\[39\]

In Sligo, land agitations came to be directed as much against the CDB itself as against landlords and graziers. From 1910 onwards, complaints recurred about the snail’s pace of the

\[35\] Ibid, May 1912 (PRO CO 904/87).
\[36\] Since the 1881 Land Act, tenancies of less than 12 months had not been subject to rent controls.
\[37\] Monthly report of the Roscommon county inspector, January 1914 (PRO CO 904/92).
\[38\] The dispute was also noteworthy for triggering the 'coercion' trial against Jasper Tully, whose Roscommon Herald had published local UIL resolutions against the MacNeills by name. Tully did his best to publicise the trial and to tie the prosecution up in procedural knots. The case was eventually dropped in November 1910.
\[39\] See monthly report of the Leitrim county inspector, November 1910 (PRO CO 904/82).
CDB's work. In November 1911, the South Sligo MP John O'Dowd talked of a 'grave agrarian crisis' caused by the slow work of the CDB. In September 1912, the police reported 'the people have lost patience' with the CDB and the Estates Commission. The grievance was real. The 1909 Land Act had given the CDB a greatly enhanced role in buying, restructuring and reselling estates over most of Connaught but it also discouraged direct sales from landlords to tenants. However, the Board operated with far greater alacrity in Roscommon than in Sligo and the contrast between the CDB's treatment of Roscommon and its East Connaught neighbours was startling. In August 1913, the Roscommon Herald reported a reply to a parliamentary question concerning CDB purchases since the passing of the 1909 Act. The Herald noted that 772 holdings in Roscommon ('where Mr. John Fitzgibbon MP is on the Board') had been vested in the CDB and 24,629 Roscommon acres sold to it. Comparable figures for Sligo were only 7 holdings and 2,903 acres (and for the admittedly much less troubled Leitrim, no holdings and 1,091 acres). In May 1914, a Roscommon Journal piece on discontent in the west emphasised that there was still jealousy of Roscommon, where large sums of money were said to have been spent and where there was 'relatively little congestion'. Sporadic disputes in County Sligo continued to erupt through to 1914, particularly in the west around Easkey, and although the police estimated that two-thirds of the 'county' had been purchased by March 1914, a new Easkey agitation to force the sale of non-residential farms and 11-month tenancies to the CDB had resumed.

Outside Connaught, the most active ranch warrior had been Laurence Ginnell, MP for North Westmeath and 'father of the hazel' - the first public advocate of cattle driving. After the January 1910 general election Ginnell, now severed from the Irish parliamentary party, attempted to sustain the Ranch War in his constituency. During 1910 his visits were characterised by calls for action across the county to end ranching in a single parliamentary

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40 For example, see monthly reports of the Sligo county inspector, December 1910 (PRO CO 904/82), January 1911 (PRO CO 904/83), April 1911 (PRO CO 904/83), or the Roscommon Herald, reporting on North Sligo UIL executive (14th January 1911) and on disorder at the South Sligo UIL executive (3rd September 1911).
41 O'Dowd was speaking to the South Sligo UIL executive, Sligo Champion, 2nd December 1911.
42 Monthly report of the Sligo county inspector, September 1912 (PRO CO 904/88).
43 Western Nationalist, 31st August 1912. Fitzgibbon told a Mayo audience that the CDB would not normally give permission for direct sales from landlord to tenant - otherwise graziers would just buy their own farms and block redistribution.
44 Roscommon Herald, 9th August 1913.
45 Roscommon Journal, 2nd May 1914.
46 Monthly reports of the Sligo county inspector, January and March 1914 (PRO CO 904/92).
session, and by attempts to provoke arrest by teasingly naming malfeasants publicly (such as when he called on his audience, against a Mr Knott, to 'cut the knot with the hazel').

Though in 1910 he called for a 'hurricane' of driving, Ginnell dropped his local agitation in 1911. Already by August 1910 the county inspector noted: 'I am informed that people generally are tired of this form of lawlessness' and by October he wrote that no attempt had been made to revive the anti-grazing agitation. By contrast, driving was more sustained in the south of the county around Moate, the base of the Irish party boss Eugene Robins. Around Moate the agitation focused on clearing up unresolved Ranch War disputes and had the benefit of reaffirming the party's agrarian radicalism and seeing off Ginnellite incursions, but even here activity tailed off sharply by late 1911. In January 1912, the bishop of Meath, Dr. Gaughran, based in Mullingar, noted that he had heard nothing of driving of late and hoped he would hear nothing in the future.

The Ranch War agitation in Longford had also had a strong degree of political leadership from above, from the MP for North Longford, president of the South Longford UIL and owner of the Longford Leader, J.P. Farrell. Farrell chose his targets carefully and his enthusiastic espousal of land radicalism in 1908 had coincided with a by-election in South Longford and a Sinn Fein challenge in North Longford. As noted above, boycotting rather than driving was the staple of campaigning here and the bulk of boycotts in 1909-11 were continuations of assaults on 'land-grabbers' dating from 1908. Farrell's newspaper took the lead in promoting boycotts and as a result Farrell and others underwent a prolonged 'coercion' prosecution during 1910 (a Dublin jury was finally 'hung' in January 1911). In February 1911 a new agitation began, for a cut in the Longford town rents of the tenants of Lord Longford. Again, this agitation had a strongly political element - Lord Longford was an active unionist. However, falling enthusiasm for Farrell's campaigns can be seen from the failure of the 'County Longford National Defence Fund', set up to pay court-imposed damages arising from the earlier 1908 agitation. Launched in March 1911 to raise £165, it

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49 Monthly report of the Westmeath county inspector, May 1910 (PRO CO 904/81).
50 Ibid. August 1910 (PRO CO 904/81).
51 Ibid, October 1910 (PRO CO 904/82).
52 Leitrim Advertiser, 4th January 1912.
closed in August having raised less than £44.53. Both the imposition of these damages and the campaign against Lord Longford led to some of Farrell’s goods being seized by the sheriff and repurchased by Farrell’s supporters, but activity was clearly waning in 1911. By January 1912 the county inspector commented that the Longford Leader was ‘milder than of old’ and he reduced recorded boycotts from over 30 to 9. By May he reported that the agitation had ‘practically disappeared’.

In both Westmeath and Longford further disputes did re-erupt and Dr. Gaughran’s hopes of not hearing of drives again were not fulfilled. Nevertheless, protracted disputes, though triggering boycotts, drumming and even drives, were now rare and, as in Roscommon, related more to mopping up operations than to any deep-seated anger. A dispute in 1912-13 over the Donore farm near Moate resulted from the owners refusing to sell to locals at a ‘fair’ price. From November 1914, at the Pilkington estate near Tyrrellspass, Westmeath, two graziers refused to budge from an estate sold to the Estates Commission. The Ballyinulvey ranch near Ballymahon, Longford became a source of contention in the spring of 1913 when three Ballymahon town traders pre-empted their neighbours in buying the farm. Ginnell’s ‘hurricane’ was rather a series of squalls.

The net result of all this was that for many local commentators the issue was plain - the land war was over and farmers were leaving politics, becoming ‘selfish’ and mean-spirited, paying no regard to wider issues. In late 1909, a correspondent of the Roscommon Messenger lamented: ‘It seems that when the people have got the grass of a few sheep and cattle they imagine all is won. Are there no other grievances to be addressed?’ In February 1912 the Westmeath Independent bewailed the new political outlook of local farmers:

For very shame sake there is just the possibility that some patriotic feeling may be touched in the emergency of the present great national crisis. It is pitiable to see our farmers so mean-spirited and so poor-hearted.

53 See monthly report of the Longford county inspector June 1911 (PRO CO 904/84) and Longford Leader, 2nd September 1911.
54 Monthly reports of the Longford county inspector. January 1912 (PRO CO 904/86), May 1912 (PRO CO 904/86) and March 1913 (PRO CO 904 89).
55 Roscommon Messenger, 2nd October 1909.
56 Westmeath Independent, 24th February 1912.
From a quite different perspective, police reports from Longford and Leitrim from the end of 1909 onwards would repeat, month after month, comments on the ‘beneficial’ impact of land purchase on local behaviour, while the Westmeath inspector later made it clear that purchased farmers would now ‘hold aloof’ from political activity. Even the prospect of new land legislation aroused little interest. When a new Land bill was stalled in 1913 and failed in 1914 - it had been supported by the parliamentary party to improve purchase terms and extend compulsory purchase outside Connaught - its demise triggered not a flicker of popular protest.

In March 1910 John Dillon confided to his friend Wilfrid Scawen Blunt that the Irish ‘peasantry’ had changed, becoming much more like the French, ‘industrious and economical, even penurious’. More scathingly, the O’Brienite clerical novelist Canon Sheehan also wrote of the French nature of Irish farmers:

So long as there was a Cromwellian landlord to be fought and conquered, there remained before the eyes of the people some image of the country. Now the fight is over, and they are sinking down into the abject and awful condition of the French peasant who doesn’t care for king or country and only asks “who is going to reduce the rates”.

The UIL organiser Seamus O’Mulloy used a more agrarian turn of phrase to describe the phenomenon in Roscommon in 1913:

Wherever I go I am told that since the tenants got their holdings and since they got a reduction in their rents and other things like that, you might as well be trying to knock blood out of a turnip as to get them to contribute to the cause (hear hear).

Local Political Elites

The withdrawal of many farmers from active politics meant that what remained of political life shifted further from the parishes to the towns, from farmers to urban traders and

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57 For example see monthly reports of the county inspectors for:
Leitrim: December 1909 (PRO CO 904/79)
Longford: January 1910 (PRO CO 904/80). March 1910 (PRO CO 904/80)
Westmeath: December 1911 (PRO CO 904/85).
58 See Midland Reporter, 10<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> July 1913, Roscommon Messenger, 17<sup>th</sup> January 1914, Westmeath Independent, 21<sup>st</sup> February 1914.
61 Roscommon Messenger, 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1913.
professionals. When, in February 1912, the *Westmeath Independent* lamented the behaviour of Irish farmers as ‘so mean-spirited and so poor-hearted’, it added the significant rider: ‘The towns may be relied upon as ever to stand by the Irish Party’. 62

The political power of the ‘trader’ in provincial political life had already long been a staple of contemporary comment and was taken as axiomatic by writers such as Padraic Colum, Canon Hannay and, most vividly in his contempt for the ‘groggy-patriot-publican general-shop man’, by J.M. Synge. 63 The English commentator Sydney Brooks wrote in 1912:

Uniting in himself the functions of shopkeeper, moneylender, publican and political boss, it is the country trader who, as a rule, has the final word in the local government and economic destinies of Nationalist Ireland. 64

The phenomenon has been analysed best by Liam Kennedy - traders were consistently over-represented in political life while large farmers failed to achieve dominance in the rural electorate. Traders were at the centre of networks of kinship, credit, information and employment. They had geographic proximity to local government, the time to participate in politics and the strong economic self-interest to promote their trade, status and the nationalism that had so pervaded their rural hinterland from the last quarter of the 19th century. 65 Their prominence was generally uncontested: ‘In the eyes of most country people there was nothing unnatural in the involvement of traders in agrarian agitation or in their prominence as political representatives’. 66

The stereotyped image of contemporaries, however, was not just that of the politically-influential trader but of the ‘boss’. Economic influence, local power, ‘Tammany Hall’ politics and the control of patronage were seen as inseparable. The departing tide of mass enthusiasm in the countryside left exposed the grubbier mechanics of local patronage, manipulation and factions. In Carrick-on-Shannon, a town of just over 1,000 people, the monopolisation of power by a ‘boss’ was typified by Patrick Flynn, the leading wholesale and

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64 Sydney Brooks, *Aspects of the Irish Situation* (Dublin and London 1912), p. 120.


66 Ibid, p.368.
retail merchant. His trades included grocery, tea, wine, timber, coal, firearms, agricultural machinery and undertaking. He was also a large farmer, town landlord, JP, member of the county grand jury, Hibernian, president of the town UIL, treasurer of the local parliamentary fund, chair of both the district council and the guardians, member of the old age pensions committee, chair of the county infirmary committee, chair of the county agricultural committee, vice-chair of the county council, and member of the General Council of County Councils.67

Other prominent nationalists seen as such ‘bosses’ across the five counties were:

**Leitrim**: Francis Meehan (MP, grocer and publican), in Manorhamilton;

**Longford**: J P Farrell (MP and newspaper proprietor) in Longford town, dominant in both North and South Longford;

**Roscommon**: John Fitzgibbon (draper) in Castlerea, T.J. Devine (grocer and general store owner, auctioneer) in Boyle, George O’Reilly (auctioneer) in Strokestown;

**Sligo**: P.A. McHugh (MP and newspaper proprietor until his death in 1909), Daniel O’Donnell (hotelier), John Jinks (auctioneer, undertaker, carter, publican and grocer) - all three in Sligo town - and John O’Dowd (MP, chair of the county council, publican and farmer) in Bunninaden, Tobercurry and across South Sligo;

**Westmeath**: John Hayden (newspaper owner, also in Roscommon town) in Mullingar, Eugene Robins (auctioneer) in Moate.

The significant towns in which there was not an obvious, leading, local party figure were Athlone in Westmeath and Granard in County Longford.

If small Irish towns were the stagnating hamlets so frequently depicted by their rivals, the hypothesis of each being easily dominated by a single, individual boss would be quite credible. However, as already seen above (pages 24-25), the reality of small-town life was often different. The gulf between the depiction of Roscommon town by Athlone’s *Westmeath Independent* as ‘the most woebegone, out-at-elbow and tattered patch of cabins to be recognised on the map of Ireland’68 and the busyness of life there could hardly be wider. As already seen, the town boasted an array of commercial activities - a population of under 1,900

67 *Leitrim Observer*, 2nd October 1909, 13th November 1909, 5th March 1910, 14th December 1912, 17th October 1914; *Western Nationalist*, 19th December 1914.

68 *Westmeath Independent*, 22nd April 1911.
generated, in the *MacDonald’s Irish Directory* for 1912, 108 commercial entries (although the caveat must be added that many merchants made multiple entries). Moreover, the town’s societies, whether cultural, sporting, religious, social or political, were many and various. Such activity and diversity was common to all the towns in the five counties - certainly to all the towns of over 1,000 inhabitants - and each society, club or branch had its officers and committees. As Sydney Brooks wrote:

More than any country I am acquainted with, more even than Poland itself, Ireland is a network of “organisations”, leagues, societies, factions and cliques. Almost every department of life seems to be on a committee basis...A genius for combination penetrates to the lowest strata.

A town’s leadership, operating through multiple, interlocking societies and committees, was commonly a collective.

It was, of course, still possible for individuals to aggregate considerable local power by participating in an enormous range of activities and devoting (damning?) themselves to an almost permanent committee life. Many did so, but even to contemporaries the multiplicity of roles of a Patrick Flynn in Carrick-on-Shannon seemed extreme - in a 1914 libel case he was mocked when the long list of his positions was recited to the amusement of the court, followed by his being depicted by Sergeant Sullivan as ‘a superman and supernatural being’. Power was more typically shared by a range of traders, grocers, drapers, publicans, hoteliers, lawyers, newspaper proprietors and, very frequently, auctioneers. In the language of the time, there were still ‘bosses’, but they surrounded themselves with ‘rings’, ‘cliques’ and ‘cronies’ - or as Ginnell bizarrely called Hayden’s closest lieutenants in Mullingar, ‘the Rabbis’.

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69 *MacDonald’s Irish Directory and Gazetteer*, 1912 edition. Such commercial activity was matched by other towns in the county. Boyle (pop. 2,691 in 1911) had 95 entries, Castlerea (1,224) 101 and Strokestown (801) 70.


71 *Western Nationalist*, 19th December 1914.

72 The prevalence of local auctioneers in politics is remarkable. The following auctioneers were senior UIL and/or AOH figures in the five counties: Eugene Robins in Moate, O.J. Dolan in Athlone, John Jinks in Sligo, T.J. Devine and John Keaveny in Boyle, George O’Reilly in Strokestown, Thomas McGovern in Manorhamilton, T.F. Smyth in Mohill, Michael Carter in South Leitrim, Michael McGrath in Carrick, P.J. Weymes in Mullingar. In many cases, holding an auctioneer’s licence was one of several business activities, but for Robins, Dolan, O’Reilly, McGovern, Smyth, Carter and even Jinks it was a major business activity.

73 *Roscommon Herald*, 22nd January 1910.
This provincial political class was entirely male, overwhelmingly Catholic (there were only a handful of Protestant nationalists in the five counties) and distinctly middle-aged. Most had been senior in local politics for 10, 20 or more years. Changes in their composition were by definition rare, and came about largely through death or old age. To quote the MP Stephen Gwynn, 'control of local affairs was generally claimed by the veterans, and conceded to them'.

Young men were not excluded as such, but had to work their way up the ladder of social participation, influence and committee membership. Those few who emerged more rapidly (like Patrick McKenna in Westmeath and Longford, or Henry Monson in Sligo) did so as the protégés of local leaders. The participation of individual farmers in the political class was also limited. On the surface there were still many men in small towns who called themselves ‘farmers’ - traders and professionals were often keen landowners, tenants and/or graziers - but those who were both genuine farmers and active in political life tended to be men such as John Phillips (the MP for South Longford and chair of the county council) or J.J. O’Neill (Farrell’s supporter and president of the North Longford UIL), who had been senior in the political machine for years. The one area in which farmers did participate was as candidates, often unopposed, for election to the bloated local government boards which covered the towns’ rural hinterlands. As seen above, however, those elected were often more noted for their subsequent absence from meetings.

The diversity of town life was such that there was plenty of scope for rivals of a town’s leading group - personal, family, commercial or political - to entrench themselves in local organisational bases; urban life was tailor-made to support rival factions. In different towns the rival organisations could be any or all of the Hibernians, Town Tenants, Foresters, Town Commissioners, ad hoc bodies or, of course, rival newspapers. There was, however, little or no consistency in the five counties as to which particular organisations challenged and which cemented local political control, other than that in every town the dominant grouping controlled its local UIL. In Carrick, the centres of nationalist opposition to Patrick Flynn came from within the Irish party, based on the Hibernians and Town Tenants (led by the draper and auctioneer Michael McGrath). In Roscommon town, challenges to the Hayden...

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75 See Roscommon Herald, 27th December 1913, concerning conflicts within the Town Tenants against 'landlords' and the Roscommon Herald and Leitrim Observer, 6th June 1914 on McGrath's election to Carrick No. 1 RDC, after which he was paraded around the town by Hibernians and Volunteers.
family came from the Tully family (William Tully was yet another auctioneer), its newspaper the *Roscommon Journal*, the Trade and Labour Association, the chairman of the Town Commissioners (George Geraghty) and the Associated Estates Committee (an ad hoc rival to the Town Tenants set up by the parish priest Canon Cummins - see Chapter 5). In Mullingar, the Foresters were staunch allies of Hayden and the UIL; in Longford town they were opponents of J.P. Farrell, the UIL and the Hibernians, which were also led by Farrell. In Sligo town the Hibernians under Daniel O'Donnell first challenged the position of the UIL and P.A. McHugh in the mid-1900s, and then were used to underpin O'Donnell’s own power in later years (see Chapter 7).

Local government in Ireland was not generally considered to be flagrantly corrupt, but underneath the surface the prize for local political success was still the control of local patronage. The interests of supporters and relatives, allies, businesses and newspapers were consistently advanced by ‘influence’, exercised so automatically that it usually ruled out the need for more overt malpractice. Paul-Dubois opined that local councils were not corrupt, but that ‘the custom of combinazione is widely diffused’. 76 The co-operator R.A. Anderson, no friend of town traders, stated: ‘With us jobbery is seldom, if ever, the result of corruption, but is due to a good-natured desire to help a neighbour’s child’. 77 Thus ‘the neighbours’ children’ collected jobs, committee posts, housing and contracts; their loyalty was rewarded and future control cemented. Mary Daly has shown that in Roscommon town, after the War of Independence, an investigation into the Town Commissioners (which had been purged of Sinn Feiners) reported that the chairman, secretary, assistant secretary and two other members were all employed by Hayden’s *Roscommon Messenger*, while tenants of artisan dwellings, with low rents often in arrears, included several town commissioners and Messenger employees. 78 When his opponents in 1917 finally attacked Tom Fleming, a lieutenant of the controlling group in Roscommon town and secretary of the county insurance committee, they noted that he was in addition a relieving officer, sub-sanitary officer, rent collector, rate collector, assistant stock-master to the CDB, UIL branch secretary and large farmer to boot. 79

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76 Paul-Dubois, *Contemporary Ireland*, p. 195.
78 Mary Daly, *The Buffer State: The Historical Roots of the Department of the Environment* (Dublin 1997), p. 121. The Town Commission had by then been purged of any Sinn Fein supporters.
In County Roscommon, far and away the most influential nationalist politician was John Fitzgibbon, one of the few local leaders to take on a wider provincial and national role even before he became an MP. His commercial base was his drapery in Castlerea, a large business which at any one time employed some 30 apprentices, of whom possibly only six or seven were paid.80 Active in the local Gaelic League (of which he was treasurer and later vice-chairman) the temperance movement and, with the Haydens, as a Parnellite in the 1890s, he rose to fame as a land agitator, ranch warrior, supporter of ‘labour’ against road contractors and Irish party organiser during the 1900s, though he combined this with active dealings in land as a ‘shopkeeper/grazier’ and the job of local CDB inspector of industries.81 His skills in organisation and agitation and his old Parnellite ties to John Redmond propelled him to being one of Redmond’s companions on a US fund-raising trip in 1908 and a trustee of the Irish party’s parliamentary fund in 1909. In 1910 he became a CDB board member and, there being no Roscommon vacancy, MP for South Mayo. Throughout the years 1910-14 he maintained his chairmanship of the Castlerea guardians and Roscommon county council. His closest associates were either former South Roscommon Parnellites such as Hayden or Denis Kelly, vice-chair of the county council, or Castlerea businessmen such as Michael Grogan (grocer, spirits merchant and county councillor), Frank Forde (baker and confectioner) and the old Fenian Pat Conry.

Fitzgibbon was mocked by parts of the press for his maiden parliamentary speech - ‘a solid, tubby, elderly man with a large head and no hair on it...florid, pugilistic like a prize-fighter grown elderly...all his life he has sold pyjamas and talked politics and done well out of both’82 - but he remained throughout formidable as a man not to be crossed locally and as a sharp business dealer. Certainly Augustine Birrell, the Liberal Irish chief secretary, though describing him as ‘such the statesman’ on his joining the CDB, added: ‘were it not for his red eye-lids which glow like circles of fire’.83 As noted above, he was again ‘fighting John Fitzgibbon’ in 1910-11, at Ballybeg in particular, and in early 1912 his rhetoric over land

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80 Ibid, 4th January 1913, quoting the Irish Draper's Assistant. One of Fitzgibbon’s former shop assistants was Major John MacBride, whom Fitzgibbon took pride in welcoming back to Castlerea to talk about his Boer War role in 1907 (Roscommon Journal, 5th October 1907).
81 Micks, An Account of the Constitution, Administration and Dissolution of the Congested Districts Board, p. 185.
82 Roscommon Herald, 18th March 1911, quoting a British parliamentary sketch.
83 Birrell to Dillon, 31st January 1910. Dillon papers TCD f 6798/171.
issues led to a brief unionist campaign to force him to resign from the CDB - this was, however, met not with defiance but with at least one public apology to Birrell.84

Fitzgibbon was undoubtedly keen to keep his membership of the CDB, a major source of influence which, as Paul Bew has noted, he had sought for some years.85 As seen above, his native county received preferential treatment from the Board. He himself sold land to the CDB several times, completely oblivious to what a later age would call ‘conflicts of interest’. Micks’s history of the Board records three such direct sales, amounting to 266 acres.86 The most spectacular abuse of his position on the CDB related to the sale of the Castlerea demesne. After a campaign by the Castlerea Town Tenants, led by Fitzgibbon, Forde and Grogan, the CDB had purchased the demesne of the Sandford estate, which in 1912 it reorganised and resold. However, instead of distributing the demesne among the townsmen, who believed they had been promised it, the CDB allocated most - 605 out of 700 acres of ‘town’ land - to only a handful.87 In theory the transaction could be defended. Those receiving this land were meant to swap ‘equivalent’ agricultural land outside the town for allocation to congests. Woodlands were also being preserved and a new fair green and football ground carved out for all the town. The deal was devised by the leading local Catholic gentleman, the O’Conor Don, and by Fitzgibbon.88 However, the few recipients of the demesne land included not just associates of Fitzgibbon, notably Forde, but the O’Conor Don and Fitzgibbon himself - he got 35 acres.89 Fitzgibbon had been involved in every phase of the transaction, as Town Tenant, organiser, recipient and CDB member. The transaction split the town’s bourgeoisie, led to a petition to Redmond to intervene90 and temporarily triggered the formation of two rival Town Tenants’ bodies campaigning for and against the sale.91 Fitzgibbon effectively rode out the storm and called his opponents allies of the unionist leader Sir Edward Carson - because they promoted nationalist disunity. The deal went through, but it led to the temporary disillusionment of Fitzgibbon’s lieutenant Grogan92

84 Roscommon Herald, 2nd, 16th, 23rd, 30th March 1912.
85 Bew, Conflict and Conciliation in Ireland, p. 105.
87 Roscommon Messenger, 11th, 18th, 25th May 1912; Roscommon Herald, 18th May 1912.
88 Westmeath Independent, 4th May 1912.
89 Midland Reporter, 25th May 1912.
90 Roscommon Journal, 21st September 1912.
91 Ibid, 8th, 22nd June 1912.
and a permanent breach with a range of townsamen. These included the IRB man, former Sinn Fein supporter and labour agitator Tom Egan, with whom Fitzgibbon, Conry and Grogan had only recently travelled to the great Home Rule rally in Dublin.\textsuperscript{93} As a supposed concession three trustees were appointed in 1913 to administer the unallocated 95 acres for the town as a whole - two of the three were the O'Conor Don and Fitzgibbon's son Henry.\textsuperscript{94}

Jasper Tully, a long-standing enemy of Fitzgibbon going back at least to the Parnell split, characterised him in 1912 as 'Foxy Jack'.\textsuperscript{95} A balanced view of the man - something never taken by Tully - would have to take account of his real political skills, lifelong temperance, support for cultural nationalism, land campaigning and loyalty to Redmond. However, while his CDB colleague Micks could quite genuinely praise his 'reputation for wisdom and the best business qualities',\textsuperscript{96} Fitzgibbon also typified the 'wire-pulling', narrow self-interest driving so much of the Irish party - like Fitzgibbon, apparently 'a prize-fighter grown elderly' - and its small-town elites in the years before the war.

\textbf{Dances around Local Gods}\textsuperscript{97} - Localism in Politics

Given the dominance of provincial politics by small-town groupings and cliques, it is hardly surprising that their political pre-occupations should be almost exclusively local - the 'parish pump' issues that were of direct importance to them, namely jobs, property, rivalries (whether personal, family, village, town, or county), contracts (whether for roads, printing or advertising), railway schemes, newspaper wars and 'the rates'. As seen above, even the thirty-year campaign for 'the land for the people' had given way to much more sporadic, localised frictions and often to squabbles that were considered to be little more than 'personal spite and trade jealousy'.\textsuperscript{98} The analysis of 'localism' made by Theodore Hoppen of mid-Victorian Ireland (see page 16) can be applied unchanged to the five counties in the years before 1914: 'limited goals and local priorities' really did, more often than not, 'count for more than heroic principles and dramatic brilliance'.\textsuperscript{99}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{93} \textit{Westmeath Independent}, 8th April 1912.
\item \textsuperscript{94} \textit{Roscommon Messenger}, 10th May 1913.
\item \textsuperscript{95} \textit{Roscommon Herald}, 18th May 1912, which reported that Fitzgibbon did once say 'people call me foxy; perhaps I am' and pinned the sobriquet of 'foxy' on him.
\item \textsuperscript{96} Micks, \textit{An Account of the Constitution, Administration and Dissolution of the Congested Districts Board}, p. 185.
\item \textsuperscript{97} Hoppen, \textit{Ireland Since 1800}, p. 129.
\item \textsuperscript{98} Monthly report of the Longford county inspector, December 1909 (PRO CO 904.79).
\item \textsuperscript{99} Hoppen, \textit{Elections, Politics and Society In Ireland}, pp. viii-ix.
\end{itemize}

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Chapters 5, 6 and 7 of this thesis study the issues driving local politics in County Roscommon, North Westmeath and Sligo town respectively. The Roscommon analysis will show a tapestry of feuds which significantly weakened the Irish party’s control of the county and influenced subsequent allegiances when the national movement split during the First World War. That of Westmeath will focus on the supposed ideological gulf between ‘Haydenites’ and ‘Ginnellites’ and the reality of personal, family and professional rivalries. The analysis of Sligo town will focus on the importance of class and sectarian tensions which were particular to the town, uniting Catholic nationalists and giving the movement a coherence lacking elsewhere. All will reaffirm Hoppen’s leitmotif, of the gulf between local realities and the rhetoric of national politics.100

Outside of Sligo town, in County Sligo, the leitmotif of ‘localism’ was just as loud. Issues of town vs. county, north vs. south, family against family and newspaper against newspaper formed the staple diet of political life. Few could be divorced from the vacuum left by the death of P.A. McHugh in 1909, and which was only imperfectly filled by the efforts of the South Sligo MP John O’Dowd. Typical of the issues important to local politicians was that of whether the Sligo Champion or its three Sligo rivals should get the lion’s share of the county council’s printing and advertising contracts - O’Dowd was chairman of the county council. This story ran and ran in 1911, and the main challenge to both O’Dowd and the Champion, as will be seen in Chapter 7, came from the Hibernians of Sligo town, in a brief, unholy alliance with the county’s ratepayers.101 It was complicated by the uncomfortable fact that Eugene McHugh, son of the late P.A., was both the brother of the Champion’s owner, Alfred McHugh, and secretary to the county council. Several councillors were in 1912 finally surcharged by the Local Government Board for favouring the Champion, which, instead of making the lowest tender for the council’s contract, had made the highest.102

As for O’Dowd himself, the nepotism on display in his promotion of family interests was quite open. First, in 1910 his niece, though not a qualified nurse, was elected matron of the Sligo county infirmary - O’Dowd blasted the ‘effete and tyrannical Toryism’ of the Sligo

100 Hoppen, Ireland Since 1800, p. vii.
101 Sligo Champion, 8th July, 22nd July, 2nd September, 16th September 21st October 1911; Roscommon Herald, 4th November 1911.
102 Roscommon Herald, 17th August 1912; Sligo Independent, 10th August, 21st September 1912.
Independent for daring to criticise the appointment. Then in 1912 his son Matthew stood unsuccessfully, with O’Dowd chairing the meeting, to be secretary of Sligo county council on the death of Eugene McHugh, he lost against a solid block vote from Sligo town in favour of their man. Matthew then stood again, this time successfully, to be the council’s accountant; O’Dowd again chaired the election meeting and alienated several old supporters with his blatant backing. Back in 1910, O’Dowd had had to write to the Roscommon Herald to deny that his son had been made a CDB inspector. ‘I have never’ he said ‘got anything from any government but persecution’. He was correct to write that it was not his son who got the job - it was his nephew.

In County Longford, the key issue was again personal: would J.P. Farrell ever reach an accommodation with the many local nationalists who successively fell foul of him? The story of the feud of Longford’s two MPs, Farrell and John Phillips - ostensibly over the merits of cattle driving and climaxing in fisticuffs between rival supporters in late-1909 - has been told by both Paul Bew and Marie Coleman. The feud went way back beyond 1909 and, despite some years of peaceful coexistence after 1900, extended back to the Parnell split. Phillips had been a Parnellite and Farrell an ‘anti’: in late 1909, Farrell would accuse Phillips of trying to have his brother murdered at the Edgeworthstown races in 1892. When hostilities were resumed in 1908-09, the real body blow was delivered by Phillips, not when he publicly attacked cattle driving, but when in September 1909 he engineered the loss of the Longford Leader’s inflated printing contract with the county council (Phillips was chairman and Farrell a councillor). Farrell lost an annual income of £750 - most definitely ‘serious money’ - and the new contractor charged only £150.

In addition to Phillips, the list of Farrell’s enemies was long, including:

- William Ganly - the party boss in Granard and president of the North Longford UIL until 1908, who was purged by Farrell in that year for his adherence to Sinn Fein,
• James and Michael McCann - two prominent Catholic grazier brothers who were among the main targets of the cattle driving of 1908 and boycotting thereafter,

• T.W. Delany - Phillips's ally, vice-chair of the county council. a cousin of Farrell's by marriage and the Longford Crown Solicitor who prosecuted Farrell in 1910.

• Patrick McKenna - a protégé of Farrell who turned against him, allying himself with Phillips when in late-1908 Farrell’s men deposed his uncle, Pat McCann (not related to James and Michael), from the presidency of the Clonguish UIL,

• Patrick Mallon - another solicitor, firmly one of Farrell’s group up to 1911, but alienated from him by 1912 and thereafter promoting the Irish National Foresters to rival the Farrell-dominated Hibernians as an insurance society registered under the 1911 National Insurance Act.

In each case save that of Ganly, whose adherence to Sinn Fein remained constant after 1908, the dispute was local and personal rather than ideological.

Vituperation and fighting may have ended temporarily - a truce between the Farrell and Phillips camps was imposed by the party in November 1909 - but enmity remained. In 1910 Phillips continued to attack cattle driving and boycotting and in 1911 Farrell tried unsuccessfully to block Phillips and Delany from being re-appointed to their county council positions of chair and vice-chair. Enemies of Farrell continued to frustrate his control of the county. Pat McCann caused irritation when in 1911 he unseated a Farrell supporter as chair of Longford Rural District Council (RDC). In 1913 an ally of Mallon, Michael Connolly (a Longford hardware merchant), was elected to Longford Urban District Council (UDC) to join Mallon in opposing the Farrell ‘family party’ there. Reconciliations were few and far between. Delany did apparently mend his fences with Farrell in 1913, but the grazier brothers James and Michael McCann responded to years of persecution not by becoming Sinn Feiners, as postulated by Paul Bew, but unionists (in 1911). Even as late as

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110 Monthly report of the Longford county inspector, August 1910 (PRO CO 904/81).
111 Roscommon Herald, 10th and 17th June. Longford Independent, 10th June 1911; monthly report of the Longford county inspector, June 1911 (PRO CO 904/84).
112 Longford Independent, 10th June 1911.
113 Roscommon Herald, 4th January; Longford Independent, 11th January; Midland Reporter, 23rd January 1913.
114 Longford Independent, 9th August 1913.
115 See Bew, Conflict and Conciliation, p. 214 and Roscommon Herald, 22nd July 1911. Michael McCann finally seems to have returned to the bosom of the Longford UIL in 1918 (Longford Leader, 12th January 1918). In that year he was elected the rate collector of Longford UDC, against a Sinn Feiner and proposed by Farrell's brother. Christopher (Longford Leader, 11th May 1918).
October 1914, Farrell was privately and, it appears quite falsely, libelling Phillips by calling
him 'pro-German mad and fiercely denouncing Redmond in all directions.' In the 1917
South Longford by-election after Phillips's death, Farrell ostentatiously failed for some weeks
to provide public support for the leading party candidate, Patrick McKenna. The endemic
personal feuding of Longford nationalists, as has been observed by Marie Coleman,
undoubtedly shortened the political horizons, and the life, of the Irish party in the county in
the years 1910-17.

The profoundly inward-looking nature of provincial Irish politics could be seen most clearly
in Leitrim, where, despite the recent upheaval of the ‘Sinn Fein’ election in North Leitrim in
1908, the countryside and politics were the quietest of any of the five counties in the years
after 1909. Here, the most important spur to political action was the Cavan and Leitrim Light
Railway (the ‘C&L’). From the very beginning of the period, from T.F. Smyth’s victory
speech on his uncontested election as South Leitrim’s MP in January 1910, he referred to ‘a
little clique’ opposing him because of his exposure of the railway’s goings-on. Again and
again the press - not just the two Leitrim papers but those in Roscommon and Sligo - reported
the twists and turns of C&L-related disputes. In 1909-10, the main issues were those of
whether the right county council directors (including Patrick Flynn) had been nominated to
the C&L and of the lack of disclosure in its accounts. The railway was seen as only
intermittently profitable, ultimately Protestant-controlled, and indissolubly linked to its major
customer, the Arigna [coal and iron ore] Mining Company on the Roscommon-Sligo border.
(Both companies even shared the same general manager, a Mr. McAdoo, but oddly the
railway did not actually reach the Arigna mines.) In 1911 the focus of dispute shifted to the
sheer scale of the burden on Leitrim ratepayers - over £3,000 and rising - stemming from the

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116 Farrell made the accusation in a letter to Dillon (8th October 1914. Dillon papers, TCD, f 6753/430) and it is
considered the claim ‘somewhat exaggerated’, but it seems rather to have been completely untrue. Phillips had
shown no recent Sinn Fein sympathies - indeed he had been mocked as a ‘guileless old gentleman’ by Griffith’s
Sinn Fein in 1910 (Midland Reporter, 25th August 1910). If he had suddenly in 1914 converted to ‘pro-
Germanism’ it was a remarkably private affair, with no newspaper picking it up, even the anti-party Tully papers
which covered Longford. Nor did it stop Phillips signing a Longford Recruiting Committee circular in March
1916 (Longford Leader, 18th March 1916), pledging loyalty to Redmond at a UIL meeting with Farrell in April
1916 (Longford Leader, 8th April 1916). Nor, when very frail, from deferring his resignation at Redmond’s
request in November 1916 (Longford Independent, 11th November 1916).

117 Coleman, County Longford 1910-23, pp. 94-95.
118 Leitrim Advertiser, 20th January 1910.
119 Leitrim Observer, 17th February 1912.
county’s legal obligation to provide financial support. In the autumn the impact of this on the
rates triggered political activity even among farmers, with the formation of Farmers’ Defence
Associations and later a county ratepayers’ movement, led by the farmers James Geoghegan
and Pat Gaffney and the auctioneer Michael Carter. This movement came from within the
Irish party and all three were party stalwarts. Carter was county president of the Hibernians
while Geoghegan would later move a resolution of ‘love and gratitude’ at the South Leitrim
UIL executive, to Liberal, Scottish and Irish MPs. Carter and Gaffney were UIL-backed
county councillors. During 1912 their movement flourished in country districts as farmers
faced a direct threat to their pockets. The MPs Smyth and Meehan were caught in the middle,
publicly supporting the ratepayers but also defending their own county council (including
Flynn).

However, momentum subsided rapidly in 1913, as the county council was able to cut its rail
subsidy and freeze the rates. In that year, the issue became instead that of a speculative new
company, the Arigna Valley Railway (and its attendant parliamentary bill) designed to link
directly to the Arigna mine from County Sligo. This triggered a realignment within Leitrim,
with almost all locals now supporting the C&L against its Sligo-backed rival, on the obvious
grounds that competition to the C&L would only increase the Leitrim county subsidy. It also
triggered greater parliamentary involvement by the MPs, with Smyth and Meehan trying to
kill the bill, the Sligo MPs O’Dowd and Scanlan supporting it and O’Dowd fulminating that
‘the people who run the Cavan and Leitrim railway are all Orangemen’. As for Meehan,
though with Smyth he succeeded in killing the bill, he also amused the Irish Independent by
sitting all morning in the wrong parliamentary committee to review a railway bill - not the
Arigna one - without realising it.

The last chapter of the saga, in 1914, related to yet another private speculative venture, and
again a parliamentary bill, this time to extend the C&L itself to the Arigna mine. This
reopened divisions in the local ranks, notably between figures such as Flynn and Carter, keen
to get the entire C&L sold to the promoters and then extended, and a revived ratepayers’

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120 Leitrim Advertiser, 5th October 1911.
121 Leitrim Observer, 29th March 1913.
122 Sligo Champion, 25th October 1913.
123 Reported in the Leitrim Advertiser, 5th June 1913.
movement (the rates had gone up again in 1914), led by Geoghegan, who was anxious to avoid any further outlay, whether of capital or subsidy. In the end county support for the extension died when it became clear that the private promoters could offer neither funds nor security to support it.

The response of Leitrim ratepayers to the C&L was at least indicative of the fact that farmers could still be mobilised in political activity, though it took a strong local rates issue to achieve this. In Longford and Westmeath, where no comparable issue emerged, no coherent ratepayers’ movements followed. In County Longford, brief attempts to start a ratepayers’ association in the town of Granard were squashed in 1912, primarily by Farrell’s supporter J.J. O’Neill, who argued that their interests could be represented by the UIL. In Westmeath, no significant movement emerged, and less than a handful of isolated branches were left to fulminate over the road programme or, literally, the sinking of new parish pumps. Significantly more coherent ratepayers’ movements did evolve in Roscommon and Sligo, but other than their hostility to paying rates, they had little in common with the Leitrim association. In Roscommon (see Chapter 5), the ratepayers’ movement was primarily a coalition of long-standing nationalist enemies of John Fitzgibbon. In Sligo town (Chapter 7), the bulk of ratepayers were Protestant businessmen, united in opposition to the near-bankrupt nationalist Sligo Corporation. In the rest of County Sligo, the ratepayers were, according to the police, ‘practically a Unionist body’. In the five counties, Dillon’s and Canon Sheehan’s ‘French peasants’ were mobilised only occasionally, in Bew’s description, as a purely sectional group of aggrieved taxpayers and ratepayers. Without specific local targets to attack, such as a railway, Sligo Corporation or Fitzgibbon, they were mobilised hardly at all.

124 Roscommon Herald, 3rd, 17th, 24th January, 7th, 14th February 1914.
125 Leitrim Advertiser, 26th March, 16th April 1914.
126 Longford Leader, 14th September 1912.
127 Westmeath Examiner, 14th March, 11th April 1914.
In the five counties as a whole, the years after 1910 were characterised by a distinct slowing of the political pulse and a contraction of the number of those active in politics. The local Irish party leadership was indeed ‘representative’ of the literally bourgeois milieu in which political activity was increasingly concentrated. While the myriad, interlocking networks of town-dwellers sustained both party cliques and their local rivals, the shrinking of the political world to small towns, as the land wars faded away, reinforced the sense of quiet and nationalist apathy on which so many commentators so frequently remarked. For most of the pre-war period, this environment was not a hotbed of radicalism or wild enthusiasms and the local political world was conservative. Writing of the typical midlands country trader in 1912, Padraic Colum saw that:

The man with the blinking eyes and wavering speech became representative of the real conservative Ireland - of that Ireland which is profoundly sceptical of revolutionary movements and revolutionary ideas. Behind him I saw farmers, ecclesiastics, officials and Catholic conservatives whose weight would make an Irish deliberative assembly the most conservative assembly in Europe.\(^{130}\)

Of all the five counties, Leitrim was the quietest and the most ‘apathetic’. Here, the significance of the Cavan & Leitrim Light Railway saga was that it was almost the only story, apart from the Flynn-McGrath rivalry in Carrick, to trigger any political activity for most of the period. Until the end of 1913 it was this issue, solely one of hard cash, which inspired political manoeuvrings, shifted allegiances, sparked inter-county rivalries, embarrassed local MPs and briefly quickened the pulse of local farmers. At the end of 1913, a correspondent from Ballinamore, where Geoghegan chaired the local ratepayers, wrote thus to the *Leitrim Advertiser* on the importance of the railway to local life. What he said had a resonance for political life beyond Ballinamore:

An Irishman without a grievance would be like a fish out of water. A grievance properly aired is once a tonic and a stimulus. Were it not for the Light Railway grievance, Ballinamore would be a sleepy, hum-drum place - no life, no progress.\(^{131}\)

\(^{130}\) Colum, *My Irish Year*, p. 127.
\(^{131}\) *Leitrim Advertiser*, 1\(^{st}\) January 1914.
Chapter 3: ‘Still Flourishing More or Less’ - Organisations, Societies and Clubs

Writing in early 1908 at the climax of the ‘Sinn Fein’ by-election in North Leitrim, the local RIC county inspector believed that: ‘Every society and organisation almost, known to Irish Political Science exists in this county’. Admittedly he was not writing at a ‘normal’ time; the by-election had substantially boosted the range and tempo of Leitrim’s political activity and this surge was distinctly temporary. Leitrim, as just seen in Chapter 2, instead went into a protracted political lull and across all the five counties the pace of popular politics slowed significantly. How far, however, was this waning of activity felt in the intermeshed network of clubs, divisions, branches, societies and committees which underpinned local political life?

The number of ‘political’ organisations - including many which resolutely called themselves ‘non-political’ (i.e. non-party political) - was reported routinely by the police, though not by every county inspector. In late 1909 the inspectors for Leitrim, Longford and Westmeath were reporting ‘branches’ as follows:

**Leitrim** : UIL 32; AOH 35; Gaelic Athletic Association [GAA] 11; Gaelic League 1; Irish National Council [Sinn Fein] 12; Irish National Foresters [Foresters] 2; Town Tenants 5; **Longford** : UIL 22; AOH 14; Sinn Fein 1; Town Tenants 4; **Westmeath** : UIL 40; GAA 25; Gaelic League 4; Sinn Fein 1; Land and Labour associations 5; Trade and Labour 1; Foresters 2; Town Tenants 1; Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants 1.

In Roscommon, such numbers were only reported from June 1911, by a new county inspector, starting with:

UIL 54; AOH 21; GAA 14; Gaelic League 7; Land and Labour 5; Town Tenants 5.

The Sligo inspector did not report ‘branch’ numbers until January 1916.  

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1 Monthly report of the Leitrim county inspector. February 1908 (National Archives 3/7 15, box 13).
As sources of data on local activity, monthly branch counts by the police were anything but perfect. It was not until January 1916 that inspectors were required to use a common format. Both before and after that time, while they were quick to report on new activities, they also displayed great inertia in continuing to count branches which were long moribund. Some entire organisations, such as the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), temporarily disappeared below the police radar. For example, in County Longford the inspector reported no GAA clubs in September 1909 but fourteen three months later. A vast range of other activities were not, or were not considered, ‘political’ and therefore went unreported - music societies, race committees, agricultural societies, dance clubs, bands, Gaelic social clubs, Feis committees, co-operatives, industrial development associations, craft trades unions, temperance societies, charities, sodalities, many sports clubs and, especially after the legislation of 1911, insurance societies. However, even in their imperfect form the monthly police reports showed that two political associations (the UIL and AOH) and one sporting association (the GAA) did extend beyond the towns to the countryside and, in the case of the UIL, to almost every parish. Moreover, it was these which Fitzpatrick has described as part of a wider myriad of local associations, suffused by politics and almost all of them subscribing to the ‘National’ creed.

This chapter analyses such organisations in the five counties - their stability, growth or decline, their inter-relatedness and their politics. It will assess the health or otherwise of the main affiliates of the Irish party; were they in the state of terminal decay so often assumed because of their subsequent collapse? Just how far should they be differentiated as ‘political nationalists’, to use the definition of John Hutchinson in *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism*, from the ‘cultural nationalism’ of organisations such as the Gaelic League? For Hutchinson, ‘political nationalists’ were focused on the mechanics of Irish statehood, secularised, anglicised and run by a ‘mediocre elite of publicans and shopkeepers’. By contrast ‘cultural nationalism’, a movement independent of political nationalism, had been ‘transformed into a significant ideological movement by a rising Catholic intelligentsia’, had a natural affinity with the Catholic church and held as its aim a moral regeneration of Ireland. Was such a distinction valid? If so, were the ‘mammals’ of cultural nationalism poised to

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4 The separate and parallel world of Protestant and/or unionist societies, diversified as were Catholic/nationalist societies but on a far smaller scale, is not studied in this chapter.
take over from the soon-to-be extinct ‘dinosaurs’ of the Irish party or was the situation the rather more mundane one described by the Roscommon county inspector in 1912? Having recited yet another long list of ‘political’ societies (including the UIL, AOH, GAA and Gaelic League) he concluded that they were ‘flourishing’ and ‘generally friendly amongst themselves’.6

The Irish Party – The United Irish League

As noted in Chapter 1, the premise of some local studies has been that the UIL was in decline in the immediate pre-war years and that its decrepitude, if not making subsequent collapse inevitable, was certainly an important precondition. In Marie Coleman’s study of County Longford, the success of Sinn Fein in 1917 could only be explained by looking at the previous decline of the UIL.7 Clare C. Murphy, in her study of the ‘continuing’ Ranch War, saw the UIL as failing, ‘faltering in its efforts to steer a balanced course’ between the conflicting demands of parliamentary Home Rule and land agitation, of shopkeeper/graziers and ‘small’ men.8 By contrast, John Noel McEvoy, writing on King’s County, saw the success of land purchase and the consequent loss of farmers’ political enthusiasm as the causes of the key theme of his work, the ‘long decline’ of the UIL.9 Given the dissipation of land tensions outlined above in Chapter 2, McEvoy’s model of UIL decline would appear to be more relevant here than Murphy’s. The UIL’s ‘decline’, if such it was, certainly came from a high base. In 1908, at height of the Ranch War, the Sligo county inspector considered it ‘perfectly organized and most aggressive’.10 UIL statistics for all Ireland were collated in the quarterly RIC Crime Special Branch report. At the end of 1909 it estimated that in the five counties the League had no less than 193 branches and an amazingly precise 24,462 members11 (equivalent to just under 14% of the local male population in the 1911 census). Moreover, there was little apparent change in succeeding years :

6 Monthly report of the Roscommon county inspector, March 1912 (PRO CO 904/86).
7 Coleman, County Longford 1910-23, pp. 3-4.
10 Monthly report of the Sligo county inspector, August 1908 (National Archives 3/7 15 box 13).
11 Crime Special Branch, Quarterly Returns re the United Irish League (PRO CO 904/20).
Table 5: UIL Branches and Membership (Crime Special Branch Returns)

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<td>Members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leitrim</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>5,378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longford</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3,162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roscommon</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>6,675</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sligo</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>6,209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westmeath</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>3,038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>193</strong></td>
<td><strong>24,462</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In four counties these police returns showed only marginal fluctuations; only in Westmeath was there any decline in the number of recorded branches and only in Roscommon and Westmeath did indovidual membership fall by more than 10%. In Leitrim both membership and branches went up. However, any aggregate stability across the region as a whole was superficial. Though the reported UIL membership numbers implied a continuing mass organisation, other police sources, notably the monthly reports of county inspectors, repeatedly described that membership as inactive and many branches as ‘nominal’. Despite the UIL’s comprehensive branch network, anecdotal evidence of decay was also published in the local press. The Sligo Champion summed things up in March 1912. UIL branches might well continue to function, but the paper attacked the quality of the branch meeting reports submitted to it and admitted: ‘In some districts the branches have really little to do, and that little they do not do over well.’ Incidences of inactivity were far from confined to Sligo. In Leitrim, from January 1910 onwards the county inspector commented on the inactivity of almost all, sometimes all, UIL branches. In Longford, the lack of funds, poor attendances at meetings, and the failure of branches to pay subscriptions to the League’s National Directory were the subject of regular complaint. Thus J.P. Farrell and Frank MacGuinness at the South Longford executive regularly grumbled about the number of paid-up branches, or the level of donations to the Home Rule fund. In Roscommon town, John Hayden’s associate James Grogan could lament in March 1911:

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12 Ibid.
13 *Sligo Champion*, 30th March 1912.
14 See monthly reports of the Leitrim county inspector. January 1910 (PRO CO 904/80); July 1910 (PRO CO 904/81); November 1910 (PRO CO 904/82) and September 1911 (PRO CO 904/85).
15 See *Longford Leader*, 17th February 1912; 8th March 1913; *Roscommon Herald*, 12th October 1912.
I don’t know what is coming over the UI League branch in Roscommon. There was to be a meeting this day week, and there was nobody at all there, not even the chairman to take the chair.\textsuperscript{16}

The biggest ‘black hole’ of the League was, however, in Westmeath, where the northern split between followers of John Hayden (loyal to the Irish party) and of Laurence Ginnell seriously undermined it. The considerable impact of this split is examined in Chapter 6. By late 1911 the Westmeath county inspector could report only three active branches in the entire county - the rest (including the ‘Ginnellite’ branches, still recorded by the police as ‘UIL’) were ‘merely nominal’. The state of the UIL in the county was not helped by its perceived weakness in the largest town, Athlone, where the merger of two branches into one was presented in the best light by the \textit{Westmeath Independent} as replacing two poor branches with one good one, but by the police as ‘making a show of keeping the League active there.’\textsuperscript{17} The \textit{Westmeath Independent}, when the merger was first mooted, explained the phenomenon of the ‘dormant’ branch: ‘Except in name, we have no branches of the League here, for meetings are seldom held after the branches are affiliated.’\textsuperscript{18}

Throughout the period the recurring refrain was that without a serious land agitation there was little for UIL branches to do. The effect of this on more general political enthusiasm, and the widespread perception of popular apathy, has already been described in Chapter 2. In February 1913 the RIC inspector general observed of the UIL that ‘in districts undisturbed by agitation, it was inactive’.\textsuperscript{19} His county inspectors’ reports were entirely consistent: where land tensions rapidly faded, as in Leitrim, the UIL relapsed to dormancy; where they persisted, in parts of Sligo and in 1910-11 in Roscommon, activity held up. Similarly, it was a land agitation which sustained the few Westmeath branches remaining active (led by Eugene Robins in Moate and around Mount Temple).

Excluding ‘the land’, there were some other activities. Periodically, paid national organisers toured the counties, encouraging branches and addressing public meetings and annual branch

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Roscommon Journal}, 18\textsuperscript{th} March 1911.
\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Westmeath Independent}, 6\textsuperscript{th} January 1912; monthly report of the Westmeath county inspector, January 1912 (PRO CO 904/86).
\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Westmeath Independent}, 23\textsuperscript{rd} December 1911.
\textsuperscript{19} Monthly report of the Inspector General, February 1913 (PRO CO 904/89).
reorganisations’ (which, contrary to some modern perceptions, were not restructurings of defunct branches but AGMs to conclude the election of officers and payment of the £3 annual affiliation fee to the National Directory). General elections might be almost entirely uncontested, but candidates still had to be selected and supported in local elections. Patronage had to be exercised, though few branches were as blatant as Boyle in publicly, annually minuting which individuals should chair which local government bodies.\textsuperscript{20}

The UIL also continued to raise funds. Here its record, whether to pay J.P. Farrell’s legal costs (pages 49-50) or for the national Parliamentary and Home Rule funds, was not considered perfect. Fund-raising seems to have retreated from the countryside to the towns. This was, again, a regular complaint of the Longford UIL, uniting both the Phillips and Farrell factions,\textsuperscript{21} but few statistics were as dramatic as those for South Leitrim at the end of 1909. Here the \textit{Leitrim Advertiser} noted that Mohill had contributed £9 13s to a recent parliamentary fund collection, while all its surrounding parishes had raised only 15s 6d.\textsuperscript{22}

A detailed record of the UIL’s fund-raising can be collated from the RIC’s Crime Special Branch reports:

\textbf{Table 6: Annual funds raised by the UIL by county (£s)\textsuperscript{23}}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1910</th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>1912</th>
<th>1913</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leitrim</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longford</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roscommon</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>525</td>
<td>523</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sligo</td>
<td>560</td>
<td>489</td>
<td>538</td>
<td>553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westmeath</td>
<td>768</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>£2,492</td>
<td>£1,449</td>
<td>£1,771</td>
<td>£1,844</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Western Nationalist}, 17\textsuperscript{th} June 1911: 15\textsuperscript{th} June 1912.
\textsuperscript{21} See Coleman, \textit{County Longford 1910-23}, p. 31: \textit{Longford Independent}, 13\textsuperscript{th} November 1909. In the latter, John Phillips noted that the party was getting very little from South Longford and that only from the town.
\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Leitrim Advertiser}, 9\textsuperscript{th} December 1909.
\textsuperscript{23} Crime Special Branch, quarterly returns on the United Irish League (PRO CO 904/20).
These returns do reveal a clear, overall decline, but hardly a catastrophic one. In all but one case - Roscommon - 1910 was a peak year, but this is hardly surprising given the incidence then of two general elections. The fall in Westmeath in 1911 was precipitous, but the local ‘League’ in 1910 was ‘collecting for two’ - Ginnellite and Haydenite collections were aggregated by the police. In every case except Longford, collections revived significantly in 1912 as the Home Rule fund got under way, and Longford then revived in 1913. In the cases of Roscommon and Sligo, it is hard to discern any consistent decline. Of course these police returns may be as suspect as those for branches and members, and Marie Coleman in her Longford study argued that they had to be so, ‘in the light of the evident dissatisfaction of nationalist leaders in Longford at the low level of contributions.’ However, while anecdotal evidence from Longford certainly told a story of decline, so too did the Longford police statistics of funds raised - until 1913. These statistics, more revealing than the static police branch counts, could be consistent with a view that the UIL’s decline, while real, was not unrelenting and its condition not yet terminal.

The UIL itself provided another statistical series by keeping records of branches whose £3 annual subscription was paid up to the League’s National Directory:

Table 7: UIL branch subscriptions paid to the National Directory (years ending approx. end-January). 25

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1909-10</th>
<th>1910-11</th>
<th>1911-12</th>
<th>1912-13</th>
<th>1913-14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leitrim</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longford</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roscommon</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sligo</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westmeath</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>156</strong></td>
<td><strong>124</strong></td>
<td><strong>117</strong></td>
<td><strong>106</strong></td>
<td><strong>121</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24 Coleman, *County Longford 1910-23*, p. 31.
25 Minute Book of the UIL National Directory (NLI, Ms. 708). Sally Warwick-Haller has also observed that the UIL kept on its books each branch the dues of which were paid, even if that branch was otherwise quite inactive. See Sally Warwick-Haller, *William O’Brien and the Land War* (Blackrock 1990), p. 207.
Again the picture presented was hardly robust. Paid-up branches were materially fewer than those recorded by the police. In addition the Athlone example (see above) indicates that even some of these paid-up branches were still dormant. Secondly, there was a clear downwards trend at least until 1912-13 in Leitrim, Longford and Westmeath, with the fall in Westmeath particularly sharp as Ginnellite branches defected and remaining UIL branches declined. Thirdly, while there was a marked up-tick in 1913-14, particularly in Leitrim, that year also witnessed a slump in Roscommon, to a level well under half that reported by the police. In aggregate, whereas over the period the RIC reported on around 190 branches, the number in good standing with the national directory, still including some dormant branches, fell from 156 to 121.

A fourth statistical measure of UIL activity was the frequency of reports submitted by branches to the local press. For the years 1910-13 this can be measured from reports written by branch secretaries for publication in the Roscommon Herald, Roscommon Messenger, Sligo Champion and Western Nationalist, covering virtually all of counties Leitrim, Roscommon and Sligo. The same exercise cannot be undertaken for Longford or Westmeath. The incompleteness of the preserved series of the Longford Leader for 1910/11 and the erratic nature of reports in the Mullingar papers after the Ginnellite split rule this out (for South Westmeath, reports in the Athlone Westmeath Independent were few and far between). Nevertheless, for three counties a large pool of data is available.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8 : UIL reports in local newspapers 1910-13.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roscommon Herald:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roscommon Messenger:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sligo Champion:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>612</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Nationalist:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here, a pattern of steadily falling activity is clearer than in the other statistical series, with all four newspapers showing large reductions in reports of branch and committee meetings, public rallies and social events, of between 30% and 51%. It could be argued that Jasper Tully’s strident opposition to the party’s leadership reduced the willingness of branch
secretaries to submit reports to his paper, but the *Herald’s* rate of decline - 51% - was exactly the same as that of its Boyle-based party rival, the *Western Nationalist*.

Overall, therefore, both statistical and anecdotal evidence did show the UIL to be an organisation significantly in decline. Reports of branch activities dropped markedly, while fund-raising and the number of paid-up branches also fell, albeit erratically. Certain areas, notably Westmeath, were in a dire state. However, while it is tempting to link this pattern to the League’s wartime collapse, as ‘cause and effect’, it should also be placed in the context of the several phases of growth, decline and renewal which had already characterised the League and its predecessors over the past thirty-five years. Moreover, the state of the Irish party in the pre-war period cannot be assessed without looking at its other key auxiliary, the AOH.

**The Hibernians**

Unlike the UIL, the AOH’s overall profile before the war was one of growth. In Longford, for example, the police count of ‘divisions’ went from 14 in January 1910 to 15 in January 1912 and 19 in January 1915. Leitrim divisions rose from 35 to 41 between January 1910 and 1912; Roscommon from 17 in December 1910 to 25 in January 1912; Westmeath from none at the beginning of the period to 6 by October 1913. When consistent numbers were collated by the police for all five counties, in January 1916, the reported position of the AOH was as follows:

- **Leitrim** 29 divisions, 4,284 members (well down from 1912);
- **Longford** 20 divisions (no membership shown, but well up from 1912);
- **Roscommon** 43 divisions, 1,697 members (well up from 1912);
- **Sligo** 29 divisions, 3,599 members;
- **Westmeath** 6 divisions, 640 members.

When measured by reports submitted to the local press, AOH activity also grew:

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20 Drawn from county inspectors’ reports for January 1910, December 1910, January 1912, October 1913, and January 1915 (PRO CO 904/80, 82, 86, 91 and 96).

21 Monthly reports of county inspectors, January 1916 (PRO CO 904/99).
### Table 9: AOH reports in local newspapers, 1910-13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1910</th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>1912</th>
<th>1913</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roscommon Herald</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>439</td>
<td>444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roscommon Messenger</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sligo Champion</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Nationalist</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By 1911, Jasper Tully’s AOH coverage dwarfed his reports of UIL meetings, while the *Champion*’s coverage of divisions in Sligo and Leitrim increased year-on-year. The *Roscommon Messenger*’s initially minimal coverage reflected the late start of the Hibernians in the south of County Roscommon. Only the *Western Nationalist*’s coverage declined, after 1911, with the result that aggregate coverage in the two Boyle papers plateaued after that year.

The AOH was greatly boosted by its role as an approved society under the 1911 Insurance Act, and from 1912 attracted individuals to separate insurance sections as purely ‘insurance’ members – the Longford division openly advertised that any Catholic man or woman could become a member of the insurance section without becoming a member of the Order. By the end of 1912, the AOH was far and away the largest Irish approved society, with 130,000 insurance members. Its establishment in Westmeath, where there had been no divisions until 1911, was linked to this role and the police reported that divisions in Moate and Streamstown were set up to capitalise on the Act. The Mullingar division touted for business by advertising that the AOH would take on the insurance of anyone not insured elsewhere! In other counties, however, the Order predated the Act; in Sligo and Leitrim going back to before 1900. The Order took off in these counties, and in Longford and North Roscommon, in the mid-1900s, even though the membership numbers reported by the police remained way below those for the UIL. Such was its strength in Leitrim that from 1910

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28 *Longford Leader*, 6th July 1912.
29 *Leitrim Advertiser*, 23rd January 1913. The next largest societies were the Orange and Protestant Friendly Society, 61,760 members; the Prudential, 35,000; the National Amalgamated Approved Society, 32,000; the INF Benefit Society, 30,360 and Presbyterian Health Insurance, 30,000.
30 There was a division of the Sinn Fein-supporting ‘Scottish Section’ in Mullingar in 1906, but this was inactive by 1908 and had collapsed by mid-1909.
31 Monthly report of the Westmeath county inspector, July 1912 (PRO CO 904/87).
onwards the county inspector regularly reported that the AOH dominated the UIL. For the Sligo Cl, the Order began to become ‘more powerful’ than the UIL at the end of 1912.\(^{33}\)

In 1910, the contemporary AOH writer, James J. Bergin, in a book blessed by both Devlin and Redmond, saw the Order as ‘the national organisation of Ireland’, but duly added that it had to extend the support and influence of the UIL.\(^{34}\) There was potential for rivalry and the two organisations, while clearly allied, had not always existed in perfect alignment. In Sligo town (see Chapter 7) the Order had in the mid-1900s been a rival power base to the UIL and openly in conflict with the then MP (P.N. McHugh), the bishop (Dr. Clancy) and the \textit{Sligo Champion}. In Roscommon town in 1906, the AOH division’s joint secretaries were two dissidents who were in 1907-08 to be Sinn Fein supporters - George Geraghty and John McGreevy.\(^{35}\) The division soon collapsed and was not revived until after 1914. In Boyle, the AOH was initially established in 1905 by no less than Jasper Tully as ‘a counterpoise to the United Irish League’\(^{36}\) from which he had been expelled in 1903. Tully (making a mockery of the supposed rule that all AOH members should also belong to the UIL) maintained his influence with the Boyle AOH, remaining a trustee in 1914.\(^{37}\) This compelled party loyalists to break yet another AOH rule (of no more than one division per parish) and run their own, rival division, ‘Curlieu Pass’. The rivalry spread to the mining village of Arigna, where the Arigna AOH expelled the UIL national directory member John Keaveny, who in 1910 duly established the ‘Lough Allen’ division.\(^{38}\)

Incidentes of local disputes taking the form of AOH/UIL friction could be found right up to the war and contesting local factions themselves aligned against each other in one or other of the organisations. In Keadue, Roscommon, the two took opposite sides in a row over the ownership of a farm, involving bad debts, a ‘returned American’ and shootings, lasting from November 1909 to October 1911.\(^{39}\) In Carrick (see Chapter 2) the rivalry of Patrick Flynn (though he was also a Hibernian as well as leading the town’s UIL) and Michael McGrath

\(^{33}\) Monthly reports of the Leitrim county inspector, May 1910 (PRO CO 904/81), January 1912 (PRO CO 904/86) and Sligo county inspector, December 1912 (PRO CO 904/88).


\(^{35}\) Roscommon Journal, 13\textsuperscript{th} January 1906.

\(^{36}\) Crime Special Branch report. April 1905 (PRO CO 904 117).

\(^{37}\) Roscommon Herald, 17\textsuperscript{th} January 1914.

\(^{38}\) \textit{Westmeath Independent}. 15\textsuperscript{th} March 1913.

\(^{39}\) Monthly reports of the Roscommon county inspector, November 1909, July 1911, November 1911 (PRO CO 904 79, 84 and 85).
(AOH) was well known. Elsewhere in Leitrim the AOH county president, Michael Carter, stood and won in Drumshanbo against a UIL man Pat McManus in the 1911 county council elections. These and the earlier frictions in Sligo, Boyle and Arigna all seem to bear out Fitzpatrick's description of the AOH in County Clare as a direct competitor to the UIL as 'a launch pad for public office'. However, organisational friction should not be overstated. After P.A. McHugh's death, Sligo's AOH men - Daniel O'Donnell and John Jinks - came to lead nationalist politics in Sligo town and in North Sligo. In Roscommon, despite Tully's influence over two divisions, the county organisation was staunchly loyal to the party and the RIC county inspector wrote repeatedly of the harmony and cordiality of the county's UIL and AOH. In Longford the AOH was actively promoted, and effectively led, by 'Brother Farrell' and in Westmeath the new AOH supported Hayden rather than Ginnell. In Leitrim, as already noted, the AOH 'dominated' the UIL. Even where the two organisations were supposedly in dispute, allegiances could be confused. In the contested 1911 Drumshanbo election, the AOH's Michael Carter was also chairman of the Kiltubtide UIL, while the UIL's Pat McManus was one of the leading lights in the Tully-supporting Arigna AOH.

The AOH remained distinctive from the UIL in a number of ways. It was overtly sectarian, defending what the Roscommon county president George O'Reilly called 'the cause of Catholicity in Ireland which we so dearly love (cheers)' and coming to be seen, in the historian Eamon Phoenix's phrase, as 'a Catholic Orange Order to protect the Catholic faith and people'. If not a secret society it kept the trappings of one which, for J.J. Bergin, kept its business 'strictly to its members': initiation ceremonies, 'vigilance committees' to control membership, and the 'secret signs and passwords that are attractive to young men'. Apart from being a benefits society it supported a wide range of social activities: dances, bands, concerts, 'cinematic displays', temperance clubs, outings, support for sports (Gaelic), rowing clubs and the ubiquitous AOH halls. The Western Nationalist in February 1913 reported the claim that every division in Roscommon, Sligo and Leitrim now had its own hall.

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40 Leitrim Observer, 13th May, 3rd June 1911.
41 Fitzpatrick. Politics and Irish Life, p. 94.
42 Monthly reports of the Roscommon county inspector. March and June 1913 (PRO CO 904/89 and 90).
44 Roscommon Messenger, 19th March 1910.
46 Bergin, History of the Ancient Order of Hibernians. p. 35.
providing recreational clubs for the young men of the country. There were also 'Ladies' Auxiliary' divisions, though only a handful in the five counties. The aims of Sligo town's lady Hibernians included supporting the Church, promoting Irish Catholic literature, stopping the spread of poisonous novels, raising funds for burial and medical expenses, and forming both an approved insurance society and a co-operative union.

It was also a commonplace that the AOH represented 'youth'. This was particularly so in County Longford. Addressing 2,000 at an AOH parade in Longford in 1910, Farrell called the AOH an Order 'composed of young men, who are the hope of every country'. At same parade, Farrell's associate Thomas Duffy referred to an 'AOH rule' that excluded membership beyond 'a certain age' and John O'Dowd, the South Sligo M.P. and a guest speaker, called the Hibernians 'the banded youth of the country'. When opening the AOH hall in Athlone, Hayden emphasised that it was for 'the young men of this town' and T.F. Smyth echoed him when opening the hall at Gorvagh, Leitrim. Jasper Tully wrote of 'the interest which that organization [the AOH] holds for the young men of Roscommon.' As Farrell's *Longford Leader* put it:

The might of organised young Longford ... should give those petty tyrants and mean-souled grabbers notice that alongside the United Irish League there is now grown up a young and powerful organization.

The AOH also remained, as the historian Michael Foy put it, 'at the militant side' of the Home Rule movement. As will be seen in Chapters 4 and 8, Hibernians took a leading role in campaigns against immoral foreign [English] literature at the end of 1911 and for a boycott of Belfast goods in the summer of 1912. The AOH's militancy was confirmed with particular emphasis by the Roscommon RIC county inspector, who reported in 1913 that the AOH operated a membership ban, and a limited social boycott, against soldiers, ex-soldiers and policemen:

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48 *Western Nationalist*, 22nd February 1913.
49 *Sligo Champion*, 13th April 1912.
52 *Roscommon Herald*, 17th December 1910.
53 *Longford Leader*, 4th June 1910.
The AOH is strong and influential throughout the county. If a soldier or a Policeman walks into a house where there are Hibernians the latter walk out. If a soldier, or a Policeman, on full pay, or on pension, takes part in one of their games the game is stopped. Recruiting for the RIC in this county is practically stopped and I attribute it to the influence of the AOH divisions. These facts indicate the attitude of the AOH towards the forces of the Crown and Government.  

Much of the Order’s distinctiveness and militancy was summed up in a *Leitrim Observer* article, ‘A Defence of the AOH’ by the Roscommon county secretary, P.J. Neary. The AOH had been born out of English cruelty and deception. A Catholic society was needed to resist the inroads of Socialism, and its mission was to protect the Church. Every member must live in conformity with the doctrines and conventions of Catholicity. The Order had to second the propaganda of the party, whether it was constitutional or a policy of open rebellion. ‘In it [the AOH] the glorious bonds of union and charity exist. In it a common hatred of English rule and tyranny is nursed.”

The relative vigour of the AOH locally is not consistent with the stereotype of an ageing, weak, decayed Irish party in the pre-war years. In the five counties, the growth of the AOH substantially offset the organisational weakness of the UIL and, with the obvious exception of Westmeath, the notion of a straightforward ‘long decline’ becomes hard to sustain. This can be seen when the reports submitted by the AOH and UIL to the local press are aggregated:

| Table 10 : UIL and AOH reports in local newspapers, 1910-13 |
|------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
|                  | 1910 | 1911 | 1912 | 1913 |
| Roscommon Herald | 583  | 683  | 631  | 604  |
| Roscommon Messenger | 168  | 150  | 164  | 156  |
| Sligo Champion    | 748  | 707  | 796  | 741  |
| Western Nationalist | 197  | 251  | 189  | 129  |

56 Neary was also a UIL man, chairman of the Aughrim AOH, a Gaelic Leaguer. Gaelic athlete and regular supplier of verse to the press, particularly to Hayden’s *Roscommon Messenger*.
57 *Leitrim Observer*, 19th July 1913.
Rather than being in an inexorable decline, perhaps the aggregate, local state of the Irish party’s popular movements (with the obvious exception of Westmeath) was better described by the Roscommon county inspector in July 1912, when he reported that political societies were still flourishing, ‘more or less’. 58

Affiliates of the Party

The ‘Irish party’ in the provinces consisted primarily of the UIL and AOH, but it also had a number of other affiliates. Some were recognised in the UIL’s constitution; the Irish National Foresters and Land and Labour associations could provide delegates to UIL candidate selection conventions. Some sent affiliation fees to national, UIL-backed organisations (the Town Tenants) or subscribed to the parliamentary and Home Rule funds (the Foresters, town tenants and some labour organisations). It has to be asked, however, how far the interests of these bodies and the Irish party coincided, and how far they were seen as potentially independent challengers to the party that had to be controlled.

The Foresters

The Irish National Foresters were a rather less active, more middle-aged, middle-class version of the Hibernians. Longer-established, they were another Catholic benefits and social organisation whose main public, political function seemed to be to march, in regalia, in annual St. Patrick’s Day and Manchester Martyrs’ processions. In January 1916, the police reported some eleven branches across the five counties, 59 against 127 Hibernian divisions. For most of the branches there was no question of their operating independently of the Irish party and no sign from either press or police reports that they did so. The memberships of Hibernians and Foresters overlapped, and their competition to recruit ‘insurance members’ as approved societies under the 1911 Act was relatively restrained.

Where tensions arose, they seem to have stemmed not from organisational disputes between Hibernians and Foresters, but as the public expression of well-entrenched local, personal rivalries. One focus of tension, yet again, related to Jasper Tully in Boyle. In August 1911, the Roscommon county AOH attempted to merge the Boyle and Curlieu Pass Hibernian...

58 Monthly report of the Roscommon county inspector, July 1912 (PRO CO 904/87)
59 Monthly reports of county inspectors, January 1916 (PRO CO 904/99). Ten branches were counted in all five counties except Sligo, where none was listed. There was, however, at least one Sligo branch, in Sligo town.

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divisions, as the police put it, 'to oust Mr. Jasper Tully from influence in local politics'. In June 1912, the 'Boyle' Hibernians responded by taking the lead in setting up a branch of the Foresters, with a view to defecting to it. However, little seems to have happened subsequently, and the Boyle AOH continued to meet right up to the war. A second focus was J. P. Farrell, who at some stage in 1911 fell out with one of his associates Patrick Mallon, a Longford solicitor and a Forester (see page 62). In 1912, Mallon led the establishment of new INF branches across the county to capitalise on the Insurance Act, competing with Farrell's Hibernians. More damagingly to Farrell, in January 1913 he supported the candidacy in the UDC elections of another Forester, the ironmonger and house-furnisher Michael Connolly, who stood against Farrell's supporters as a 'labour' and Foresters' man, and won. At the UDC and backed by Mallon, Connolly promptly defied the chairmanship of Farrell's lieutenant Frank MacGuinness by defending an attack already made on the 'family organisation' (i.e. Farrell's) running Longford. A public shouting match duly ensued. Nevertheless, when MacGuinness called Connolly a 'catspaw' of unionists, Connolly stressed his loyalty to the Irish parliamentary party. In the case of neither Boyle nor Longford could the tensions be put down to other than the local personal rivalries generated by Tully or Farrell. In the five counties, with only these two exceptions, the pre-war Foresters were safely under the party's umbrella.

The Town Tenants

In a further contrast between urban political activity and rural apathy, Town Tenants' associations were active across the five counties right up to the war. Though agrarian tensions had subsided, the rapid advance of land purchase triggered a wave of agitations in towns not automatically covered by the workings of the Land Acts. The possibility of purchasing 'townlands', comprising both town buildings and nearby agricultural land, appeared to open up as many neighbouring estates came up for sale, but there was no legal obligation on landlords to sell townlands. Funds for purchase could only be advanced by bodies such as the Estates Commission or CDB if the townlands were sold as part of an agricultural estate. Even then, the issues of demarcation between the various state agencies

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60 Crime Special Branch report, August 1911 (PRO CO 904/119).
61 Sligo Times, 29th June 1912.
62 Longford Independent, 18th January 1913
63 Longford Journal: Roscommon Herald, 8th February 1913. MacGuinness then threatened to put Connolly out of the window.
provided endless scope for delays. Moreover, only those lucky enough to be direct tenants could participate in a state-assisted purchase, while large tracts of townlands were instead sub-let from 'middlemen'. The opportunities open to town tenants, primarily to purchase both buildings and land, were, therefore, matched by the frustrations and tensions arising from their lack of 'rights' relative to their rural counterparts.

Thus in the years 1910-13 town tenants were campaigning in Carrick, Mohill, Drumshanbo, Dromahair, Manorhamilton and Drumkeerin (Leitrim); Longford, Edgeworthstown, Granard, and Ballymahon (County Longford); Castlerea, Elphin, Strokestown, Roscommon and Boyle (County Roscommon); Riverstown and Ballymote (County Sligo); and Castlepollard and Kilbeggin (Westmeath). Rent cuts were demanded, not just in their own right, but as a prelude to securing better sale terms, and associations also campaigned for the 'Three Fs' to be extended from agricultural to town tenants. Protracted purchase negotiations were undertaken. Rent strikes and protests at evictions provided the perfect opportunity for the intermeshed and fractious town elites to rally to the causes of 'justice' and their own mutual self-interest.

The town tenants were weakest, by contrast, in the three largest towns in the region - Sligo, Athlone and Mullingar - where the opportunities to purchase major parts of the town in single transactions simply did not arise, and where tenancies were normally held at the bottom of a long chain of sub-lettings. In Sligo, though O'Donnell and Jinks had promoted an association in the mid-1900s, there was no active town tenants' body until 1914 when it was revived, again by John Jinks. In both Athlone and Mullingar there were associations during the pre-war years, but neither did much other than holding a few irregular and sparsely-attended meetings. In Mullingar in 1911, the Midland Reporter mocked the lethargic state of the town tenants, led by associates of Hayden who could attract no more than a dozen to any meeting. In Athlone the Westmeath Independent, while welcoming moves to revive the association in the same year, noted that 'Athlone has the reputation for doing many things in turn and doing none of them for very long'.

64 Fair rents, fixity of tenure and freedom of sale, enshrined in the 1881 Land Act.
65 Midland Reporter, 9th November 1911.
66 Westmeath Independent, 2nd December 1911.
In his King's County study, John Noel McEvoy argued that the town tenants movement was born of frustration and a belief that whatever the Irish party had achieved for agricultural tenants, they ignored the needs of town tenants: the party's response was to 'vie with suspicion' and then take over the movement. However, in the five counties there were only isolated glimpses of such anti-party tensions. Only one association openly broke away from the party, in Carrick-on-Shannon. Here the Hibernians Michael McGrath and Thomas MacDermott had led the campaign to purchase the town, advised by the national Town Tenants' association in Dublin. However, at the end of 1913, the town tenants announced that they were reluctant to subscribe to the Home Rule fund because two of the collectors were landlords. The main local collector was the omnipresent Patrick Flynn. McGrath, however, went further than his long-standing rivalry with Flynn and spoke openly against Redmond and the party, saying that neither had done anything for 'the poor, rack-rented town tenants'. In two other towns, though staying loyal to the party, the town tenants split. As will be seen in Chapter 5, the Roscommon town tenants were effectively by-passed when the singularly energetic parish priest, Canon Cummins, set up his own body, the Roscommon Associated Estates Committee, in frustration at the total inability of the town tenants to buy parts of the town from the Essex estate. The more acrimonious split, against the party boss John Fitzgibbon, occurred in Castlerea. As described in Chapter 2, it was Fitzgibbon's flagrant pursuit of his own interests in 1912 which alienated a significant number of his fellow townsmen.

In virtually every other case, leading Irish party figures were active town campaigners, in their own and their town's economic and/or political interests, right from the start. There was little or no anti-party tension and no need for 'vampirisation', a modern name for the process by which the party took over and assimilated new and potentially rival movements. The town tenants, for the most part, were already firmly under the party's 'umbrella'; most associations happily affiliated and paid their dues to the national, and party-led, association in Dublin. William Field MP and Coghlan Briscoe from Dublin were regularly in the five

67 McEvoy, A Study of the United Irish League in King's County, p. 83.
68 Roscommon Herald, 27th December 1913.
69 Leitrim Observer, 13th and 20th December 1913.
70 See Fitzpatrick, Politics and Irish Life, p. 101: 'The almost mechanical reaction of Home Rule organisers when confronted by an energetic popular organisation claiming to be without politics was to infiltrate it, reorganise it and add it to the cluster of party auxiliaries.'
counties to handle purchase negotiations and provide technical advice. In Longford, Farrell and MacGuinness led the association from its re-launch in 1908\textsuperscript{71} (Farrell having set up a ‘House League’ in Longford as long ago as the mid-1880s) and in 1911 and 1912 used the association to organise a campaign for significant rent cuts and to force the sale of the town park (see page 49). Politically, the campaign also challenged the position of the newly-returned Lord Longford (‘the worst-dressed man in the world’ according to his friends)\textsuperscript{72} who had recently given up his army commission to return to Ireland, manage his estates and set up, to Farrell’s outrage, a Unionist Club in the town. Farrell took the lead in rent strikes and in the ensuing street-theatre of the sheriff’s confiscation, and repurchase by Farrell’s supporters, of his cow.\textsuperscript{73} As in Longford, so in Manorhamilton (Meehan), Mohill (Smyth after his move there) and Ballymote (O’Dowd) party MPs all took the lead quite naturally, reflecting their positions in local elites and their community of interest with their fellow campaigners.

Labour

In the 1900s, as John Cunningham has analysed in Labour in the West of Ireland,\textsuperscript{74} labour associations and trades unions had spread across much of provincial Ireland. If not always building a ‘labour’ political consciousness among their followers, they had campaigned with intermittent success in pursuit of their own particular economic and class interests. In 1910 these organisations generally took the form either of rural, parish-based associations focused on ‘small’ tenants and labourers - normally called ‘Land and Labour’ - or urban branches of craft unions. Land and Labour associations focused on the employment by councils of direct labour forces for roadwork, the cost and availability of labourers’ housing and more general support for the land agitation. In Roscommon, where the police counted five Land and Labour branches in 1911, the key campaign in the years 1906-09 had been to force the county council to encourage direct labour.\textsuperscript{75} In Westmeath in 1910, where five branches were also counted, Land and Labour had participated under Laurence Ginnell in the Ranch War. For the urban unions - bakers, carpenters, tailors, printers, stonemasons and bricklayers - the issues were those of pay, the protection of local industry and the protection of craft status.\textsuperscript{76}

\textsuperscript{71} Longford Journal, 2\textsuperscript{nd} October 1909.

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid, 14\textsuperscript{th} January 1911.

\textsuperscript{73} Longford Leader; Roscommon Herald, 4\textsuperscript{th} May 1912.

\textsuperscript{74} John Cunningham. Labour in the West of Ireland: Working Life and Struggle 1890-1914 (Belfast 1995).

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid, pp.122-123.

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid, p.53.
Some towns, such as Athlone, did see the establishment of ‘Trade and Labour’ associations from across the membership of different craft unions, but only one, Sligo, saw the establishment of a fully-fledged Trades Council.

Sligo was also the town in which organised labour grew radically in numbers and cohesion in the pre-war years. As will be seen in Chapter 7, this was through the activities of both the Sligo Trades Council and the newly-established Irish Transport and General Workers Union, which mobilised dock and general labourers to a series of significant industrial victories. Chapter 7 analyses this movement and, for all its explicit ‘labour’ rhetoric, its continuing close relationship with the Irish party, particularly the Hibernians. In stark contrast to the party/union hostility seen in Dublin during the lockouts and strikes of 1913-14, Sligo trades unionists formed a close alliance with the local party leadership - Daniel O'Donnell and then John Jinks - which survived until after the outbreak of the First World War.

Outside Sligo town, trades unions tended to come to notice of press or police only when there were disputes or strikes. Thus the Mullingar stonemasons and bricklayers in October 1911, Arigna miners in July 1910 (and again in April 1911), Roscommon town labourers in 1910, railway workers (twice involved in national disputes) in 1911, Longford carpenters in mid-1912 (Farrell’s Longford Leader supported the strike) and Athlone gas workers in November 1913 all agitated for more pay and if necessary went on strike, usually successfully. None appeared particularly political, either for or against the party, though as noted above, Pat McManus of the Arigna miners was also in the Tully-supporting Arigna AOH. The one area of marked growth in urban union activity related to shop assistants, who organised and campaigned across the five counties, in Longford, Granard, Mullingar, Roscommon, Carrick, and Athlone. Here the spur was the 1911 Shops Act and a resultant campaign to enforce its provisions limiting opening and working hours. In the case of Longford and Granard this brought the assistants into conflict with the town’s political, nationalist establishments, so many of them shopkeepers and traders, when the two Urban District Councils - with Longford UDC chaired by Farrell’s associate and draper Frank MacGuinness - dragged their heels on the issue of early closing. In October 1912 both Longford and Granard councils were ‘named and shamed’ by Augustine Birrell in parliament.

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for their non-compliance with the Act and the assistants in Granard took their council to court.\textsuperscript{78} Compliance remained distinctly patchy. Finally assistants at one Longford shop - not that of MacGuinness - went on strike, but this folded when the striking assistants left town and were replaced.\textsuperscript{79}

Outside the towns, ‘labour’ activities were largely those of the Land and Labour associations. John Noel McEvoy has argued that in King’s County these, like the Town Tenants, were another potential rival to the UIL, having ‘lost confidence in the League because it appeared in most instances to favour the claims of farmers or their sons when such farms were being divided’.\textsuperscript{80} The expression of such feelings was not, however, widespread in the five counties. In North Westmeath local Land and Labour associations did rally behind Laurence Ginnell and his rhetoric against the ‘ranchers’ clique’ in Mullingar, but in Roscommon only one Land and Labour branch wavered, in 1910, in its loyalty to the party. In late 1909 the land agitator Richard Corr returned to the county to try to organise in the interests of the dissident William O’Brien, and in early 1910 the Ballinaheglish Land and Labour association followed his lead. At this time it agitated on issues of direct labour wages and cottage rents, initially pledging loyalty to the UIL, but also passing resolutions praising O’Brien, congratulating Ginnell and attacking Roscommon town’s UIL ‘clique’. When Corr left the county in April 1910, however, the Ballinaheglish Land and Labour association quickly reverted to conventional expressions of support for the party.\textsuperscript{81} Elsewhere, the organisation basically ‘ticked over’ and was not particularly active. In South Westmeath, in contrast to Ginnell’s constituency, Land and Labour branches provided an explicit support base for the party’s man Eugene Robins. As president of Moate’s ‘Land and Labour’, Robins led its absorption into the Moate AOH.\textsuperscript{82}

The one county which saw clear growth in organised rural labour in the pre-war years was Longford. Here an agitation from late 1911 pushed for directly-employed labour (by the local councils) for roadwork and housebuilding and the leading organiser was Peter Connor from

\textsuperscript{78} Longford Journal, 19\textsuperscript{th} October 1912; Longford Leader, 26\textsuperscript{th} October 1912.
\textsuperscript{79} Roscommon Herald, 29\textsuperscript{th} November, 6\textsuperscript{th} December 1913.
\textsuperscript{80} McEvoy, Study of the United Irish League in King’s County: p. 83.
\textsuperscript{81} Monthly reports of the Roscommon county inspector, October 1909 and April 1910 (PRO CO 904 79 and 80); Roscommon Journal, 30\textsuperscript{th} October 1909; 29\textsuperscript{th} January: 5\textsuperscript{th} February: 12\textsuperscript{th} February 1910.
\textsuperscript{82} Monthly report of the Westmeath county inspector, March 1913 (PRO CO 904 89).
Edgeworthstown. At the end of 1912, a county-wide ‘Labour Union’ was formed, with
Connor as secretary and eventually encompassing eight branches. Right from the outset it
pledged loyalty to the Irish party and enjoyed as its patron that perpetual organiser Farrell,
who spoke at branch formation meetings, noted that the ‘Labour League’ was separate from
the ‘purely political’ UIL and praised the ‘giant power’ of organised labour.

Overall, therefore, labour activity strengthened in the years 1910-13, but with growth almost
totaly concentrated upon three areas: the Longford Labour League, Sligo’s mass unionism
and organised shop assistants across the region. Barring the obvious potential for conflict
between shop assistants and local shop-keeping elites, labour locally was an ally (in Sligo
town) or an auxiliary (elsewhere except for Ginnellite North Westmeath) of the Irish party in
the pre-war years.

**Enemies of the Party - Sinn Fein**

The Sinn Fein party was an outright enemy of the Irish party and had directly opposed it in
the North Leitrim by-election of 1908. However, according to R.M. Henry, writing just after
the Great War, Sinn Fein was ‘practically moribund’ in the years 1910-13 and the position
of Sinn Fein in the five counties was no different. The support that had been seen across the
region between 1906 and 1909 appeared to evaporate over the next four years. For J.P.
Farrell in March 1912, Sinn Fein was a spent force and was now confined to ‘one back room
in a side street in Dublin’.

In late 1909 and early 1910, the local press still reported on Sinn Fein activities. Indeed, in
North Longford, where Farrell’s enemy William Ganly had declared for Sinn Fein in 1907, a
new branch was founded at Granard as late as October 1909, with Ganly’s associate the co-op
manager John Cawley as its secretary. In general, however, the press reported on the
movement’s decline rather than its growth. The tone was set a month later by the chairman of
Athlone’s branch, M.J. Lennon, who resigned because, as the police put it, he had ‘regained

83 *Longford Leader*, 11th November; 25th November; 11th, 21st December 1912: monthly report of the Longford
county inspector, January 1916. (PRO CO 904/99).
84 *Longford Leader*, 20th January 1912.
87 *Leitrim Advertiser*, 28th October and 28th November; *Longford Independent*, 30th November; *Midland
Reporter*, 4th November 1909.
confidence in the Irish Parliamentary Party'.

Sinn Fein as a party played no part in the 1910 elections. An attempt in November 1909 to revive interest in what the Sligo Champion called 'factionism', by James Dolan, brother of the defeated North Leitrim candidate of 1908, was still-born. In January 1910, Jasper Tully chronicled the failure of the daily Sinn Fein newspaper, writing that 'like all newspapers devoted to an ideal, it was run in defiance of all ordinary newspaper business lines'. Sinn Fein branches simply ceased to meet. The Athlone branch had no meetings in the year to June 1912 and was 'almost extinct'. The rash of Leitrim branches, set up around the 1908 by-election (and still nominally twelve in number in September 1909) closed steadily over the next few years. By January 1910 according to the police, 'no interest is now taken in this organisation'. In June 1910 the county's one division of the 'AOH Scottish section' (also called 'Irish American), long inactive, was reported to be no more. At the beginning of 1913 the police ceased reporting even on the four remaining, 'dormant' Sinn Fein branches - 'it is stated that the organisation in this county is nearly extinct'.

People who had been active Sinn Fein supporters in the mid-1900's still featured in the local press after 1909, but nearly always in 'non-political' roles. John Cawley and William Ganly were mentioned for their role in the Granard Co-operative society, and James Dolan for his roles in the Manorhamilton Gaelic League and as a town tenant (at one point alongside Francis Meehan MP in withholding his rent). In Roscommon town, former Sinn Fein supporters did retain a position in local life. The builder George Geraghty, a bitter opponent of Hayden and Fitzgibbon in 1907, became the chairman of the town commissioners, but confined his public campaigning to matters such as the replacement of the town's graveyard, the site of the town’s race-course and organising a new football ground. Of Geraghty’s allies, Michael Finlay, a baker expelled from the UIL in 1907, was quiet until the arrival of Canon Cummins’s RAEC. Only John McGreevy, a clerk, a guardian and rural district councillor, maintained an overt political opposition to the party, standing and losing as an ‘independent’ nationalist in the 1911 county council elections - ‘the poor man’s friend’, enemy of all

88 Precis of Crime Special Branch reports, November 1909 (PRO CO 904/118).
89 Sligo Champion, 4th December 1909.
90 Roscommon Herald, 22nd January 1910.
91 Monthly report of the Westmeath county inspector, June 1912 (PRO CO 904/87).
92 Monthly reports of the Leitrim county inspector, January and June 1910 and Crime Special Branch precis, January 1913 (PRO CO 904/80, 84 and 119).
93 Sligo Champion, 22nd July, 5th August 1911.
‘grabbers’ and against Roscommon’s ‘old played-out rotten clique’. By 1912, he was sufficiently reconciled to Home Rule to go with Fitzgibbon to the great April rally in Dublin, though soon afterwards he became one of ‘Foxy Jack’s’ strongest opponents among the newly-divided town tenants.

The Sinn Fein supporter attracting the most personal publicity was the defeated North Leitrim candidate of 1908, the former MP Charles Dolan. The Midland Reporter reported Dolan’s ‘triumphant’ return to Manorhamilton in May 1911 (a temporary visit from America, where Dolan lived until 1963) and the Sligo Times noted his visit a week later to the House of Commons; many of his ex-colleagues greeted him ‘cordially’. The rest of the press tended to focus on the ‘personal interest’ story of his marriage and on his promise of American and Irish capital for an Irish boot factory. All of these stories were personal. Explicit mention of Sinn Fein in the local press, whether of its policies or its organisation, dried up after the first half of 1910. Save for Farrell’s dismissal of it in 1912, it was not worth mentioning, let alone attacking.

The Irish Republican Brotherhood

Leon O Broin’s history of the IRB estimated that in 1912 there were 1,660 IRB members in Ireland, of whom 250 were in Connaught. The IRB had shrunk dramatically from the semi-public, semi-secret society of its mid-Victorian heyday and, according to later memoirs, was by 1910 taking extreme care over recruitment and security. One would hardly, therefore, expect ‘the Organisation’ to attract press publicity, and it did not. Moreover, not only was the press silent, but police scrutiny had been scaled down in the 1900s and local police reports were sparse and dismissive. Those by county inspectors were confined to periodic notes that there was no IRB activity. What local evidence there was of IRB activity

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94 Roscommon Journal, 20th May 1911.
95 Precis of Crime Special Branch reports, October 1909 (PRO CO 904/118).
96 Midland Reporter, 18th May: Sligo Times, 27th May 1911.
99 For example see Diarmuid Lynch, The IRB and the 1916 Insurrection (Cork 1957), p. 22.
therefore stems from post-war memoirs. Thus Sean MacEoin’s unpublished autobiography states that Ganly’s associate John Cawley was an IRB centre for Longford who recruited him and Sean Connolly in 1914. The Tyrrellspass, Westmeath man, Seamas O Maoileoin, claimed that he joined the IRB at a Mullingar Feis in 1909 and promptly formed a Tyrrellspass ‘circle’ by enrolling his two brothers. Andrew Lavin, a schoolteacher and Gaelic League activist of Ballyfarnon, Roscommon, joined the IRB in 1908, though he spent most of his pre-war years in Dublin.

Virtually the only ‘Fenians’ reported in the local press were ‘old’ ones, not quite illustrating Oliver MacDonagh’s maxim that ‘the best of all Fenians was of course a dead one’, but getting pretty close in the case of J.J. O’Kelly MP, the ‘Fenian chief’ who was so infirm that he did not visit his North Roscommon constituency after 1902. O’Kelly, John Phillips and John O’Dowd all referred to and were praised for their Fenian past, though O’Dowd and Phillips (not the invisible O’Kelly) would also stress that violent methods were not now needed. The local press would also write at length on past Fenian exploits - from the escape of John Stephens from Richmond Jail in the 1860s to the role of the late Boyle man John Hopkins (‘one of the old guard’) in the attacks on Chester Castle and Clerkenwell Prison.

After all, as Tom Kettle had put it, Fenianism was ‘the fountain from which all subsequent Irish movements had sprung’.

Of young ‘Fenians’, there was only one public manifestation of activity, the Fianna - or, as the press and police described them, ‘the Boy Scouts’ - in South Westmeath. Though Sinn Fein withered as an organisation in Athlone, the Fianna were launched there in December 1911 and a troop of no more than 30-40 boys drilled, camped and took lessons right up to the outbreak of war. The Fianna did not succeed elsewhere. A company in Moate lasted only

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100 Page 33 of Sean MacEoin’s autobiography, quoted in Coleman, County Longford 1910-23, pp. 115 and 279.
104 Roscommon Messenger, 30th July 1910; Western Nationalist, 18th March 1911.
106 Monthly report of the Westmeath county inspector. December 1911 (PRO CO 904/85). The company continued after the outbreak of war, but collapsed during 1915.
six months. Rumoured companies in Roscommon and Mullingar never materialised. In Athlone, the Fianna remained part of a nexus of ‘cultural’ nationalists - in the Gaelic League and the Athlone Pipers’ Band - which never adhered to or participated in the Irish party and which, as will be seen in Chapter 9, in October 1913 formed part of Athlone’s Midland Volunteers, the first modern nationalist Volunteer formation in Ireland. Outside Athlone, however, such defined ‘revolutionary’ groups did not really exist beyond a few handfuls of individuals. The relative isolation of IRB men is summed up by Alex McCabe, a schoolteacher and Sinn Fein supporter who joined the IRB in County Sligo. Quoted in Michael Farry’s history of Sligo politics, McCabe stated that he was one of only two active, pre-war ‘Sinn Feiners’ in the county: ‘We were both standing jokes in the area and being regarded as harmless as we were, it must be said, treated with kindly tolerance.’

Alienated from the Party? - The Cultural Nationalists

Language, cultural and sporting organisations existed right across the five counties and it was the Gaelic enthusiasts inspiring these societies and clubs who formed the provincial backbone of the ‘cultural nationalist’ movement analysed by John Hutchinson in The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism. For Hutchinson, a wide range of causes came under the umbrella of ‘the Gaelic League’, including the promotion of the Irish language, the industrial revival, arts and crafts, temperance and co-operation. Cultural nationalism, as opposed to political nationalism, was described by Hutchinson as ‘a distinctive ideological movement with its weltanschauung and propounders, forms of organisation, constituency and socio-political programme’. Locally, however, the lines between the two nationalisms were considerably more blurred. It was the interconnectedness of organisations - social, sporting, cultural, sectarian, benevolent and overtly political - that was characteristic of provincial life in the pre-war years.

The Gaelic League

Using the criterion of ‘forms of organisation’, the Gaelic League was certainly different from the political ‘league’ of the Irish party. A ‘branch’ often consisted, as Padraig O Fearail wrote

107 Westmeath Independent, 29th June 1912; monthly report of the Westmeath county inspector. January 1913 (PRO CO 904/89).
108 Quoted in Farry, Sligo 1914-21, p. 13. McCabe seems not to have known of one or two IRB men in Sligo town, including the journalist Seamus McGowan (p. 54).
in his history of the league, simply of a group of people that had come together to form an Irish class. Branches could thus be anything from single language classes to fully-fledged language-teaching and cultural organisations. In addition there was a wide range of league activities - social clubs, cèilidhs, summer schools, festivals - which never featured in even the league’s broad definition of a ‘branch’. The league’s newspaper *An Claidheamh Soluis* had declared in 1902 that ‘half the Gaelic League does not know what it is about’. Its organisational confusion certainly created significant muddle about just how healthy it was.

The consensus of recent writers is that the Gaelic League declined in the pre-war years, after a phase of mushrooming growth in the early 1900s. For all his caution about the nature of ‘branches’, O Fearail noted that in Ireland their number fell from 964 in 1906 to 588 in 1909 and 388 by 1913. Moreover, Irish appeared to be losing ground in primary schools; while it was taught in some 3,000 National schools in 1910, this number had fallen to 1,600 by 1913. Hutchinson believed that this decline was only interrupted in the years 1909-10 by the successful campaign for ‘Essential Irish’, to make Irish compulsory for matriculation at the new National University. He ascribed the decline, among other causes, to a resurgence of political nationalism, severe internal dissensions and a temporary alienation of the Catholic hierarchy. McEvoy’s King’s County study noted that the number of active league branches there fell from seventeen in 1908 to three in 1914. For Peter Hart, in his study of Cork, the league before the Easter Rising was, like Sinn Fein, reduced to ‘diminutive urban clubs and isolated enthusiasts’.

In the five counties, there was no shortage of press coverage of the league’s decline. In 1910, the *Westmeath Independent* noted that ‘the activities of the Gaelic League in other directions [than the ‘national festival’ of 17th March] may not be as pronounced and as much before the public as they have been’. At the ‘Clan Uisneach’ branch in 1911, P. V. C. Murtagh said that it was no use pretending that the movement was flourishing. Despite there being 7,000 people in Athlone, he did not suppose that he had ever attended a class of more than 40, and

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11 Ibid, p. 17.
12 Ibid, pp. 30 and 42.
14 McEvoy, *A Study of the United Irish League in King’s County*, p. 149.
the branch could not continue paying its teacher. At the Sligo branch AGM in 1911, teaching of adults over the past year was reported to be ‘practically nil’, though teachers’ and children’s classes continued. For the Roscommon Journal the Gaelic League locally had not received the support it deserved and ‘local life has a notable tendency for matters English’. Progress in the parish of Roscommon had been very little and the county had been left untouched by the Gaelic revival. The Roscommon Herald reported that the league was still dormant in County Longford in 1910, and that the number of volunteers prepared to work for a ‘self-centred’ Ireland was ‘alarmingly’ small. This was a recurring theme for Tully and, for the Herald’s ‘Gaelic Notes’ in 1912, the movement was not attracting new volunteers - ‘as the veterans drop out one by one, their places remain unfilled.’

For all this, the pattern of decline was anything but clear-cut and contemporary press references, from the same newspapers, can also be cited lauding the movement’s health and success. Thus the Westmeath Independent, so cautious earlier in 1910, could in June write of the forthcoming Midlands Feis in Mullingar: ‘The advance of the Gaelic League in County Westmeath in the past two years has been phenomenal.’ The Roscommon Journal in 1911 wrote on the progress of the league, its ‘excellent organisation’ and ‘marvellous work’. Was it possible that the league, in the June 1910 words of the Roscommon Herald, was ‘getting along wonderfully after all’?

The manic-depressive nature of local press comment reflected the ebbs and flows of the league’s activities in the pre-war years. In essence, it was so disorganised and amorphous that its activities flourished or decayed at different times in different towns and counties, and no consistent pattern of overall growth or decline could be discerned. Thus in Leitrim the activities of a league organiser, Sean Ruadhain and a travelling teacher, Kathleen McGowan from London, appointed at the end of 1909, transformed the league there. Miss McGowan was rapidly teaching up to 500 pupils a week, and by July also attended eleven schools in

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117 Ibid, 22nd October 1911.
118 Sligo Champion, 2nd December 1911.
120 Roscommon Herald, 19th February 1910.
121 Ibid, 27th January 1912.
123 Roscommon Journal, 5th August 1911.
124 Roscommon Herald, 18th June 1910.
South Leitrim. By September 1910, the *Roscommon Herald* claimed that there were 19 'branches' in South Leitrim alone. For the police, progress was smaller but still startling, with the number of reported Leitrim branches rising from one in September 1909 to eleven in May 1911.\(^{125}\) The departure of Kathleen McGowan led, however, to the end of this renaissance, even though she was replaced by another teacher. By October 1911, the *Herald* reported only five South Leitrim branches.\(^{126}\)

The league did, however, still grow in several parts of the region. It revived in Roscommon town in 1911; in Longford town and the countryside of North Longford in 1913 and Moate in 1913-14. In all three cases, the lead was taken by newly-arrived clergy. In Athlone, for all the laments of 1911, the league continued its activities, sustained by a range of musical, sporting and, as seen above, scouting activities. A new club house was opened in 1913, with a view to boosting what was then seen as a weak organisation across the Midlands. In Mullingar, activities revived in 1912, in what was believed to be the third upswing, after two declines, of language activity in the town.\(^{127}\) The arrival of Seamas O Maoileoin as an Irish teacher certainly contributed (reported by the press as ‘Seamus Mallon’, the IRB man from Tyrrellspass and a teacher at the Mullingar Christian Brothers school).\(^{128}\) However, of at least equal importance were the establishment of a branch of the Leinster Irish college at St Mary’s Hall, tap-dancing classes, a choir and a cycling club.\(^{129}\) As activity spread from Mullingar to North Westmeath, the *Midland Reporter* in 1913 could thank God that ‘there has been a great National awakening in the language revival in the last year’, after all the years of apathy.\(^{130}\)

In the several instances where the league’s revival was not short-lived, it derived institutional support from other activities and organisations. In Roscommon town it was bolstered by two energetic clerics (Canon Cummins and Rev. Michael O’Flanagan) and by the long-established social evenings, music and sports (football and billiards) of the town’s Gaelic Club. In Sligo a Gaelic Club was set up complementing an existing league branch, by John Treacy in 1911.

\(^{125}\) *Leitrim Advertiser*, 6\(^{th}\) January 1910; *Sligo Champion*, 15\(^{th}\) January 1910; *Roscommon Herald*, 29\(^{th}\) January; 9\(^{th}\) July; 24\(^{th}\) September 1910; monthly reports of the Leitrim county inspector, September 1909 and May 1911 (PRO CO 904/79 and 83).

\(^{126}\) *Roscommon Herald*, 7\(^{th}\) October 1911.

\(^{127}\) *Midland Reporter*, 13\(^{th}\) June 1912.


\(^{129}\) *Midland Reporter*, 16\(^{th}\) May 1912. The club was for members of the league to cycle to the historic places of the county. Members were requested to speak as much Irish as possible on their journeys.

\(^{130}\) Ibid, 11\(^{th}\) September 1913.
In Longford consistent support came from the bishop and diocesan clergy and in Mullingar from activities such as the choir and the cycling club. The *Westmeath Independent* might complain that in Westmeath ‘the study of Irish is largely over-shadowed by the social side of the Gaelic League programme’, but the diversity of social life in towns appears to have underpinned the movement there. Unsurprisingly, the most prolific ‘Gaelic’ activities were in the largest town, Sligo. Here a new branch was set up by Rev. Brian Crehan (the later, qualified supporter of Redmond in September 1914) in the diocesan Gillooly temperance hall. Crehan’s language students could also participate in the abstinence pioneers, dance and gymnasium classes, handball, billiards, cinema shows, a pipe band, singing lessons, a drama club, Latin classes, social evenings, excursions, boating competitions and, of course, an approved insurance society.

The league’s activities were, therefore, best sustained in the towns. Towns were also the location of many of the summer festivals or Feiseanna. These were normally, but not exclusively, held under the auspices of the league, with competition syllabuses published well in advance and a series of competitions in Irish language, history, and music. Annual festivals were held in Athlone, Mullingar, Boyle, Castlerea, Manorhamilton, Riverstown (Co. Sligo) and Sligo town. Again, the Feiseanna flourished not just because of their focus on Gaelic culture and language, but because they embraced a diversity of less Gaelic local activities - in one case including knitting, lace, crochet, laundry, fretwork, woodwork, hemming, bread-making, freehand-drawing, handwriting, letter-writing and prayers. These festivals, often held over several days, attracted large crowds and, certainly until 1912, record numbers of competitors each year.

In its language teaching, the league continually came up against the barrier of the common perception that to learn Irish was too difficult for most adults. As Rev. Doorly put it at the 1912 Language Day procession in Sligo: ‘It is not to be expected, and we can scarcely expect, that people who have arrived at middle life will ever acquire a very good knowledge

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131 *Westmeath Independent*, 5th July 1913.
133 The Sligo Feis Ceoil was the largest and the most focused on music competitions. It was the only local Feis which was not exclusively nationalist and its patron was Georgina, Lady Gore-Booth.
134 The 1911 Midland Feis in Mullingar. See *Westmeath Guardian*, 21st July 1911.
of the Irish language." According to the writer of the *Westmeath Examiner* ’s ‘Gaelic Notes’ in February 1914: ‘I may assume that it is true that the average adult members of Gaelic League classes are not fluent speakers of Irish. I am sure it is a fact that several who have attended the Irish classes for many years have only a smattering of the language.’ At a Mullingar céilidh in 1913, Rev. Flynn noted the widespread belief that it was impossible for most individuals to get a speaking knowledge of the language. Instead, hopes had to be centred on teaching children. Here, the general belief was that things were still progressing well and, as Hutchinson has recorded, by 1914 60% of boys and 40% of girls were taking Irish as a subject in secondary schools. When reporting the 1911 census, the *Midland Reporter* noted that in Westmeath the increase in Irish speakers in the county was almost entirely in the age range 10-18; ‘it is really in the schools that the work is being done’. In County Sligo, the number of Gaelic speakers had fallen since 1901 - 15,927 against 17,570 - but the number of these under 18 had risen from 1,070 to 3,869. Even the supposed collapse of Irish teaching at National schools in 1913 was explained away. It was widely acknowledged to have plateaued for several years at under 3,000 out of over 8,200 National schools - a stagnation believed to stem from government parsimony in providing supporting grants. When *An Claidheamh Soluis* reported a collapse, down to some 1,600 schools in the year to June 1913, this was hastily refuted by no less than Douglas Hyde, who made clear that all but 250 of the ‘two thousand’ schools which had apparently ‘dropped’ Irish had since resumed it.

The league’s most successful educational campaign in the period, for Essential Irish, attracted support across the spectrum of local nationalists. All hailed the success of the campaign, which locally took the form of politicians on county councils refusing to fund scholarships from the rates until the National University had conceded compulsory Irish for matriculation. For the *Sligo Champion* its success in June 1910 was ‘A ‘National Triumph’. The *Leitrim Observer* said that the result would make Irish compulsory in practically every school and

135 *Sligo Times*, 9th March 1912.
136 *Westmeath Examiner*, 7th February 1914.
137 Ibid, 25th January 1913.
139 *Midland Reporter*, 25th April 1912.
140 *Sligo Champion*, 1st June 1912.
141 *Roscommon Herald, Roscommon Journal*, 2nd August 1913. Hyde was speaking at the Gaelic league convention at which he temporarily held back the ‘entryism’ of more advanced nationalists. The rival claims made at the time about the National schools seem to have related more to this contest than to reality.
quoted the prediction of J.P. Boland MP that in forty years Ireland would be Irish-speaking from sea to sea.\textsuperscript{142} Indeed, the Gaelic League received repeated support and encouragement from the local political elites throughout the period. Eulogies for St. Patrick’s Day parades, Language Fund collections, pipe bands, the Feiseanna and compulsory Irish for scholarships and/or teachers, together with periodic columns in Gaelic, appeared across the nationalist press. Irish party politicians also backed the League’s educational campaigns and participated in their local branches. Fitzgibbon was a committed treasurer and later vice-president of the Castlerea branch and his family participated actively.\textsuperscript{143} Hayden, on the committee of the Midlands Feis, seems to have been a less committed, honorary vice-president of the Mullingar branch; his brother Joseph had been a patron of Roscommon’s Gaelic Club.\textsuperscript{144} T.F. Smyth backed the revival of the Leitrim league in 1910-11, and brought together the league, the UIL, AOH and co-operatives to promote the Irish industrial revival.\textsuperscript{145} In Sligo, John Jinks became the vice-president of John Treacy’s Gaelic club.\textsuperscript{146} In Boyle, the head of the town’s UIL, T.H. Devine, was also a luminary of the town’s league\textsuperscript{147} and as a result Tully’s \textit{Roscommon Herald} did report on it.

The ‘politically correct’ view of an Irish politician towards the league, whatever his personal cultural affiliations, was given by the party’s leader, Redmond, speaking at the 1911 Wicklow Feis. All United Irish Leaguers had to give their utmost support to the language movement, and the first duty of an Irish government would be to foster the spread of the Irish language. ‘There could never be a great Nation in Ireland unless everything was Irish from top to bottom.’\textsuperscript{148} This was the generally expressed view of local party politicians and the press. In 1913, it was echoed by F.H. Meehan MP, opening the Breffni Feis in Manorhamilton, who stated that every Irishman had to assist the league and, in particular, oppose the secondary school scholarships recently offered by Augustine Birrell.\textsuperscript{149} These scholarships, proposed in 1912, were for secondary education and generated another issue on which local politicians could support a Gaelic League campaign. As Douglas Hyde put it at the 1912 Castlerea Feis,
a knowledge of Irish would not be compulsory for such scholarships and thus Essential Irish would be undermined. The local nationalist press was adamant, in a repeat of the 1909-10 campaign, that county councils should not support the scholarships out of the rates. Local politicians duly obliged.

This is not to say that the Gaelic League was an adjunct of the Irish party. In public it remained resolutely ‘non-political’. Many of its activists were not connected with the party. In Athlone in particular, the town’s Gaels associated with obvious ‘advanced’ opponents of the party; in 1914, when the town’s defunct Sinn Fein branch finally closed, it merged itself into the Gaelic League. Moreover, the party’s advanced nationalist opponents in the five counties were almost all active in the league. However, unlike the political manifestations of advanced nationalism, whether Sinn Fein or the IRB, the Gaelic League was not isolated or insignificant, but was rather an established, respectable part of the local nationalist community of provincial Ireland. Support for the league was axiomatic for nationalist politicians, whether Irish party men or their opponents. The league’s ‘philosophy’ was the accepted conventional wisdom, a reality expressed with some confusion of language by the Sligo Champion in 1912. For the Champion, those who believed in Ireland believed in an Irish-Ireland and the Gaelic League had transformed Irish thought. A ‘national sentiment’ had, it said, been converted into a ‘philosophy of nationalism’.

The Gaelic Athletic Association

Like the Gaelic League, the GAA was well integrated into the fabric of local nationalist life, but the movement for Gaelic sports showed clearer signs of consistent growth in the pre-war years, in both towns and villages. Reports of new clubs and teams being formed, for football and hurling, peppered the local press. County associations, revived generally in the early to mid-1900s, held their own local tournaments and fielded county sides in provincial championships. Most importantly, as W.F. Mandle has emphasised, county, provincial and national football championships grew in popularity as a spectator sport, drawing large, paying

150 _Roscommon Messenger_, 10th August 1912.
151 Monthly report of the Westmeath county inspector, April 1914 (PRO CO 904/93).
152 Nevertheless, Rev. Michael O’Flanagan, on the league’s national coisde gnotha and a member of Sinn Fein’s executive in 1910-11, addressed a joint AOH, UIL and Gaelic League rally in Ballygar, Galway in June 1913. His fellow speakers were the league organiser Philip Waldron and the UIL organiser Seamus O’Mulloy (Roscommon Messenger, 14th June 1913).
153 _Sligo Champion_, 23rd March 1912.
crowds, often coming in chartered trains to permanent sports grounds.\textsuperscript{154} Thousands attended matches in Athlone, Carrick, Longford, Roscommon and Castlerea.

At the club level, police ‘counts’ were, as for other organisations, a poor guide to the GAA’s health. Again, they were not consistently undertaken across all five counties until January 1916. Moreover Gaelic sports clubs not currently affiliated to the GAA were not counted. (The most extreme case of this related to the wartime police count of the Sligo clubs, the bulk of which had then defected from the GAA. The police as a result reported on only two GAA clubs in the whole county, with 86 members.)\textsuperscript{155} Youth clubs, school clubs and ladies’ hurling clubs were not counted. Police inspectors did, however, comment anecdotally on the health of the GAA and sporadic counts at the end of 1914 gave patchy evidence of growth. Thus in January 1915, 19 clubs were counted in Roscommon (against 14 in June 1911) and 32 in Westmeath (against 25 in September 1909), but in Longford the number was unchanged from December 1909 at 14.\textsuperscript{156} The ‘English’ sports of soccer and cricket were still played and, according to the \textit{Midland Reporter} the Gainstown GAA club failed when members were seduced to play cricket by copious supplies of porter from a nearby ‘ranchers’’ pub.\textsuperscript{157} However, even a ‘soccer town’ such as Carrick formed a GAA football club at the end of 1913.\textsuperscript{158} In that year, the \textit{Sligo Champion} stated that ‘foreign games’ were all but dead in the county.\textsuperscript{159}

W.F. Mandle’s history is quite clear that at the national and provincial levels the GAA was controlled by the IRB,\textsuperscript{160} but virtually no trace of such influence can be seen locally in what was a considerable volume of press coverage. Press reports, often long, of GAA committee and sports meetings were largely on sporting matters. Where feuds and disputes were reported, and they were many, they almost invariably related to intra-club, inter-club, or inter-county rivalries. Only once did the issue of control of the movement surface, when in June 1913 the \textit{Westmeath Independent} and \textit{Westmeath Examiner} both backed the Dublin Kickham

\textsuperscript{155} Monthly report of the Sligo county inspector, January 1916 (PRO CO 904/99).
\textsuperscript{156} Monthly reports of the Longford, Roscommon and Westmeath county inspectors, January 1915 (PRO CO 904/96).
\textsuperscript{157} \textit{Midland Reporter}, 6\textsuperscript{th} July 1911.
\textsuperscript{158} \textit{Leitrim Observer}, 13\textsuperscript{th} December 1913.
\textsuperscript{159} \textit{Sligo Champion}, 8\textsuperscript{th} February 1913.
\textsuperscript{160} Mandle, \textit{The Gaelic Athletic Association and Irish Nationalist Politics}, pp. 120-123, 134, 140.
Club's efforts to reduce the power of the GAA's central and provincial councils, to stop the GAA from being 'a lever in the hands of any particular influence'. Unlike the press, police reports did address the issue of the GAA's 'politics'. However, while the RIC inspector general acknowledged the IRB's role ('The leaders are men of extreme views and the general tone of the organisation is disloyal'), local county reports repeatedly stated that GAA clubs were run for purely 'athletic' purposes. For the Leitrim inspector in February 1913, the GAA clubs were 'flourishing, but do not display disloyalty'. For the Roscommon inspector in April: 'The GAA clubs are chiefly concerned with their games and do not display disloyalty, but that is not saying that they are loyal.'

Many politically-advanced nationalists were active in the GAA, but so too were many Irish party figures. These were not just, as Marcus de Burca claimed in his history of the GAA, politicians trying to show sympathy for and climb on the bandwagon of the GAA's success. T.F. Smyth chaired the Leitrim GAA early in its revival, from 1905-07. J.P. Farrell had, as with so many other Longford societies, founded the local GAA in the 1880s. His lieutenant MacGuinness was president of the Longford Football and Hurling Club. One example of party support, cited by de Burca as opportunism, came from John Hayden in Roscommon. In 1910 Hayden continued the support for the GAA given by his late brother Joseph. He and John Heverin, another UIL man and secretary to the county council, made a gift of silver medals for the winning players to revive the Roscommon county football and hurling championships. At the beginning of 1911 the GAA county president P.J. Gillooly paid tribute to Hayden who, he said, had rescued the county GAA from being in a bad way financially. This provoked the secretary, Michael Brennan (no friend of Hayden or the Irish party) to remind Gillooly that it was the GAA, through Gillooly, who first approached Hayden and Heverin. However, Brennan's attempt to play down Hayden's initiative, and that of his fellow UIL man Heverin, was slightly negated by the fact that Gillooly was himself secretary

161 Westmeath Independent; Westmeath Examiner. 21 June 1913.
163 Monthly reports of the Leitrim county inspector. February 1913 and the Roscommon county inspector. April 1913 (PRO CO 904/89).
166 Roscommon Herald. 26th February 1910.
167 de Burca, The GAA : A History, p. 95.
of the Four-Mile-House UIL, a member of the South Roscommon UIL executive and assistant secretary, under Heverin, of the county council.  

In the five counties, support for Irish sports was a fully-accepted part of local life, whether through playing in local teams, backing them financially or attending their matches. GAA clubs were not a mental world apart from the ‘political’ nationalists, but rather interconnected with them as they were with so many other societies and organisations. As with the language movement, the dividing lines locally between ‘party men’ and ‘Gaels’ were blurred and the concept of a separate ‘weltanschauung’ was relatively meaningless.

**Temperance**

The temperance movement thrived across provincial Ireland. Temperance clubs, quite ‘non-political’ and uncounted by the police, existed in every town and many large villages in the region. The local press, particularly at Christmas or at the time of the St. Patrick’s Day parade, commented with approval on the new sobriety of the celebrations and a more general decline of public drunkenness was noted and praised. Thousands turned out at public temperance events and the movement enjoyed the unconditional support of the Catholic church. Far and away the largest rally in the five counties in the pre-war years was a temperance one, organised by Dr. Hoare and his cathedral clergy, in Longford town in 1910. It was claimed that anything from 12,000 to 30,000 people and some 40 bands were in the town on 3rd July, including 3,000 brought by special trains from Dublin, 800 from Athlone and 700-800 from Mohill. The procession took over an hour to pass.  

Even unionist commentators, often ready to patronise and denigrate the character of their nationalist compatriots, approved of the change. The *Sligo Independent*, admittedly noting that 500 Protestant ‘Catch-my-Pal’ men had also taken the pledge, wrote in 1911: ‘To anyone who has watched the drinking customs during the past three to four years it is evident that the increase of temperance and the discouragement of intemperance has been very marked.’

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168 *Roscommon Messenger*, 21st January 1911; *Roscommon Journal*, 22nd June 1912; *Roscommon Messenger*, 24th February; 6th July; 19th October 1912. Gillooly was also a delegate to the Connaught provincial GAA council and a stalwart of the Roscommon Gaelic League, race committee and coursing club.


170 *Sligo Independent*, 9th September 1911.
Ireland of Today, published by the London Times in 1913, proclaimed that the ‘Irish peasant’ now presented a new image - ‘he has even ceased to drink’. 171

The paradox remains that if greater sobriety was now diffused across the five counties, so too was the spirit of ‘Mr Bung’. Every town remained riddled with ‘public houses’. John Fitzgibbon claimed that Castlerea had 43 public houses 172 for a population of under 1,300. The resident magistrate Captain Owen lamented Roscommon town’s 40-42 ‘public houses’ (1911 population 1,858) when only four to six would be quite enough. 173 Such numbers, which seem almost incredible, were not proof that the region was overrun with modern-day pubs, but rather that drinks licences had to be obtained by every individual wishing to sell any alcohol. Thus in Macdonald’s Irish Directory for 1912, only four ‘publicans’ were listed for Castlerea, but 45 ‘grocers and spirits dealers’. For Roscommon there were also four ‘publicans’ - the number desired by Captain Owen - but also 40 grocers and spirits merchants, almost all of whom would have been licensed. 174 Add in hoteliers, ‘dining rooms’ and ‘victuallers’ and a large proportion of traders and shopkeepers derived part of their livelihood from sale of alcohol. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that the Irish party locally should be linked to the drinks trade, by both contemporary and modern writers. The 1912 Macdonald’s Directory entry for Longford town, the site of the great temperance rally of 1910, listed 17 publicans and 41 ‘grocers and spirits merchants’. When the unionist Longford Journal wanted to denounce the town’s ‘council of bosses’, in 1913, its key complaint was that of the fifteen councillors, eight were ‘publicans’. 175

Antipathy between the temperance movement and local ‘political nationalism’ was not, however, the result. The movement could not have progressed so well in provincial Ireland without the support of a significant proportion of small-town elites. Admittedly, some of this support was opportunist. Farrell, speaking at the Longford temperance rally in 1910, could remind the crowd that he had been secretary of the Longford Temperance Association in 1883, but one month later he could also denounce the Lloyd George budget and call for the

171 The Times, Ireland of Today, p. 16.
172 Westmeath Independent, 29th June 1913.
173 Strokstown Democrat, 10th May 1913.
175 Longford Journal, 1st June 1913.
party to oppose that budget's extension of the whiskey tax, 'by all the means in its power'.

However, large parts of the press and many leading party figures were far more consistent in their attacks on drink. The *Western Nationalist*, *Westmeath Examiner*, *Roscommon Messenger*, *Leitrim Observer* and *Westmeath Independent* - all party papers - regularly published leaders praising the movement, encouraging sobriety and in 1910 supporting the Lloyd George budget. They were certainly happy to see public houses closed on public holidays and in one case, the *Leitrim Observer*, even permanently. For the *Westmeath Independent* the temperance movement was 'the most encouraging feature of our national life'. For Hayden's *Westmeath Examiner* it would 'stem the tide of infidelity, of a corrupt, degraded, disorderly standard of social rights and ideals, which unfortunately too many modern influences imply'. When the Lloyd George budget supposedly wrong-footed the 'drink-related' Irish party, Hayden, Meehan, and Philips of the MPs all spoke up locally in favour of increased alcohol taxes; Meehan, himself a publican, backed a 'poor man's budget' which taxed the landlord, the brewer, the distiller, men of means and those who drank and smoked. Of the MPs, Smyth and Fitzgibbon were total abstainers and they and Phillips publicly encouraged abstinence at meetings and rallies. Fitzgibbon, a lifelong abstainer as his father had been, went so far as to say that all issues were subordinate to that of temperance – even the winning of a native parliament. Again, the line between 'political' and 'cultural' nationalism, locally, was hopelessly blurred.

**The Church**

Far and away the strongest 'organisation' in the region remained the Catholic church. Entrenched in every town and village, with massive attendance at services and its activities reverently reported by the press, the church’s position was embedded in what L. Paul-Dubois termed its shared 'common interest and sentiment with the people'. All contemporary

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177 *Western Nationalist*, 6th November 1909; *Roscommon Messenger*, 11th and 25th March 1911; *Westmeath Examiner*, 11th March 1911; *Leitrim Observer*, 4th May 1912;
178 *Westmeath Independent*, 9th August 1913.
179 *Westmeath Examiner*, 15th March 1913.
181 Fitzgibbon speaking to the Castlebar Total Abstinence Society, reported in the *Roscommon Journal*, 9th September 1911. He went on to say that he would never entrust a secret to a man who frequented a public house and that if he employed a boy who took a drop he would let him go. (Did he ever think of doing do this to his former shop assistant John MacBride?)
writers stressed the influence of the church, and even its critic Filson Young, who in 1904 wrote of it sucking the life and wealth out of the country, noted that individual priests were often 'true friends' of the people. 'They help them in their affairs, settle their disputes, claim for them their rights, comfort them in their sorrows, admonish, encourage, cherish and watch over them.'

For Padraic Colum, writing in 1912 of his travels in Ireland, the role of the individual priest was all-pervasive:

In an Irish democracy, the priest is like some great, semi-independent public servant. He marries, christens and buries; says Mass and preaches sermons; hears confession and attends sick call; he manages the schools, helps to organise League branches and cooperative societies, advises the people as to the price they should pay for the land, and the time they should spray potatoes. In addition to all this he takes a very active interest in the conduct of his people.

Priests unsurprisingly, therefore, took their place at the centre of the network of committees and connections which characterised provincial life. Every county provided examples of such intensive clerical networking:

Rev. Daly, administrator at Mullingar cathedral and from 1910 parish priest in Castlepollard, Westmeath, was on committees of the Midland feis, the Westmeath horse show, the county agricultural committee, the Mullingar lunatic asylum, the UIL, the Castlepollard agricultural and industrial show, the Westmeath county infirmary and the Castlepollard town tenants.

Rev. Langan, parish priest in Abbeylara, Longford until 1913 when he moved to Moate, ran Abbeylara's temperance society and pipers' band and the Gaelic League in both Abbeylara and Moate. With Rev. Daly in 1913 he also organised the erection of the 'Myles the Slasher' memorial at the bridge of Finea, Westmeath. He was also active in the UIL.

Rev. Manning, curate in Mohill, Leitrim until 1912 and Mount Temple, Westmeath, thereafter, was on the committees of the Mohill Gaelic League, the county's 'coisde ceanntair' the Leitrim county GAA, the Mohill 'Cycling and Athletic Sports', the Donohue temperance memorial hall and the UIL. He was also the 'religious examiner' assessing the

pay and results of National school teachers and a champion of the use of 'modern' Irish at University College, Galway.

Canon Coyne, parish priest in Boyle, Roscommon until he became bishop of Elphin in 1912, with his curate Rev Sharkey supported the Boyle feis, the town's Gaelic League and hurley club, the UIL (for Rev Sharkey the AOH), the parish committee of the Congested Districts Board and the 'Boyle No. 1' pensions committee.

Canon Cummins, administrator at Sligo cathedral (and from 1910 parish priest in Roscommon), had perhaps the widest range of interests of any priest in the five counties. The Sligo Champion described 'the extraordinary energy which Canon Cummins threw into every progressive movement' and noted that he 'thinks rather of a good end to be obtained than of the obstacles that may have to be surmounted in attaining it. While in Sligo, he was active in temperance, the county agriculture committee, the Sligo infirmary, the NSPCC, the Irish Industrial development Association, the fever hospital, the Gaelic League and the UIL. He administered and organised the building of the Gillooly temperance hall (later used so comprehensively by Rev. Crehan). The hall as organised by Cummins offered a free library and reading room, National school classes, a base for the St Vincent de Paul society, two billiards rooms, Irish and history classes, weekly lectures and a band. When he left Sligo, many of his responsibilities and positions passed to his successor as administrator, Rev. Doorly.

Almost every 'nationalist' organisation in the five counties had some kind of clerical involvement, with the only serious exception being that of 'labour'. If there a positive bias in this range of clerical activities it was, as noted by John Hutchinson, to 'cultural' nationalism. According to Paul-Dubois, 'very soon everything that was youngest and most enlightened in the clergy was touched by the new movement'. The 'Gaelic' activities of Coyne, Crehan, Cummins, Daly, Doorly, Langan and Manning and Sharkey were complemented by many other priests, including most notably Canon Harte in Castlerea, Rev.

185 Sligo Champion, 23rd April 1910.
186 Sligo Independent, 6th November 1911. This all came out in a court case eventually lost by the church, in which Cummins tried to get the hall exempted from the payment of rates.
188 Paul-Dubois, Contemporary Ireland, p. 505.
O'Flanagan in Roscommon, Rev. O'Grady in Keash (Co. Sligo) and Rev. O'Reilly in Tang (on the boundary of Longford and Westmeath). Did it follow that these clerical, cultural nationalists were unsympathetic to the political nationalism of the Irish party, or if not hostile were merely content, in the words of the historian David Miller, ‘to continue endorsing the party, if requested’, much as they ‘might endorse the products of a manufacturer of vestments or stained glass’? 189 In fact, clerical participation in and support for the Irish party went far beyond mere indifferent endorsement. All but two of the examples discussed above (Harte and O'Flanagan) were active participants in party affairs. Crehan, Coyne, Cummins, Daly, Doorly, Langan, Manning, O'Grady, O'Reilly and Sharkey were all senior UIL officers, speakers at rallies and/or attendees at UIL conventions. 190 The clergy, the Irish party and an array of societies and clubs were all inter-linked.

Above them, the hierarchy was admittedly more semi-detached. Dr. Hoare of Ardagh was probably the most supportive of the party, particularly of his former pupil from St Mel's, Longford, J.P. Farrell. 191 One bishop, Dr. Gaughran of Meath, was studiously neutral between Hayden and Ginnell in Westmeath, and all the hierarchy at some stage condemned cattle-driving, boycotting and rent strikes. However, even Dr. Gaughran publicly subscribed to the parliamentary fund, as did Drs. Hoare and Clancy. Dr. Clancy, bishop of Elphin, had clashed most with ‘the party’ locally, strongly opposing boycotts and rent strikes and then in the mid-1900s taking on Daniel O'Donnell’s AOH in Sligo town. In this latter instance, however, his allies were the party MP, P.A. McHugh, the town’s UIL and McHugh’s Sligo Champion.

189 David Miller, Church, State and Nation in Ireland, 1898-1921, (Dublin 1973), pp. 246-47. Miller was writing of the hierarchy in the years 1909-10.

190 Creehan chaired of the Riverstown UIL (Sligo Champion, 22nd July 1911), and later became an officer of the St John’s UIL branch (Sligo Champion, 17th August 1912). Coyne made the nominating speech for J.J. O’Kelly at the 1909 North Roscommon convention (Roscommon Messenger, 18th December 1909). Cummins was lead speaker at UIL rallies in Sligo in 1909 and early 1910 (Sligo Champion, 6th November 1909; Roscommon Journal, 30th April 1910), and presided over the executive of the North Sligo UIL (Sligo Champion, 22nd January 1910). Daly was a noted UIL supporter (Westmeath Examiner, 8th January 1910). Doorly was president of the Sligo UIL (Sligo Champion, 18th June 1910). Langan chaired the Abbeylara UIL (Longford Leader, 18th December 1909). Manning ‘after some hesitation’ became president of the Mohill UIL (Leitrim Advertiser, 18th August 1910). O’Grady was president of the Keash UIL and a member of the South Sligo UIL executive (Western Nationalist, 5th December 1913; Sligo Champion, 31st May 1913). Father O’Reilly revived the Tang UIL in January 1913 (Longford Leader, 11th January 1913). Rev. Sharkey was one of four priests heading, with Joe Devlin, Tom Kettle and T.F. Smyth, an AOH parade of 3,000 in Boyle (Western Nationalist, 27th May 1911).

Clancy’s protégé Canon Cummins continued to share his bishop’s aversion to the Hibernians. In 1912 he wrote to Clancy of his past dealings with ‘designing men’: ‘My experience of societies in Sligo was a very bitter one & I dread a repetition of that experience’, but he was also perhaps typical of local, pre-war clerical views in being what the Sligo Champion called ‘a staunch and orthodox Nationalist’. In 1910, before he progressed to Roscommon, Cummins could clash with John O’Dowd over the appointment of O’Dowd’s unqualified niece to be matron of the Sligo county infirmary, but he also ringingly declared his support for the Irish party, as ‘one of which any country might feel proud’.

**Flourishing more or less**

On balance, the ‘waning of popular politics’ described in Chapter 2 did not significantly weaken the life of local organisations. Though the Irish party’s main local vehicle, the UIL, did perceptibly decline, this was in large part offset by the vigour of the Hibernians, who thrived not only because of their ‘Catholicity’, relative youth and aggressive nationalism, but also through their promotion of a broad range of sporting, social, cultural and benefits activities. The Irish party maintained its connections to a plethora of other societies. In the years 1910-13 it showed sufficient signs of life to make its subsequent, imminent, demise still far from inevitable.

Just as ‘political’ organisations could not exist independently of an array of other clubs, societies and committees, nor could the ‘cultural’ ones analysed by John Hutchinson in his study of Irish cultural nationalism. The Gaelic League’s aims and objectives had become part of the conventional political wisdom of local life. The GAA may have been controlled nationally by the IRB, but locally its personnel and activities were so intertwined with other organisations that it showed, in the words of W.F. Mandle, ‘an uncanny identification with the political mood of the majority of nationalists’. The temperance movement derived its strength not solely from cultural nationalists, but from right across the spectrum of provincial Irish politicians, press and clerics. Local nationalist organisations were intricately interwoven

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192 Canon Cummins to Dr. Clancy, 13th February 1912, Elphin Diocesan Archive, File C 1912.
193 Sligo Champion, 23rd April 1910.
194 Ibid, 22nd January 1910.
and the overlaps of memberships between them were too many to make for easy
categorisations. Suffusing almost all of them was the Catholic clergy. The participation of so
many clerics in the Irish party or Gaelic League locally was not a result of any special
relationship with either political or cultural nationalism, but rather a reflection of the church’s
involvement with almost all aspects of life in Catholic provincial Ireland in the pre-war years.

The complexity of personal affiliations and the danger of too simply pigeon-holing
individuals can be seen in ‘Foxy Jack’ Fitzgibbon MP - the quintessential party boss of much
of County Roscommon, but also the committed total abstainer and Gaelic Leaguer. At the
end of 1913, anticipating Home Rule, he did indeed predict the end of the UIL. It would be
replaced, he thought, by an organisation whose purposes were ‘quite in line with’ those of the
national movement and the Irish parliament - the Gaelic League. 197

197 Roscommon Messenger, 13th December 1913.
Chapter 4: Nationalist Political Language - New Hope or Old Hatreds?

Political rhetoric, whether defined as the calculated use of public language by elite practitioners of 'high' politics or as the everyday, routine, background noise of local politicians, suffused the content of the Irish provincial press in the years before the First World War. Major speeches on Irish affairs by national political leaders, British and Irish, were reported in detail, while lengthy reports of the many words uttered by local men at a plethora of committee meetings, chapel gate gatherings and court and council sessions formed the backbone of news coverage. The verbatim nature of these reports meant that the range of public political language used by national and local figures was fully on display. They were in turn supplemented by somewhat more structured local contributions: articles, letters, poems, lectures, endless 'supplied' reports by secretaries of cultural and political societies, bishops' lenten pastorals and MPs' speeches, plus the papers' own leading articles.

Several key strands of language can be identified, including the 'Redmondism' of the Irish party's leader, the long-used language of 'The Cause', talk of a new alliance with 'the democracy' of England and, notwithstanding this, a deeply pervasive anglophobia. Though quite contradictory, they often cohabited quite happily in the language of the same individual politicians and newspapers. Together they gave a comprehensive view, reproduced across the weekly newspapers published in the five counties, of the spectrum of nationalist political beliefs and values.

Redmondism

According to the IRB man and revolutionary, Bulmer Hobson, pre-war nationalist beliefs and values were almost unreservedly docile. By the 1900s, the Irish people had given up the struggle for independence and were quite content with the prospect of a parliament subordinate to the British, while 'my generation was born into an Ireland which, for the most part, had lost even the will to resist'. From an opposite perspective, Patrick Shea, the son of an Athlone-based RIC head constable and later a senior Northern Ireland civil servant, agreed. In his autobiography Voices and the Sound of Drums, Shea wrote:

1 Hobson, Ireland Yesterday and Tomorrow: pp. 2 and 20.
at the beginning of the twentieth century Ireland was at peace; the turmoil of the Land War had come to an end and the campaign for Home Rule, which had the support of the great majority of the people, was being conducted constitutionally. Violence, it seemed, had at last disappeared from the Irish political scene. There was no resentment of Irishmen who took employment under the British crown...and now, with improved educational opportunities, more and more young men were going into the British civil service and government departments were staffed almost entirely by Irishmen.² For Shea, his father’s RIC was ‘a native police force under the British crown, a force of Irishmen with the duty of maintaining peace and order in their homeland. They had, they knew, the backing of their clergy...’.³ Both Hobson and Shea portrayed a settled, conservative, unrevolutionary society and such depictions appear to be quite consistent with the waning of political activity, the ‘apathy’ and the distinctly ‘bourgeois’ politics outlined in Chapter 2. In the words of David Fitzpatrick, ‘seldom had Irish nationalism seemed less revolutionary’ than in 1912. Thus for Fitzpatrick it was John Redmond who ‘sounded the characteristic public notes of pre-war constitutionalism’.⁴

Redmond was indeed the very model of moderation and modern historians now typically label as ‘Redmondism’ a specific set of beliefs which, though nationalist and committed to Irish self-government, were conciliatory to Britain, loyal to the empire, reassuring to unionists, wooing men of ‘all classes and creeds’ to take their proper place in the administration of a united Ireland and wedded solely to parliamentary and constitutional political methods. Such ‘Whig’, ‘Buttite’⁵ beliefs were undoubtedly ingrained in the minds of many older, landed and/or upper middle class Catholic nationalists, who were themselves assimilated into British life and culture. A contemporary political observer, the Master of Elibank (the Liberal chief whip until 1912), wrote of Redmond on his death in 1918:

I found him a thorough gentleman and absolutely reliable. Apart from the Home Rule principle...he would have been known as a rigid Conservative and Constitutionalist... In reality, he was at heart a true Loyalist and the example of his family during the war proves it.⁶

² Shea, *Voices and the Sound of Drums*, p. 28.
³ Ibid.
⁵ After Isaac Butt, first leader of the Irish Home Rule movement in parliament in the 1870s
Redmond’s fellow MP, Stephen Gwynn, wrote of him that ‘the whole bent of his mind was toward moderation in all things’ and that ‘no man was ever less of a revolutionary’. Another sympathetic contemporary biographer, Warre B. Wells, wrote that ‘from the first’ Redmond ‘contemplated the spectacle of Anglo-Saxon civilisation with a sentiment akin to awe’ while Redmond himself confided to Gwynn: ‘if I were an Englishman, I should be the greatest Imperialist living’.

Redmondite views were clearly articulated and reported in the local press. In particular, the platform and parliamentary speeches of ‘the Leader of the Irish Nation’ were regularly reproduced, even sometimes in unionist papers. Before the war, the vast majority of the nationalist press in the five counties, with the sole exception of the Boyle and Mullingar papers of Jasper and George W. Tully, remained loyal both to Redmond personally and to the Irish parliamentary party of which he was chairman. A figure such as Sir Walter Nugent, MP for South Westmeath, member of the Westmeath Catholic gentry (educated at Downside; recreations racing, hunting and shooting; member of the Turf, Reform, United Services, St Stephen’s Green and Kildare Street clubs; director of the Midlands and Great Western Railway and Northern Insurance; deputy lieutenant of County Westmeath) could consistently advance the most conciliatory and imperialist of views without any apparent damage to his local political support. Indeed, in Dublin, his views were no bar to his chairing the Freeman’s Journal Limited, which owned the Irish party’s main national press mouthpiece, from 1912-16.

In the pre-war years, Nugent advanced the full gamut of Redmondite views, which were reported without any adverse comment in the party press, particularly the *Westmeath Independent* and the *Westmeath Examiner*. During 1911 he called repeatedly for the unity and strengthening of the British empire, which he saw as a liberal ideal based on equality of treatment for every citizen. Only in Ireland, he claimed (presumably ignoring non-white colonies) was this ideal not fulfilled. In 1912, he stated that the great Irish landed families

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7 Stephen Gwynn, *John Redmond’s Last Years* (London 1919), pp. 3 and 11.
9 Stephen Gwynn, *John Redmond’s Last Years*, p. 15.
10 Thoms Irish Who’s Who (Dublin 1923).
11 See the *Westmeath Examiner*, 11th March, 30th September 1911 and *Westmeath Independent*, 13th May, 1911.
were no longer leaders of unionism and called for all ‘thoughtful’ men with the interests of the empire at heart to join together to reach a ‘general agreement’. Ultimately, the King and Queen would come over to Ireland to open the Irish parliament and complete the ‘great work of conciliation’. Ireland would then take her place within the empire. In the autumn of that year he told the Athlone UIL: ‘We only want to be taken into the Empire, to form part of the Empire, part of the United Kingdom, in reality instead of name’. In October 1913 he laid out to a Tang public meeting what Home Rule stood for - ‘justice for Ireland, the integrity of the United Kingdom, the maintenance of the Empire and loyalty to the Crown’.

To the dismay of figures such as the Tullys, such thinking was not just the preserve of Sir Walter Nugent. In September 1912 the Roscommon Herald’s ‘Gaelic Notes’ could comment that ‘the demon of Imperialism has recently entered into possession of many honest souls in our midst who were quite proud of their nationality only a few short months ago’. One local paper, the Athlone-based Westmeath Independent (owned by the Protestant Chapmans and edited by the secretary of the South Westmeath UIL, Michael MacDermott-Hayes) certainly used Redmondite rhetoric more than its rivals and praised conciliatory initiatives taken by Nugent. In October 1912, it supported Nugent's call to woo ‘thoughtful’ men into a new ‘general agreement’ by praising ‘moderate Unionists’ such as Lord Dunraven and Lindsay Talbot-Crosbie. In February 1913, the paper explicitly defended an article by Nugent promoting Ireland’s role in the empire, declaring that the Irish wanted to live as ‘freemen in the Empire’, as free and independent as the people of Canada.

Nor was Nugent alone among local MPs. A fellow imperialist was Thomas Scanlan, MP for South Sligo. Scanlan came from anything but from the same social or cultural background as Redmond or Nugent. He was a local boy made good, went to the same Drumcliffe National school as the Sligo town party boss John Jinks and had emigrated to Scotland to work as a

12 Westmeath Examiner, 9th March: Westmeath Independent, 27th April 1912. Nugent subsequently welcomed the defection from unionism of his friend Gerald Dease.
14 Nugent speaking to the Athlone UIL. Westmeath Independent, 12th October 1912.
15 Longford Leader, 4th October 1913.
16 Roscommon Herald, 28th September 1912.
17 Westmeath Independent, 19th October 1912.
18 Ibid, 15th February 1913.
journalist and solicitor. However, Scanlan shared with Nugent the fact that he was largely remote from his constituency and assimilated into British life, in Scanlan’s case as a lawyer now practising in England and, with Stephen Gwynn, running the Irish Press Agency in London.\textsuperscript{20} Like Nugent, Scanlan used the language of conciliation and imperialism, and his speeches were well-reported in the Sligo press. Typically, speaking in London in November 1911, he made it clear that what the Irish wanted was ‘a position within the British Constitution, within the British Empire, under the King’. The end of maltreatment of the Irish would lead to far stronger bonds to the empire than could possibly exist at present.\textsuperscript{21}

\textbf{Redmondism Disowned: Redmond and the ‘Daily Express’ in 1910}

Redmondite rhetoric was, therefore, clearly articulated in the five counties in the pre-war years, but its use was confined to a minority. Effectively, across the region only the two MPs, Nugent and Scanlan, and possibly only one newspaper, the \textit{Westmeath Independent}, could be found to give it voice. The lack of momentum behind this conciliatory, imperialist agenda was shown in the autumn of 1910. At this time Redmond and his parliamentary colleague T.P. O’Connor, while they were touring North America to raise funds, promoted a thoroughly Redmondite political initiative, in favour of federal ‘Home Rule All Round’ for the United Kingdom and the empire. O’Connor made a series of openly imperialist speeches in Canada which, in the words of William O’Brien, ‘out-Redmonded Redmond and indeed almost out-Kiplinged Kipling’.\textsuperscript{22} In these speeches and in an interview given by Redmond to the London \textit{Daily Express} in New York in early-October, both men made it clear that they sought for Ireland only the degree of self-government given to an American state or to a Canadian province. Immediately, they found themselves almost totally isolated back in Ireland and, within two weeks, Redmond was forced to repudiate his \textit{Express} interview. During that interval, no Irish MP or newspaper spoke up in his or O’Connor’s defence. Nationalist opponents of the party denounced the perceived betrayal of the ‘National demand’ and covered the story in detail, while the response of party loyalists was one of silence, with minimal news coverage and no leader comment whatsoever. Then, with Redmond’s repudiation of the \textit{Express} interview, there came a collective sigh of relief from the party

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Sligo Times}, 18\textsuperscript{th} November 1911.
\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Sligo Champion}, 25\textsuperscript{th} November 1911.
\textsuperscript{22} William O’Brien in a letter to \textit{The Observer}, 23\textsuperscript{rd} October 1910.
press, extensive reporting of Redmond’s denial and a succession of attacks on what was now widely seen to have been a fake.\textsuperscript{23}

In the five counties, the \textit{Roscommon Herald} reported at length on the Redmondite betrayal, denouncing it and commented on the contrasting ‘frostiness’ and silence of party organs such as the \textit{Freeman’s Journal}.\textsuperscript{24} Its sister paper the \textit{Midland Reporter} pronounced that Redmond had abandoned the national demand and that O’Connor was ‘slobbering on’ about Ireland’s imperial destiny.\textsuperscript{25} By contrast, party papers such as the \textit{Sligo Champion}, \textit{Western Nationalist} and \textit{Leitrim Observer} initially produced at most only truncated factual reporting of the \textit{Express} interview and no comment at all. This paucity of coverage was then succeeded by extensive reporting of and comment on Redmond’s denial. All of these party papers accepted the denial at face value and that the \textit{Express} interview was a fabrication. The \textit{Sligo Champion} said that the \textit{Express} had tried to portray Redmond as accepting a ‘very mild milk and water form of devolution’ to the delight of Tory papers in London and of Irish factionists.\textsuperscript{26} The \textit{Western Nationalist} said that the \textit{Express} had caused the ‘usual regulation critics’ to be up in arms against Redmond.\textsuperscript{27} Only Paul Dunne’s \textit{Leitrim Observer} in Carrick-on-Shannon struck a sour note, remarking that while Redmond had denied the interview nothing had been said about T.P. ‘This is a bar sinister,’ it said, requiring further explanation. It concluded, not inaccurately, that ‘the whole imbroglio would be laughable if it were not tragic.’\textsuperscript{28}

Throughout the affair, the most Redmondite local newspaper should have been the \textit{Westmeath Independent}. However it followed the exact pattern of the other party-supporting nationalist papers. Its initial coverage of Redmond’s interview was minimal and its comment non-existent. After the denial, it moved quickly to attack the \textit{Express}’s attempt to promote ‘gas and water’ Home Rule. Two weeks later a leading article, ‘Lowering the Flag’, mocked the ‘absurd’ rumours which had circulated that Redmond would tolerate such a watered-down version of self-government.\textsuperscript{29} In theory, John Hayden’s \textit{Roscommon Messenger} and

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\item \textsuperscript{23} For a fuller account of Redmond’s and O’Connor’s initiative, and its demise, see Michael Wheatley. ‘John Redmond and Federalism in 1910’ in \textit{Irish Historical Studies} Vol. XXXII (May 2001), pp. 343-364.
\item \textsuperscript{24} \textit{Roscommon Herald}, 8\textsuperscript{th} and 15\textsuperscript{th} October 1910.
\item \textsuperscript{25} \textit{Midland Reporter}, 13\textsuperscript{th} October, 1910.
\item \textsuperscript{26} \textit{Sligo Champion}, 22\textsuperscript{nd} October 1910.
\item \textsuperscript{27} \textit{Western Nationalist}, 22\textsuperscript{nd} October 1910.
\item \textsuperscript{28} \textit{Leitrim Observer}, 22\textsuperscript{nd} October 1910.
\item \textsuperscript{29} \textit{Westmeath Independent}, 22\textsuperscript{nd} October and 5\textsuperscript{th} November 1910.
\end{itemize}
Westmeath Examiner should also have expressed support for Redmond’s initiative. Hayden was, after all, one of Redmond’s longer-standing Parnellite associates, a friend and one of the few house guests at Redmond’s summer home at Aughavanagh, County Wicklow.\footnote{Stephen Gwynn, *John Redmond’s Last Years*, p. 38. When Redmond in August 1914 was to launch his great ‘offer’ of the Irish Volunteers to defend Ireland’s shores on the outbreak of war, Hayden was to be one of only two MPs with whom he first discussed it - the other was T.F. O’Connor (Ibid, p. 131).} When the Express interview came out, however, Hayden’s titles were as reticent as any other local party paper - indeed the interview was not reported at all. After the denial (now reported by the paper) had been made, the Messenger believed that those who had attacked Redmond for his ‘alleged’ change of policy should be ashamed. The ‘genius and statesmanship’ of Redmond [though he had presumably not done anything, not having given the interview and not having changed policy] had forced the issue of Home Rule through, making it ‘the question of the hour’.\footnote{Roscommon Messenger, 22nd and 29th October 1910.} Hayden remained resolutely loyal to his friend and leader, but not ‘Redmondite’.

Redmondistm, it appeared, remained a minority taste. Opponents pointed out that strategic retreats by Redmond had happened before; he had pulled back from a position in advance of his followers in 1904 (over Irish devolution) and again in 1907 (over the ill-fated Irish Council bill).\footnote{See Tim Healy’s brother Maurice speaking at Limerick, 22nd October 1910, *Irish Weekly Independent*, 29th October 1910.} In 1910, only two local figures - Nugent and Scanlan - provided any defence of what Redmond and T.P. O’Connor had been saying, though like all local MPs they were publicly silent prior to Redmond’s repudiation of the Express. At the end of October, Scanlan, speaking on Teeside, said that some unionists now realised that ‘Mr Redmond was not asking for something that would be a danger or menace to the Empire, but something which would tend to its greater strength’.\footnote{Sligo Champion, 29th October 1910. The newspaper did not give a date for Scanlan’s speech, merely noting that he spoke ‘recently’. It is possible, though unlikely, that Scanlan spoke before Redmond’s denial.} Nugent spoke in Ireland in mid-November and was more explicit, defending both Redmond and O’Connor at a local UIL branch reorganisation meeting. It was absurd, he said, to portray Redmond and O’Connor as going back on the national demand. Nothing had been done other than to define that demand clearly and specifically. For years Redmond had been attacked for being too vague. Now that he provided definition he was attacked even more.\footnote{Nugent speaking to Loughnavalley UIL, *Westmeath Independent*, 19th November 1910.} Nugent and Scanlan remained atypical figures, however, in their defence of their leader’s imperialism and moderation. A more
typical party response was provided by the *Longford Leader*, owned by the stalwart party loyalist, J.P. Farrell - the *Express* interview had been ‘a lying fabrication for which Mr Redmond was in no way responsible’. There had been no ‘tremendous lowering of the national flag’. Another ‘Tory lie’ had been nailed.\(^3^5\)

Nugent and Scanlan remained unusual in the consistency of their Redmondite beliefs in the years prior to the outbreak of war. Other local figures would, of course, use individual Redmondite catch-phrases - reassuring Protestants, calling for the unity of ‘all creeds and classes’ or refuting any desire for total separation from Britain. Many others would repeat the stock debating point that a generous Home Rule settlement would provide far more security for England, Britain or the empire than all the police, armies or dreadnoughts employed by that empire. The example of the Boers (and sometimes of Canada in the 1860s) was deployed again and again - generous Home Rule settlements brought peace and loyalty. Newspapers and politicians did write and speak of the loyalty of self-governing nations to the empire, or of the need for Ireland to embrace all its ‘sons and daughters’. However, in the case of nearly all writers and speakers in the five counties, the use of such rhetoric was anything but consistent. Their circumspection towards Redmond’s federalist initiative in 1910 indicates that merely citing isolated Redmondite utterances is not proof that they embraced the Redmondite creed with any of the conviction of figures such as Nugent. Moreover, any Redmondite phrases used formed only a part of a much broader and often quite different political vocabulary. Far and away the largest component of that vocabulary was that of ‘The Cause’.

### The Cause

One of the regular contributors to Hayden’s *Roscommon Messenger* was P.J Neary, district councillor, UIL man, Gaelic Leaguer, Gaelic footballer, leading Hibernian (Roscommon county secretary of the AOH) and poet. His verse, from 1910 to 1914, reminded the *Messenger*’s readers of the epic struggle they and their forefathers had undertaken. The tone of his verse was unchanging. At the beginning of 1910 his ‘To the Gaels’ concluded:

\(^{35}\) *Longford Leader*, 22\(^{nd}\) October 1910.
Old Ireland is a land of slaughter,
Tyrants find their home is here
Our best’s away far o’er the water
Ireland’s wounded sons are here

Oh! Forward then, erase the Saxon
Battle give to tyrants mean
Let our’s be pure determined action
Proudly hail the flag of green.36

His ‘Ode to Emmet’ of the same year ended:
We’ll there avenge our martyred dead
That murdered cold had been.
We’ll there tear down the English red
Instead plant Ireland’s green.37

In 1913, the message of ‘To Irishmen’ was:
Let passions brave fan high the martial flame
Of those who well their country’s freedom claim.
The purpose pure of patriotic minds
A confirmation ’fore the God head finds.
The soldier ne’er o’er his bright sword should pause;
God blesses swords when drawn in freedom’s cause.

A people’s lawful banner too is blest
If raised in fight when people deem it best.
Let cowardly Gaels who linger in the fight
Learn now to know God ever aids the right.
Awake! Advance onto the battle scene
And soon we’ll freedom have in College Green.38

36 Roscommon Messenger, 15th January 1910.
37 Ibid, 1st October 1910.
38 Ibid, 13th September 1913.
The words used by Neary were a mixture of bellicosity, liberty, justice, struggle, victory, martyrs, militarism, religion and patriotic freedom. They were entirely consistent with a standard nationalist rhetoric which, according to the historian George Boyce, was embodied in a mass of popular Victorian Irish literature and history, forming the staple content of speeches, editorials and poems. According to Boyce, the substance of popular Irish nationalism stemmed from 'the teaching at every level of a catholic Irishman’s life - home, school, places of work and leisure, place of worship, press, the penny song books, of the myth of the persecuted but now arisen nation'.

Ireland’s history was one of suffering and struggle, of tyrannous and treacherous oppression by the Saxon over the Gael. The list of enemies of the Irish nation was long - tyrants, landlords, the aristocracy, the ascendancy, bloodsuckers, parasites, carrion crows, Orangemen, masons, the Saxons, the English. Irish unionists were firmly on the list and were repeatedly the subject of thoroughly ‘un-Redmondite’ language in the mainstream nationalist press. In 1911, the Sligo Champion cautioned the unionist, J.H. Campbell, who had attacked the papacy as a ‘foreign power’, to remember that:

the Catholic church has been intimate in the minds and hearts of Irishmen for close on sixteen hundred years, whereas the men of whom he is the spokesman have not yet been naturalised, and are in fact the most unnatural and foreign thing on Irish soil. They are not English, they will not be Irish, and so they can only describe themselves as “His Majesty’s Loyal Subjects”. Has any race of men reached a lower stage of degeneration than this?

The Western Nationalist saw ‘the respectable classes of Ireland’ as ‘the spoiled spoon-fed descendants of planters, the camp followers of every successful English army, the carrion crows who would rob the dead of their own side’. Such belligerent language was used again and again across the five counties by newspapers, party bosses, MPs, lecturers, ‘poets’ and councillors, the vast majority of whom nevertheless remained loyal to Redmond as leader of the Irish party. Its force can be seen in a summary of Irish history, written in 1913, in a Roscommon Journal leader:

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39 Boyce, Nationalism in Ireland, pp. 246, 247 and 385.
40 Sligo Champion, 4th April 1911.
41 Western Nationalist, 28th September 1912.
Through centuries of misgovernment when our foes made endeavours to eradicate the rightful owners of the soil and bequeath it to aliens, when our holy religion that St. Patrick taught us was attempted to be wrested from us by the lawless Saxon, when the cruel Saxon soldiers despoiled the verdant aspect of our "gem of the sea" and likewise attempted their atrocities on the virtue of our feminine kin. Through the years of famine and pestilence when existence was almost impossible, again came the fierce agrarian war and its attendant fight with landlordism. Such is a brief summary of those awful episodes from which we eventually emerged and carries us into the present epoch.42

For nationalists, the fight for freedom had been handed on to the present generation by a succession of Irish martyrs and leaders - a list that could include any of Malachy, Brian Boru, Tone, Emmet, Fitzgerald, O'Connell, Smith O'Brien, the Manchester Martyrs, Butt, Davitt and Parnell, covering the full spectrum from mythology to constitutionalism to physical force. In particular, the national movement was seen as being in a direct line of descent from the Fenians. In the case of two local MPs, the absentee J.J. O'Kelly and the elderly John Phillips, this was quite true and, as noted in Chapter 3, both were regularly described as 'Fenian chiefs'. John O'Dowd also had an IRB past while John Fitzgibbon, speaking in 1910, supposed that he, had he been as old as his Castlerea lieutenant Pat Conry, would, like Conry, have been one of 'Stephen's men'. He went on to declaim that 'every fat landlord and gutter agent' would be swept away, and that his hearers still had to 'fight' the 'landlord garrison'.43

When a figure as obviously associated with the IRB and physical force as John MacBride visited Sligo to give the Manchester Martyrs' lecture in November 1911 (see also Chapter 7), 'that gallant soldier' was feted by almost the entire nationalist political establishment of the town. Daniel O'Donnell welcomed MacBride. O'Donnell was the AOH's Connaught provincial director, national treasurer of the Order and friend of Joe Devlin (the West Belfast MP who headed the Hibernians and, with Redmond, T.P. O'Connor and John Dillon, led the Irish parliamentary party). O'Donnell told his audience that it 'must respect those amongst them who had the courage, not alone in the past, but at present, to give practical expression to

42 Roscommon Journal, 18th October 1913. Unlike the papers of his nephew Jasper, William Tully's Roscommon Journal remained largely loyal to Redmond until after the outbreak of war.
43 Roscommon Messenger, 16th April 1910.
that God-given freedom to which man the world over was entitled’. The audience was there ‘to pay a debt not just to the Manchester Martyrs but to the men who had died for Ireland’.  

The debate among local nationalists was more about means than ends: should physical force still be employed, or should the ‘fight’ and ‘struggle’ be carried on by constitutional methods? P.J. Neary, in a 1912 prose article defending Hibernianism in the *Roscommon Messenger*, said that Hibernians would support the party ‘whether it is for rebellion or constitutional means’; but generally the Cause was seen by the press and by local speakers as on the brink of victory. Violence was not now needed. The *Roscommon Journal* concluded its catalogue of Ireland’s historic woes by saying that after the almost ‘ceaseless toil’ of MPs, Ireland was now on the brink of Home Rule.  

Fitzgibbon’s 1910 fight against ‘every fat landlord’ was now to be conducted through the Congested Districts Board, of which he had just become a member. Physical force was seen as something to be revered but also as, thankfully, unnecessary. As John Phillips put it in 1912, he still had the bullets that he had cast in 1866, together with his old rifle, but he hoped that Ireland would never again have to resort to such methods.

Such language, however much it placed physical force in the past and pledged loyalty to Redmond, sat ill at ease with the conciliation repeatedly advocated by the party’s leader. The inconsistency of tone, between new friendships and older hatreds, could be seen again in Philips, essentially a rather pacific figure for all his Fenian past and mocked in 1910 as a ‘guileless old gentleman’ by the Dublin *Sinn Fein* newspaper. Speaking to a Longford party convention at the end of 1909, he stressed that the party’s goal was Home Rule within the empire and not separation. However, his combination of this with stock ‘Cause’ rhetoric led the unionist *Longford Journal* to report this speech as ‘full of the bitterest hatred of the Empire’. For Phillips, brutal English government was responsible for the Famine and

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44 *Sligo Champion*, 2nd December 1911. MacBride in his lecture touched all the bases by stating that if the time came again he hoped Ireland would find as many men ready to die for her as in ’67’, while also announcing that he ‘did not in any way want to hamper the work of Mr Redmond’. MacBride had been similarly received four years earlier by the nationalist establishment in Castlerea, led by his former employer. Fitzgibbon (*Roscommon Journal*, 5th October 1907).

45 *Roscommon Messenger*, 30th March 1912.

46 *Roscommon Journal*, 18th October 1913.

47 *Roscommon Messenger*, 16th April 1910.

48 *Longford Leader*, 15th June 1912.

landlords were ‘the enemies of our race and religion’. He was proud to have held a rifle for Ireland, and told young men to keep alive the ‘ideals’ of 1798, 1848, 1867 and the Manchester Martyrs. The *Longford Journal* concluded that Phillips did not seek Home Rule but rather separation, and ‘at the point of a bayonet’. In this instance, the power of the traditional rhetoric used by Phillips far outweighed the impact of his widely-known respectability and even his explicit, formal adherence to moderate Home Rule policies.

Hayden’s newspapers showed the same inconsistency of tone, even within the same editorials. Thus the *Westmeath Examiner* in July 1912 could hail the visit of an English prime minister, Asquith, to Dublin and say that the heart of the Irish nation went out to him. It then immediately called for the restoration of Ireland’s ‘stolen right of nationhood’ and for a healthy national life in a country ‘freed from the clutches of the parasite minority’. The ‘last great stand’ for liberty was now being fought. In February 1913 the *Roscommon Messenger* lauded the result of a by-election in Derry and praised those Protestants who had voted in a nationalist MP. However, it then went on to lambast ‘Shoneen Unionist Cawtholics’ who were still found on too many public boards, crawling after ‘the ascendancy’. The Irish had to tighten their ranks against the enemies of liberty and progress. ‘Those who are not with Ireland are against her.’ Hayden himself illustrated the contradictions that riddled so much of Irish political rhetoric when speaking at Govan in late 1913. He stressed first, in the best Redmondite spirit, that the national movement knew nothing of creed or class, and that the ‘separation bogey’ had been completely buried. However, concerning the Irish unionist minority, he said that their watchwords were ‘inhuman, uncharitable, unchristian and brutal’. They made contemptible threats and fought hard to maintain the ascendancy they had so long enjoyed. The people’s turn had come.

The *Leitrim Observer* demonstrated the range of opinions that could be expressed by a paper loyal to Redmond throughout the pre-war years. In April 1911 it hailed ‘Ireland’s Day of Hope’. Home Rule was coming and Irishmen would ‘soon place the long lost diadem of liberty on the head of their dear motherland’. The ‘carrion crows’ would no longer fool

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51 *Westmeath Examiner*, 20th July 1912.
52 *Roscommon Messenger*, 8th February 1913.
53 Ibid, 1st November 1913.
anyone. These achievements were the result of the 'splendid genius' of Redmond and the unity of his party. A contented Ireland would be a great strength to the empire - witness the South African example. Of course 'factionists and humbugs' would have to be fought, and there was still a 'battle' to come 'in the name of National and human liberty'. By November 1912 the same paper, still loyal to Redmond and under the same editor and owner, was overtly anti-imperialist. There was a danger of Ireland being too contented and conciliatory. The paper attacked the 'West Britonism' of those who went into 'ecstasies' at the mention of the word 'Empire'. It went on to condemn the idea of Ireland 'taking its rightful place' in an empire which was built on 'rapine and bloodshed'. Home Rule must not set the boundary to the march of a nation.

A more consistent use of traditional, belligerent, nationalist rhetoric came from J.P. Farrell and the Longford Leader. The paper throughout worked for 'this glorious consummation to the greatest struggle ever made by a poor down-trodden country'. According to Farrell, men 'knew in their hearts that Unionists were enemies of the Irish national cause'. Speaking at an AOH rally in 1912 at Ballinamuck, County Longford, Farrell started by apologising for his cold, caught in a 'Saxon parliament', and said that the Hibernians were on 'holy ground', moistened with the blood of Irish martyrs 114 years ago. Even after Home Rule was achieved, he said, his hearers would still have to fight the demon of ascendancy, and a 'Catholic society' (i.e. the AOH) would still be needed to fight both Orangemen and Freemasons. In the words of the Clare MP, Arthur Lynch, if Irishmen were 'together in a public meeting...the address to which they respond, which vibrates in their hearts and thrills them in enthusiasm, that address is one which throws before their eyes the image of Irish struggles and points the way to the fulfilment of Ireland's triumph'. Such an address, though it was made over the years by virtually all party speakers, including Redmond himself, was emphatically not 'Redmondism'.

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54 Leitrim Observer, 1st April 1911.
55 Ibid, 9th November 1912.
56 Longford Leader, 31st December 1910.
57 Farrell speaking to the UIL at Moylough, Longford Independent, 26th August 1911.
58 Farrell speaking to the AOH at Ballinamuck, Longford Leader, 15th June 1912.
The ‘Democracy’ and its Enemies

Party supporters of course gave most of the credit for the impending triumph of Home Rule to the national movement, the labours of its MPs and the ‘genius’ of its leaders, past and present. However, a new ally was also seen as important to the movement’s success: the ‘democracy’ of the old enemy, England. The conversion of ‘the slow, plodding but progressive people of England’60 to support for Home Rule was regularly hailed by party speakers and writers. Speaking at Bermondsey in March 1912, Fitzgibbon said that Ireland was now in sight of the promised land. The struggle which stretched back to the men of ’67 and on to Davitt and Parnell was being fulfilled. He thanked God that the English view of Ireland had changed and that Ireland now shared the friendship of ‘the democracy’.61 The North Leitrim MP Francis Meehan asked in 1912 whether Ireland could ever hope to obtain Home Rule without the help of the democracy of Great Britain,62 while John O’Dowd could declaim that the Irish were ‘now free men practically within their own land’. All had been achieved through the masses of the ‘democratic forces’ of the country. The ideals of British democracy were now identical to those of Ireland.63

Such language did not embrace all of England in this victorious alliance, but only its ‘democracy’. Praise was directed far more to the democracy than to the Liberal party as a whole. Nor was the rhetoric an exact clone of the ‘Union of Hearts’ language used by Redmond himself in the years 1910-14, nor that of nationalists of the mid-1880s and 1890s who hoped for Gladstonian Home Rule. It was explicitly radical, attacking privilege, class and wealth as well as the old shibboleths of landlords and the aristocracy. It was, moreover, commonplace in nationalist circles in the five counties in the pre-war years. J.P. Farrell stated that the Irish now had no quarrel with the vast bulk of English opinion, which had had no democratic say in government until 1885.64 Fitzgibbon claimed that the Irish had helped to destroy the power of the aristocracy and had thus helped to raise the English democracy to power. English prejudices towards Irishmen no longer existed.65 As the Westmeath Independent wrote in 1911, commenting on the new parliament and the imminent Parliament

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60 Westmeath Independent. 28th January 1911.
61 Roscommon Messenger, 9th March 1912.
62 Meehan speaking to Maugherow UIL. Sligo Champion, 17th February 1912.
63 O’Dowd speaking to Gurteen UIL, Ibid, 3rd February 1912.
64 Farrell speaking at Finsbury Park, Longford Leader, 15th June 1912.
65 Fitzgibbon speaking in Cardiff. Roscommon Messenger, 19th April 1913.
bill to end the veto power of the House of Lords, a revolution was coming to assert the independence of the masses. 'The people shall rule.' The same paper hailed Asquith’s visit to Dublin in 1912, saying that he represented ‘the new-born spirit of justice which permeates the British democracy’. Asquith represented ‘the masses’ against ‘the ascendency’. J.P. Farrell, that long-time exponent of the national struggle, went further, and several times spoke up in support of the labour element of the democracy. In 1911 he openly backed the strikers disrupting Great Britain: the people were supreme when they took ‘the bit in their mouth’. ‘In this country’, he said, ‘we are carrying on a fight on all fours with the fight the Trades Unionists are carrying on in England’. Speaking to a new Labour League branch in County Longford in 1912, he stated that ‘this is nominally a Liberal government but really a democratic one’. The ‘Independent Labour party’ was the mainspring of democratic advance in the House of Commons. The ‘giant power’ of organised labour was such that if only the workers acted they would be the real rulers of the empire.

Apart from the nationalist allies of labour in Sligo town (see Chapter 7), no other leading party figure or newspaper in the five counties adopted Farrell’s explicitly pro-labour language. Nevertheless, almost all party-supporting papers paid homage to the democracy and to the radical alliance, of which the British Labour party was a part and which, with the Irish parliamentary party, sustained the Liberal government in office. The most consistent friend of the English democracy was John Hayden. In May 1910 the Roscommon Messenger could write that ‘the National question is now identified with the interests and aspirations of the democracy of Great Britain’. In November the paper declaimed: ‘freedom for the Irish people is now bound up with the freedom of the British people. The democracies are now marching side by side toward a single goal’. In Coventry in April 1911, Hayden made it clear that ‘Ireland long ago recognised that it was not the people of England that kept Ireland under subjection, but the titled and wealthy classes that kept the people ignorant’. The Westmeath Examiner in 1914 stated that Home Rule was Ireland’s charter, but the Parliament

66 Westmeath Independent, 28th January 1911.
67 Westmeath Independent, 20th July 1912.
68 Farrell speaking to Moydow UIL, Longford Independent, 26th August 1911.
69 Farrell speaking to Clonlough UIL, Longford Leader, 26th August 1911.
70 Farrell speaking to Killoe Labour League, Ibid, 6th January 1912.
71 Roscommon Messenger, 28th May 1910.
72 Ibid, 19th November 1910.
73 Westmeath Examiner, 8th April 1911.
Act was the charter of millions of the masses of Great Britain. The struggle was that of autocracy against democracy. In the fight of wealth against the masses Asquith and Redmond were together engaged in the 'struggle for human liberty'.

Local Irish politicians were therefore saying complimentary things about a significant section of English opinion in the pre-war years, but it would be a mistake to label such language as conciliatory, imperialist or Redmondite. It was explicitly radical, attacking the men of property appealed to by figures such as Redmond and Nugent. Moreover, though the range of enemies of the Cause may have narrowed, bitterness towards the enemies of both Ireland and the democracy remained undimmed. These enemies were still the aristocracy, landlords, the ascendancy, the House of Lords, the Tories and all of their Irish, Orange and unionist hangers on. This could be seen clearly again in Hayden’s papers, which continually attacked Ireland’s class and ascendancy enemies in a spirit quite inconsistent with any Redmondite appeal to ‘all creeds and classes’. Thus the *Westmeath Examiner* inveighed against ‘the vampire class which has had its grip for so long on the throat of the Irish Nation and sucked the life blood away’. Its New Year leader in 1914 could still praise the democracies of Great Britain, but in their fight against the ‘miserable parasitic tendencies of the ascendancy’. For the *Roscommon Messenger* in 1911, unionists were ‘the conservators of class privilege and tyranny’. In March 1913, the paper dismissed ‘landlords’ (without qualification) as ‘a mean, narrow-minded, selfish class’, as they had been throughout their history.

The Cause, for all its impending triumph and alliance with the democracy, was still defined by reference to its enemies. In addition, the adherence of its followers to constitutional methods was always conditional. If Ireland were cheated and Home Rule lost who knew what might happen. Even Sir Walter Nugent could muse in October 1912, with more than a little prescience, that if Carson were successful and the Irish adopted his methods, ‘the Irish party would be swept away to make room for a party of more irreconcilable men’. Usually the threat was more blunt. John O'Dowd in January 1912 said that Irishmen had fought

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74 Ibid, 14th and 21st February 1914.
75 Ibid, 5th April 1913.
76 Ibid, 3rd January 1914.
77 *Roscommon Messenger*, 1st April 1911.
78 Ibid, 8th March 1913.
Ulstermen before and if need be would do so again. In April, T. F. Smyth declared that Ireland was going to get Home Rule by constitutional means, but if there were a 'slip' he had 'no doubt that the gallant men and women present here would be just as determined as their forefathers'. In January 1913, Fitzgibbon, speaking in Essex, could emphasise that while the democracies of England, Scotland and Ireland were 'knitting together as one web'; if Home Rule failed the Irish would give up all hope of getting freedom by constitutional means and 'await the opportunity of getting their freedom by other means'. Even obviously 'Redmondite' national figures could be threatening. In what was admittedly the far more febrile atmosphere of July 1914, John Redmond's younger brother, William Redmond MP, could tell the Liberal Daily Chronicle in London that if Home Rule were flouted, the youth of Ireland would 'resist at all costs'. Sooner than return to the old system of government the average Irishman would rather die. In the same month Henry Monson, Daniel O'Donnell's protégé and successor as the leading Hibernian in Sligo, and the man who was to be 'right behind Mr. Redmond' only two months later, put the threat most starkly:

...coercion [that] has for centuries deprived you of the chance of drilling has not killed the martial spirit within you, but has rather strengthened and reinforced it, so that now it is like a mighty pent up volume of water restrained by but a flimsy dam, the dam of constitutional agitation (hear, hear). If English statesmen by paltry tinkering methods should yield Ireland's cause and go over to the side of Ireland's enemies then down will go the dam, and like a mighty devastating torrent the Irish Volunteers will sweep over Ireland, and it will be well for England if they demand no more than Home Rule (loud and continued applause).

Anglophobia - Strikes, Cattle Disease and Immorality

English Unions

Despite the perceived alliance with the English democracy, a key component of that democracy, British labour, was viewed with suspicion by most of the nationalist press. For all of J.P. Farrell's praise for them, distrust of British trades unions was never far below the surface, not just because they led disruptive strikes, but because they were 'English'. In 1911,
Ireland experienced a significant upsurge of industrial unrest, particularly of railway strikes. The striking railwaymen were members of a UK-wide union and their actions posed a direct economic threat to the commercial life of Irish towns and farmers. The local press response was uniformly hostile. According to the *Sligo Champion* the 1911 strikes were a symptom of 'militant socialism', attacking the whole social fabric. Should the striking Irish railwaymen have allied themselves with English leaders? For the *Roscommon Messenger* an attempt had been made to make Ireland the battleground for an industrial war, to the benefit of Great Britain. The destruction of Irish industry mattered little to a British trades union. Why should Irish workers obey the orders of English leaders? The *Westmeath Independent* believed that the railwaymen had to cut themselves away from an English leadership and noted that an English agitator in Athlone had been made to leave town rapidly. Jasper Tully, always an opponent of the party and hostile to both Liberals and English radicals, also denounced the English railway union executive. Parnell, said the *Roscommon Herald*, never dealt with the English unless the terms of the bargain were reduced to writing. The strikes were a 'wanton sacrifice of Irish workers. Parnell had remarked that the worst he could say of any man was that “he was as false as a Saxon”'.

This suspicion and denunciation of things English in labour affairs occurred again during the Dublin strikes and lockouts of 1913-14. The *Roscommon Messenger* denounced the selfishness of the British unions. While Irish trade was disrupted and Irish workingmen suffered, 'our British rivals' gained. Were the English interfering in the dispute to their own benefit? For the *Sligo Champion*, far the most 'sinister' feature of the dispute was the role of the English TUC. The attempt to 'deport' the children of strikers to England came in for particular criticism and for the *Roscommon Journal* this was nothing less than: 'The Attempted Anglicisation of Our Race'. Again, it was Jasper Tully's papers which gave full vent to anglophobic paranoia. The strikes were a plot, the union leader James Larkin was an 'Englishman' in league with Dublin Castle. Everything had been inspired by an English

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85 *Sligo Champion*, 23rd September and 7th October 1911.
86 *Roscommon Messenger*, 30th September 1911.
87 *Westmeath Independent*, 30th September 1911.
89 *Roscommon Messenger*, 4th October 1913.
90 *Sligo Champion*, 25th October 1913.
intrigue to destroy Irish industry and the Irish claim to self-government. In a leader 'England the Enemy', Tully claimed that the truth had been made clear by the Larkinite strikes. ‘The great truth of the last seven centuries’ was the venom and hate for everything Irish that swelled in the English breast. England’s history in Ireland was one of rapine, cruel landlords and the ruination of Irish industries. Now they attacked Ireland’s Church. A torrent of lies was produced in support of ‘their brother Englishman’ Larkin. Ireland’s ‘constant and treacherous enemy is double-faced, treacherous England’. 93

Foot and Mouth

Tully’s anglophobia was extreme and unrelenting throughout the pre-war years, but in other papers loyal to the Irish party, distrust of, distaste for and sometimes outright hatred of things ‘English’ coexisted with praise for the English ‘democracy’. As seen above, hostility to England as Ireland’s historic enemy was inherent in the rhetoric of ‘the Cause’. The declaration by Farrell to a Roscommon AOH demonstration in 1910 that he was determined to ‘clear the Sassanach out of Ireland’ was typical of local attitudes. When P.J. Neary wrote yet another defence of the AOH in 1913, his conclusion, as noted above on page 80, was that ‘in it [the AOH] a common hatred of English rule and tyranny is nursed.’ This hostility was directed specifically against ‘England’; as R.F. Foster has observed, the word ‘England’ carried ‘a historical charge, an implication of attempted cultural dominance, an assertion of power, which is not conveyed to an Irish ear by “Britain” ’.

English government, based in London or Dublin, remained a natural target for nationalist hostility. The smallest dispute with a government body could trigger a press tirade. Even the most conciliatory of local newspapers, the Westmeath Independent, demonstrated its short fuse in 1911 when the new Roads Board made disappointing funding allocations to Irish county councils. Ireland would always be penalised, said the paper, if linked to ‘the English’ financially. The United Kingdom was united only to rob Ireland. When in 1912 the Local Government Board blocked the use of Athlone’s workhouse grounds by the Uisneach Feis,

92 Roscommon Herald, 30th August and 13th September 1913.
93 Ibid, 22nd November 1911.
95 Leitrim Observer, 19th July 1913.
96 Foster, Paddy and Mr Punch, Connections in Irish and English History (London 1993). p. xii.
97 Westmeath Independent, 8th April 1911.
the paper responded with a denunciation of 'the bigoted and contemptible innate hatred of the official classes to any form of Irish nationality', of the 'deeply ingrained spirit of ascendancy' and of those who saw themselves as the 'English garrison in Ireland'.

When economic life in rural Ireland really was damaged, by outbreaks of foot and mouth disease in 1912 and 1914, the response to the actions of 'English' officials was a wave of nationalist attacks on them, from both supporters and opponents of the party. The outbreak of 1912 caused immediate and significant short-term disruption to the rural economy. In the second half of that year, cattle exports from Ireland were cut by 44% and pig exports by 56%. Every stage of the livestock trade saw dislocation and reduced prices and profit margins. The pain was not just felt by 'large-farmer' exporters of fattened cattle, but by sellers and buyers of livestock right down the chain of production. Serious concern was expressed locally about the blow to farmers, markets and towns, even in areas where there was no local outbreak. The primary culprits were seen to be the English Board of Agriculture and its minister Walter Runciman. This assignment of blame was not just paranoia, though, for the immediate response of Runciman to the first Irish outbreak, in County Dublin in June, was to impose a ban on all imports of Irish livestock into English ports. This blanket ban on all live cattle was subsequently relaxed, with a variety of restrictions, inspection rules and quarantine requirements being placed on imports from Ireland, but the disruption of Ireland's major export trade remained a source of grievance for as long as the restrictions lasted; the last ones were lifted only in January 1913.

Patrick Maume has noted that only two Irish party MPs, Patrick White and William Field, campaigned strongly against the cattle embargo and that one, David Sheehy, actually praised it as a 'blessing in disguise' because it damaged graziers. However, the local political reaction to the crisis was far more widespread than Maume believed. The damage to all Irish farmers raising cattle, pigs and sheep was such that the typical response was not to take pleasure in the plight of graziers but to sound the alarm on behalf of all farmers, both large and small. Many party MPs were, admittedly, constrained in their campaigning, because they could not be seen actively to oppose the Liberal government when the Home Rule bill had

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98 Ibid, 9th March 1912.
99 The Times, The Ireland of Today, p. 363. Whether this comparison was with the second half of 1911 or the first of 1912 is not clear, but in either instance the damage done was large.
100 Patrick Maume, The Long Gestation, p. 121.
just begun its parliamentary passage. The outbreak, therefore, became a political catspaw, with loyal party MPs advocating the formation of local committees, deputations and the lobbying of ministers, while their nationalist and unionist opponents called for rent and annuity holidays, an attack on the government, Runciman’s head and even abstention from parliament.

Thus, in Mullingar (where there actually was an outbreak of the disease) John Hayden’s *Westmeath Examiner* would say that the party was already doing everything possible to get the embargo lifted. The paper attacked ‘Unionist tricks’, for example that of urging the defeat of the government, and called for farmers to stay cool and trust their leader, Redmond, to handle the matter. The response of Hayden’s local rival, the ‘land warrior’ Lawrence Ginnell, was directly to attack the government and start a local campaign for rent relief and the cessation of land annuity repayments. Ginnell’s press ally, Jasper Tully, was at the forefront of the attack on Runciman. According to the *Roscommon Herald*, Runciman was a ‘typical bumptious Britisher’ with that distinguishing ‘contempt for everything Irish’. The embargo could not continue for thirty seconds if the Irish party stood up to the government. Runciman’s family was connected to Canadian shipping interests which would benefit if Canadian meat exports to England were to grow. When he had been education minister, Runciman had been a bigot against all things Catholic. Why did England not impose a comparable embargo on Welsh cattle? The restrictions were intolerable and the Irish party, like any other placemen, had been bought and corrupted by the government.

The *Herald* and *Midland Reporter* were not alone in their attacks on the restrictions. According even to Hayden’s *Roscommon Messenger*, Runciman was now acting like an ‘enemy of Ireland’. While the *Roscommon Journal* repeated the accusations about Runciman’s shipping connections and anti-Catholic bigotry, saying that he ‘revels in delight to crush Ireland’. For the *Longford Leader* Runciman was ‘one of the hardest and coldest types of British official one could find’. The *Westmeath Independent* denounced the English Board’s ‘pig-headed stubbornness’, saying that if necessary Irish MPs would have to

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101 *Westmeath Examiner*, 14th September; 21st September; 9th November 1912
102 *Roscommon Herald*, 31st August; 7th, 14th and 28th September 1912.
103 *Roscommon Messenger*, 14th September 1912.
104 *Roscommon Journal*, 7th and 28th September 1912.
105 *Longford Leader*, 7th September 1912.
vote against the government. A week later, though, it ruled out this course of action because Home Rule could not be lost. Ireland was in 'a pitiable crisis manufactured by England for us'.

In a speech at the Dublin Mansion House in September 1912, John Dillon had emphasised the need for party discipline - i.e. not to undermine the government - and the party's discipline did hold during the 1912 outbreak. Dillon emphasised that 'the language of threat' would not win over English public opinion. However, he also told his audience that there was 'a conspiracy backed up by powerful English interests to damage the Irish cattle trade'.

Dillon's speech was illustrative of the fact that though the economic crisis of 1912 did not translate into a full-blown political crisis, another example of English antipathy to Ireland had been engraved in the collective memory.

The 1914 outbreak of foot and mouth was less extensive geographically though it lasted longer, from January to September. Again, as in 1912, restrictions were immediately imposed on live cattle exports to England, though they were more flexible than in 1912 and lifted just after of the outbreak of war. However, the response of the Irish press to the outbreak was, in its accusations of plots and conspiracies, substantially more paranoid. The *Roscommon Journal* pointed out how the South American shipping trade, together with English and Scottish farmers, were all profiting at Ireland's expense. For the paper the origin of the outbreaks was 'mysterious', giving 'a sinister aspect'.

The *Strokestown Democrat* reported suspicions that the outbreak was the act of 'malicious rivals' and the *Western Nationalist* said that the disease might be the work of men out to damage the Irish trade - 'we do not know'.

Needless to say, Jasper Tully thought that there were 'plenty of opportunities for people 'on the other side' to produce these outbreaks 'to order'. It was all part of a deliberate scheme, just after the Dublin strikes, to keep Ireland in 'hot water'.

As will be seen in Chapter 9, the background to such conspiracy theories was, in 1914, one of political crisis, betrayals and popular paramilitary mobilisation. This ratcheting-up of

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107 *Sligo Champion*, 28th September 1912.
tensions could clearly be seen in the *Westmeath Independent* even though, throughout that year's political crises, it continued resolutely to support every initiative made by Redmond (its leading article on the outbreak of war would be headed 'Bravo England').\textsuperscript{111} In March, to paraphrase the 1910 observation of William O'Brien, it almost 'out-Tullied Tully' in its intolerance. ‘It is more than opinion’ it said, ‘that a deep and sinister game is being played to kill the Irish cattle trade.’ Foreign cattle would replace Irish cattle in England, to support ‘the Jew millionaires’. ‘The Jewman’, normally a Tory in politics, ‘has a great hatred of Ireland’. Men from Birkenhead had recently been seen at a cattle sale in Cork ahead of an outbreak there, though it was ‘probable’ that the disease had not been brought in deliberately. Nevertheless ‘this is what we get from contact from England - the worst of it’.\textsuperscript{112}

**Immoral Literature**

A marked distaste for foreign culture - its perceived irreligiousness, immorality and materialism - regularly manifested itself in the five counties in the pre-war years. This was anything but a new phenomenon and in large part its anti-materialism was influenced by a centuries-old religious rhetoric exalting asceticism over the baseness and decay of the material world. Unsurprisingly, the local clergy were particularly prominent. However, in provincial Ireland, the foreign culture that was condemned was in almost all cases English. According to the bishop of Meath, Dr. Gaughran, in a 1910 Saint Patrick’s Day sermon, ‘England had fallen away and he would not call it Protestant England but he would call it infidel’.\textsuperscript{113} Father O'Reilly, the parish priest of Tang, damned English dirty trash, vice, immorality, materialism, oppression of small nations and dishonesty.\textsuperscript{114} The popular Catholic novelist, Father Guinan, opened a South Leitrim Feis by saying that the role of the Gaelic League was ‘to counteract the denationalising inanities and paganising influences of an effete civilisation.’ (He later also referred to ‘the niceties of a mincing English accent’.)\textsuperscript{115} In 1911, the *Western Nationalist* gave prominence to articles by a Jesuit writer M.J. Phelan, over several weeks, in which he attacked evils such as ‘the Anglicisation that threatens to devour us with its filthy plays, its godless literature, its animal standards and pagan ideals’.\textsuperscript{116}

\textsuperscript{111} *Westmeath Independent*, 8\textsuperscript{th} August 1914.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid, 21\textsuperscript{st} March 1914
\textsuperscript{113} *Westmeath Examiner*, 26\textsuperscript{th} March 1910.
\textsuperscript{114} Father O'Reilly lecturing to Gaelic League branches, *Westmeath Independent*, 12\textsuperscript{th} November 1910.
\textsuperscript{115} *Roscommon Herald*, 5\textsuperscript{th} August 1911.
\textsuperscript{116} *Western Nationalist*, 8\textsuperscript{th}, 15\textsuperscript{th} and 22\textsuperscript{nd} July 1911.
One particular focus for disgust with things English was 'filthy literature'. The Sligo Champion at the end of 1909 could ask whether England was a Christian country. Its leading newspapers were owned by Jews, freemasons and sceptics. It produced a 'deluge of hurtful and degrading literary matter' characterised by 'nastiness and vileness, generally by innuendo'. All patriotic Irishmen should keep away from 'the vile garbage so alien and repulsive'. The Leitrim Observer in 1910 blasted 'poisonous and unhealthy' literature flooding in from over the Channel. The Westmeath Independent attacked the influence on Irish youth of 'cheap trashy garbage' sent over from England. For the bishop of Ardagh, Dr. Hoare, in his 1911 lenten pastoral, the press teemed 'with the hatred of God and His Church', and was 'leavened with the poison of uncleanness'.

When, therefore, a national 'crusade' of 'vigilance committees' briefly took off in late 1911, to stop the local circulation of immoral, English literature, it was enthusiastically supported by local clerics and politicians and by almost the entire press. Leaders were written, public meetings held, sermons preached and committees set up in Athlone, Boyle, Longford, Mullingar and Sligo. Local bodies such as the Gaelic League, Trade and Labour association, Foresters, the St Vincent de Paul society, co-fraternities and temperance pioneers all participated, and in each town save for Mullingar the key local role was taken by the Hibernians. Their main action was to 'wait on' local newsagents and to persuade them to refrain from selling immoral literature.

Though firmly nationalist-led, the crusade was not exclusively Catholic. The unionist Sligo Times voiced its support and in Athlone the Protestant, temperance 'Catch-my-Pal' club participated on the committee. However, the language used remained dominantly that of Catholic morality, Irish nationalism and anglophobia. The Sligo Champion made it clear that the campaign was against English Sunday newspapers and English boxing papers, 'penny

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117 Sligo Champion, 12th November 1909.
118 Leitrim Observer, 12th March 1910.
119 Westmeath Independent, 26th August 1911.
120 Roscommon Herald, 4th March 1911.
121 See Longford Leader, 9th December; Roscommon Herald 18th November; Sligo Champion, 25th November; Western Nationalist, 9th December; Westmeath Examiner 9th December; Westmeath Independent, 9th December 1911. In Mullingar the lead was taken by the UIL.
122 Westmeath Independent, 9th December 1911.
123 Sligo Times, 25th November; Westmeath Independent, 9th December 1911.
dreadfuls’ and postcards. The Westmeath Examiner excoriated ‘imported trash, morbid literary matter and immoral literature’ pouring in from across the Channel. It welcomed the new movement against national decay, and the formation of Mullingar’s vigilance committee, ‘for God, for Nationality, for the intellectuality, character and traditions of a generous pure-souled people’. When Rev. Hugh Carpenter lectured on the crusade to the Holy Family co-fraternity in Mullingar cathedral, blasting the ‘voice of debauchery and crime and sin’, he talked of a fire spreading through Europe the spark of which had come from hell. England, he said, ‘had lost the faith and ceased almost to be Christian’.

The mania for vigilance committees at the end of 1911 should not be overstated. There was a fundamental inconsistency from the start, in that one of the targeted English Sunday papers, Reynolds’s Newspaper, was the platform for a regular weekly column by T.P. O’Connor and for occasional articles by ‘the leader’, Redmond, himself. The crusade did not stop the contributions of either man. In addition, many Irish readers appear to have responded to the publicising of ‘evil’ by buying more of it. At the end of November, Sir Henry Dalziell, proprietor of Reynolds’s, claimed that his Irish sales had risen by 50% since the campaign started. After an initial flurry of activity, local press coverage of the committees dried up in early 1912 and activity seemed to peter out. The Roscommon Herald’s ‘Gaelic Notes’ in May 1912 took pleasure (as Tully always did in any local failure of his rivals) in noting that nothing had happened other than the passing of resolutions and the formation of committees. Why, it asked, had all the ‘splendid spirit’ ended in nothing? Nationally, D.P. Moran’s The Leader asked in April 1912 what the committees were doing. Most had done little other than to black-list ‘only seven or eight dirty papers’. In early 1913 the movement was still going strong only in Limerick, Queenstown and Dublin. Clerics and newspapers continued regularly to denounce English immoral literature, but the ‘crusade’ had ended.

In the years 1910-13, the political activity generated in each of the three instances above was relatively short-lived. The concerns aroused by the strikes and the first foot and mouth

124 Sligo Champion, 11th November 1911.
125 Westmeath Examiner, 9th December 1911.
126 Midland Reporter, 23rd November 1911.
127 Ibid, 30th November 1911.
128 Roscommon Herald, 18th May 1912.
outbreak ebbed as soon as external stimuli were removed. The immoral literature crusade, locally, lasted no more than two to three months from its inception and was if anything counterproductive. As seen in Chapter 2, these years were generally characterised more by nationalist inertia and apathy than by wild alarms. In the more politically-charged atmosphere of late 1913-1914, the vehemence of nationalist language in relation to both the Dublin strikes and the second foot and mouth outbreak was greater, but the themes expressed were familiar. In each of the three cases studied, England was characterised as inimical to Ireland. Whether represented by her trades unions, government officials or publishers, she was variously seen as at best selfish, uncaring, manipulative, obdurate, anti-Catholic and/or materialist, and at worst as conspiratorial, immoral, oppressive, unchristian, malevolent and/or degenerate. This language was far more antipathetic to an old enemy than appealing to new friends. When, as in late 1912, the novelist Father Guinan talked of 'the deadly miasma which exhales from the literary filth of the English gutter press (applause)', he was hardly advancing the 'Union of Hearts'.

**Political Language**

'Nationalist' political language covered a strikingly wide variety of beliefs and attitudes within the same political movement - from support for English popular radicalism to disgust with English popular literature; from conciliation to threat; from Whiggish imperialism to visceral anglophobia. Contradictory views were often expressed by the same individual or newspaper (with the *Westmeath Independent* in 1914 throwing in anti-Semitism for good measure). Even excluding the unrestrained language of the Tully brothers, examples of the full range of this rhetoric could be found in the language of mainstream, party-loyalist politicians and newspapers throughout the pre-war period.

The Dublin Home Rule rally of March 1912 provided a 'set-piece' display of much of contemporary nationalist rhetoric. The third Home Rule bill was about to be tabled in parliament and nationalists rallied to show support. Some twenty speakers addressed the crowds from four different platforms and the event was widely covered in both the Dublin and provincial press. Despite this (or possibly because of it?) the *Midland Reporter* dismissed it as 'Boetian dullness from start to finish', with the speeches 'the dreariest things on God's fair

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130 Guinan was lecturing in Leitrim on changes in Irish social life. *Longford Leader*, 21st December 1912.
earth. One might wade through the columns of them in the “Freeman” and not find a good phrase, an original idea or even a happily phrased thought’. 131

The speech most reported in the press was, of course, that of the leader, Redmond, who made an appeal for future harmony and reconciliation with England, unionists and the empire. Ireland was holding out her arms to her sons of every creed and class and longed for the day of conciliation. The passing of Home Rule would form a great treaty of peace between Ireland and the empire. Ireland would end the ruinous war with England, enter partnership with the empire, establish national self-government and become a prosperous land which could support herself and in due course bear her fair share of imperial obligations. Ireland would have a parliament on College Green sooner than the most optimistic man in the crowd would believe, and was about to come into her own again. 132

Redmond was not alone at the rally. First, the majority of speakers repeatedly paid tribute to his leadership and statesmanship. Secondly, a number of supporting speakers echoed his conciliatory and moderate sentiments. These included, notably, Joe Devlin, but also the MPs P.J. Brady, Sir Thomas Esmonde, William Field, J.P. Nannetti and (though he threw in references both to ‘the persecution, the prison and the gibbet’ and to Emmet, Tone and Fitzgerald) William Redmond. 133 If these speeches represented one end of the spectrum of nationalist language, the other was expressed by the non-party speaker Patrick Pearse, who spoke in Irish and shared the ‘Number 3’ platform, chaired by Mayor Daniel O’Donnell of Sligo, with Joe Devlin. 134 This was the speech in which Pearse hoped that Ireland could win a ‘good Act’ from the British, but predicted ‘red war in Ireland’ if she were cheated. ‘If we are tricked this time, then the Gael must have no dealings with the Gall again.’ Thereafter Ireland would need the ‘strong hand and the sword’s edge’. 135 Like the rest of the press in the five counties, the Midland Reporter did not report Pearse’s speech, nor indeed the fact that he spoke at all. However, the

131 Midland Reporter, 4th April 1912.
132 Sligo Times, 6th April 1912.
133 Irish Independent; Freeman’s Journal, 1st April 1912.
134 Freeman’s Journal, 1st April and Irish Independent, 2nd April 1912. Both papers reproduced Pearse’s speech in Gaelic, with no translation to English. The Gaelic speeches of Stephen Gwynn and Eoin MacNeill were translated (according to the Freeman on 1st April, each platform had a Gaelic speaker).
paper did remark on the range of language used at the rally, noting the paradox that while Redmond on one platform called on Orangemen and Protestants to join the Home Rule ranks, Dillon on another called them, in the paper’s words, ‘the vilest things on earth’. 136

Dillon did not in fact use these words, but the contrast in tone between his speech and that of Redmond’s was still great. He asked his audience to declare for national self-rule or for the rule of ‘the stranger’, to decide ‘the simple issue of whether the people, the people of Ireland, preferred to be governed by Irishmen on the soil of Ireland or be governed by Englishmen and Scotchmen sent over to rule them’. He gave no thanks to ‘the stranger’ for Irish emancipation - it had been won by the Irish themselves. The unionist cry was one of ‘bigotry and intolerance’ and their policy one of ‘cowards and of dastards and of liars’. The Tories were the enemies of English as well as of Irish liberty. In contrast, Ireland wanted no ascendancy of Catholics and desired fair play for all Irishmen. 137 Though he did make references to the threat to English as well as Irish liberty, and to the desire for ‘fair play’ for all Irishmen, Dillon’s tone was manifestly not conciliatory.

Other speakers touched on themes of enmity. The secretary of the North American UIL, John O’Callaghan, on Redmond’s own platform, predicted that the ‘vengeance of an outraged people’ would pursue Ireland’s enemies, both open and covert, if Home Rule was blocked. 138 John Muldoon MP promised that he would be there to ‘meet’ Sir Edward Carson should he carry out his threatened march on Cork, while the national secretary of the AOH, J..D. Nugent, pledged that the Hibernians were also ready to confront Carson. 139 Sligo’s own favourite son, Daniel O’Donnell, speaking on the same platform as Devlin, Muldoon, Nugent and Pearse, struck a particularly sour note, with a barely-concealed threat to the status of Irish unionists. He attacked the ‘bloaters’ who had no faith in their Catholic countrymen, and the vile campaign of slander conducted by the carrion crows. He had no doubt that 300 years of nursing and pampering (of the ascendancy) from the Castle’s feeding bottle were about to end. Then the health of these ‘superior persons’ would ‘return to a more normal state’ and they could take part in the regeneration of the country they had done so much to ‘blast’ in the

136 Midland Reporter. 4th April 1912.
137 Irish Independent. 1st April; Sligo Times and Weekly Freeman. 6th April 1912.
138 Irish Independent. 1st April 1912.
139 Ibid.
past.\textsuperscript{140} Even at a rally meant to anticipate his greatest triumph, the introduction of the third Home Rule bill, Redmond’s conciliatory message was therefore blurred by its inseparability from the bellicosity and threats of many of his fellow speakers.

Locally, though a decisive majority of Home Rulers expressed loyalty to their leader, only a minority sympathised instinctively with the conciliation that he advocated. The passive ‘background noise’ of day-to-day nationalist political rhetoric was suffused instead with a vocabulary of heroic struggle, suffering, grievance, injustice and enemies. Even the new element of party language, that of a radical alliance with the democracy of England and Scotland, gained focus from its hostility to a long list of ‘anti-democratic’ enemies: landlords, aristocrats, men of wealth, unionists, Tories, Orangemen. Support for the English democracy remained shallow and a clear strain of anglophobia lay not even below the surface of nationalist thought; rather it was in the open and regularly expressed by politicians, clerics and newspapers. Almost any dispute could arouse hostility to England. The language that was to be used during the more general political crises of 1914 or 1916-17, against a succession of English ‘betrayals of Ireland’, was already fully developed.

In April 1914, P.J. Neary, this time in the \textit{Leitrim Observer}, pledged his loyalty to Redmond and the Irish party’s leaders:

\begin{quote}
As shamrocks bloom on mountain crest
On banks which lordly rivers lave,
So bloom a gallant trio blest
Destined a glorious land to save.

Laud the names! Hail the stars;
Redmond, Dillon, Devlin.\textsuperscript{141}
\end{quote}

Four months later, and written just before the outbreak of war, Neary’s next contribution returned to John Hayden’s \textit{Roscommon Messenger}. The ‘Volunteer Song’ shows how little Neary really appreciated the beliefs and goals of his leader, but perhaps also demonstrates

\textsuperscript{140} \textit{Sligo Champion}, 6\textsuperscript{th} April 1912.
\textsuperscript{141} ‘Redmond, Dillon, Devlin’. published in the \textit{Leitrim Observer}, 4\textsuperscript{th} April 1914.
how it was Neary, rather than Redmond, who was more in tune with the pre-war beliefs and rhetoric of provincial, nationalist Ireland:

We bend no more to England's lords
We dread not England's thunder,
We yield not to the Saxon swords
We tear our ties asunder.
The sword alone our wounds can heal,
Can men from tyrants sever –

United hearts and glistening steel
Can weld our hopes for ever.\textsuperscript{142}

\textsuperscript{142} Roscommon Messenger, 8\textsuperscript{th} August 1914.
Chapter 5: ‘The inner wheels which are working in the county’ -
Localism in Roscommon

In January 1917 the electors of North Roscommon voted in the by-election resulting from the
death of the long-absent and infirm J.J. O’Kelly MP. For many observers the result, a heavy
defeat for the Irish party’s candidate by Count Joseph Plunkett, was proof of a decisive shift
in Irish politics, indicating that the new ‘Sinn Fein’ movement would sweep the country while
the Irish party fell apart. For the RIC inspector general: ‘The attitude of all sections of
Nationalists is now hostile to the system of government... Too much reliance cannot be
placed on continued adherence to Constitutional agitation on the part of the Redmondites’.1
The Dublin-based Irish Times, Ireland’s leading unionist newspaper, wrote that the Irish party
‘would be swept out of three quarters of their seats in Ireland by the same forces that carried
Count Plunkett to victory’.2

The ‘forces’ propelling Plunkett to electoral victory were undoubtedly national rather than
local, exemplified by the Count’s symbolic role as father of the executed Easter rebel Joseph
Mary Plunkett. Dismissed as ‘an amiable old Whig’ by Jasper Tully,3 with no prior local
connections and arriving in the county only late in the campaign, Plunkett trounced not only
the party candidate, Boyle’s leading UIL man and Hibernian, T.J. Devine, but Tully himself.
Tully, who split the anti-party vote by standing as an ‘Independent Nationalist’, had
dramatically greater local standing and superior opposition credentials, until the Easter Rising
(vitriolically condemned by Tully) ensured iconic status for almost the entire Plunkett family.
A near-permanent fixture of Boyle politics since the 1880s, Tully could muster only a fifth of
the anti-party votes going to his elderly, Dublin-based, academic rival.

Seen from the perspective of nationwide political movements, the North Roscommon result
was sudden and startling. The Irish party’s grip on the county’s affairs had for years appeared
monolithic, while advanced nationalists had been singularly weak. For the Irish Times, the
electoral success of Sinn Fein was particularly noteworthy because Roscommon had been

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2 Quoted in the Roscommon Herald, 10th February 1917 and by Denis Carroll in They Fooled You Again, p. 55.
3 Roscommon Herald, 27th January 1917.
believed to be so peaceful and so free from Sinn Fein and the rebellion taint'. However, if the focus of analysis is shifted from national political alignments to the 'parish pump', then the previous hold of the Irish party on Roscommon politics can be seen to have been anything but monopolistic. 'Factionist' stresses, the result of local disputes, intensified significantly prior to 1914, leaving the party weakened and in a poorer state to withstand the earthquake' triggered by the Easter Rising and its aftermath. Newspaper rivalries, family feuds, personal affronts, and even the cost of the county surveyors' motorbikes were the driving forces of much of Roscommon politics in the pre-war years. As the Roscommon RIC county inspector wrote at the end of 1908, after a detailed analysis of the goings-on of the Kilmayral branch of the UIL (efforts were being made to reduce, yet again, the influence of Jasper Tully): 'These moves are only of parochial interest but they shed light on the inner wheels which are working in the county'.

After the Ranch War
As already seen in Chapter 2, though the land agitation of the Ranch War subsided rapidly after 1909, nevertheless, some tensions persisted into the quieter pre-war years. The accelerated pace of land sales in Roscommon did not stop the local campaign against 'migrants' - men from outside the county assigned Roscommon land by the CDB - from the beginning of 1910 through to the outbreak of war. Boycotts and cattle drives, though declining after 1909, still generated lingering grievances. In particular, the 1910 agitation at Ballybeg near Tulsk, initially led but soon abandoned by John Hayden and 'the fighting John Fitzgibbon of former times', fed local ill-feeling against 'the great Mr Fitz' through to 1914. In the towns, the sales of agricultural estates which also owned significant townlands aroused hopes and occasionally frustrations among a broad range of town tenants, whose agitations were if anything significantly more vigorous than those of their now 'apathetic' country neighbours.

The local prominence of John Fitzgibbon provided a target for many of these frictions. As a board member of the CDB, he was the focus of almost all local criticisms of the board, whether from anti-migrant campaigners, disappointed 'small' men or dispossessed graziers. Presiding over the UIL in the county, it was he who was said to have let down the men of

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4 Quoted in the Roscommon Herald, 10th February 1917 and by Denis Carroll in They Fooled You Again, p. 55.
5 Monthly report of the Roscommon county inspector, December 1908 (National Archives 5716 box 15).
Tulsk and Ballybeg. Leading the Castlerea town tenants, it was his pursuit of his own interests which so decisively fractured the town’s association. As chairman of Roscommon county council (and Castlerea RDC and Guardians), he dispensed more patronage and influence than anybody else in the county and far more than many of the recently-dispossessed landlord class. From the end of 1909 onwards there was a continuous undertone of discontent with Fitzgibbon, the CDB, the county council and the UIL. As the RIC county inspector wrote in June 1910, ‘there are many coteries displeased with the present League regime’. 6

The personal grievances underlying these ‘coteries’ were openly commented upon. For the Western Nationalist in July 1910, the enemies of the national movement were a collection of boycotted men, road contractors, defeated councillors, those refused admission to the League and those too mean to subscribe. 7 From Fitzgibbon’s perspective, his political opponents were men disgruntled because he had checked their personal ambitions. Very often he was right; they were indeed outside the circle of those benefiting from his jobbery. When in 1913 the Castlerea county councillor and auctioneer John Hanson attacked the nepotism of Henry Fitzgibbon’s co-option to the county council, he spoiled the effect by complaining that it was Henry’s father who had deprived him of a £50 pension and his rate collectorship. Another dissident, John Flanagan (a Strokestown guardian) was, according to Fitzgibbon, motivated solely by his failure to get the deputy county surveyor’s job. In Fitzgibbon’s view he faced not serious political opposition but rather ‘a combine of disappointed men’. 8

It was, however, such ‘disappointed men’, based in and around Strokestown, who were already chipping away at Fitzgibbon’s impregnability from the end of 1909. As county council chairman, Fitzgibbon had in 1908-09 supported the cause of employing direct labour, usually ‘smaller’ men and labourers, against the previous practice of letting out road work to contractors, mostly larger farmers. 9 In doing so he and the county surveyor, Christopher Mulvaney, incurred the ire of a faction of former road contractors on Strokestown’s rural district council. Strokestown RDC was one of the last to fall into line with the county’s new

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7 Western Nationalist, 9th July 1910
8 Roscommon Messenger, 1st February and 1st March 1913. Hanson was also one of Fitzgibbon’s Castlerea town tenant opponents in 1912.
9 See Cunningham, Labour in the West of Ireland, pp. 122-25.
roads policy and in late 1909 led an assault against Mulvaney and his deputy, Michael Hanly, who was found to have paid one of his relatives for 80 tons of never-delivered gravel. Only after an investigation by the Local Government Board did Fitzgibbon agree to Hanly’s sacking, though Mulvaney survived.\textsuperscript{10}

On Strokestown RDC the main assailants of the county’s roads regime were the county councillor John D. O’Farrell, his brother-in-law James Maguire and the former police detective John Shanly\textsuperscript{11} - all three of them farmers. Many of these opponents of Fitzgibbon, such as O’Farrell, remained party loyalists and party men still formed a majority of RDC. However, the council was consistently hostile to Mulvaney and to the cost of the county’s road programme. Joseph Maguire (no relation to James), its chairman from 1910 and deputy president of the county AOH, was a particular scourge, inveighing against Mulvaney, Fitzgibbon, the cost of steam-rolling and the intrusion of ‘tourists’ ’ motor cars into the county. Though remaining very much a ‘party’ man, Maguire raised the spectre of CDB men (no prizes for guessing who) flying around in motor cars while those who fought for the land were left out in the cold.\textsuperscript{12} Such was the consistent opposition from Strokestown (plus the nearby villages of Elphin and Tulsk) that Fitzgibbon, throughout 1910, could not get a steady majority on the county council to agree to a pay rise for Mulvaney. One meeting in June 1910 was particularly turbulent, with a large, noisy crowd heckling the councillors and the police having at one stage to keep it back from Fitzgibbon.\textsuperscript{13} After another Local Government Board inquiry, Fitzgibbon in August 1911 could only secure Mulvaney’s income by removing the surveyor’s salary increase from the control of the county council. (In future Mulvaney would receive a fee out of grants received from the new, national Roads Board.)\textsuperscript{14}

In this case the challenge was localised (centred on Strokestown), self-interested (with former road contractors prominent) and personal (against Hanly, Mulvaney and then Fitzgibbon), but it was already an indication of the limits of even Fitzgibbon’s authority and of the fractured localism of the county’s politics. Another dispute to break out, again at the end of 1909, was

\textsuperscript{10} Leitrim Observer, Longford Independent, Roscommon Messenger, 20\textsuperscript{th} November 1909.
\textsuperscript{11} Longford Independent, 20\textsuperscript{th} November, Leitrim Advertiser, 23\textsuperscript{rd} December 1909.
\textsuperscript{12} Maguire speaking at a Ballyleague rally, 30\textsuperscript{th} October 1910, Roscommon Journal, 5\textsuperscript{th} November 1910. See also Maguire speaking in September 1910 (Leitrim Advertiser, 8\textsuperscript{th} September 1910) or in August 1913 (Roscommon Herald, 16\textsuperscript{th} August 1913).
\textsuperscript{13} Roscommon Herald, 4\textsuperscript{th} June 1910.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid, 19\textsuperscript{th} August 1911.
equally localised, self-interested and personal, stemming from two families which had been rivals in Roscommon town for some thirty years, the Tullys and the Haydens.

The Hayden family had long been influential in Roscommon town, and though John Hayden had lived in Mullingar, Westmeath since 1882, he inherited the South Roscommon parliamentary seat on the death of his brother Luke in 1897. In December 1909, Hayden inherited the proprietorship of the Roscommon Messenger and day-to-day leadership of the town’s UIL on the death of another brother, Joseph. Almost immediately, Hayden, the Messenger and the local UIL were pitched against the Tullys. In this instance, the Tullys were William, proprietor of the Roscommon Journal and his son George D. ’William Tully and Sons’ were the town’s leading auctioneers. Their hostility to the Hayden family had been entrenched for years in the business rivalry of the town’s two newspapers and was reinforced by the Parnell split from 1890 to 1900 (the Haydens were all Parnellites; the Tullys ‘antis’). In 1910, William Tully - unlike his nephew Jasper in Boyle - was a loyal supporter of Redmond, but had been long at odds with the town’s UIL.

The death of Joseph Hayden triggered the issue of who should be co-opted to replace him on Roscommon District Council. George D. Tully wanted to fill the position, but the Tullys were not paid-up UIL members and the town’s UIL moved rapidly to deny him any chance of this honour. The Roscommon Messenger made it clear that George Tully could have no claim to the role, ‘on the grounds of Nationality’. This led to weeks of leaders and counter-leaders in the two papers. For the Messenger, the Tullys’ non-membership of the UIL debarred them from any office. Their newspaper, which had ‘sat on the fence for far too long’ was doing nothing other than to support factionalism. For the Journal, Hayden’s paper was guilty of ‘low, mean and contemptible misrepresentation’, motivated by nothing more than ‘PERSONAL SPITE’. The Tullys claimed that they had always backed the principles of the UIL, but had no time for the clique, wire-pullers and ‘factionists’ who ran the town’s branch. Two particular objects of their antagonism were H.I. McCourt (a Messenger employee, Joseph Hayden’s successor as clerk to the town commissioners, secretary of the town UIL) and Charles O’Keeffe (secretary to the South Roscommon UIL and accountant to the county

15 William Tully was the uncle of the Boyle-based brothers Jasper and George W. Tully.
16 Roscommon Messenger. 1st January 1910.
council). After less than a month, the battle was won, easily, by the Tullys. George D. was co-opted by the RDC on a 17-5 vote - another indication, in the post-Ranch War period, of the limits to the influence of the UIL’s ‘bosses’. George Tully, admittedly according to the *Journal*, was cheered by a crowd and bonfires were lit on the fair green.

**The World of Jasper Tully**

Jasper Tully, nephew of William and cousin of George D., was undoubtedly the most vocal Irish nationalist in Boyle, and his political influence spread to much of North Roscommon and South Leitrim. A veteran, radical Land Leaguer, follower of Davitt, jailed with Parnell in Kilmainham, Tully had been the MP for South Leitrim from 1892 to 1906, first as an anti-Parnellite and then in the reunited Irish party. He had inherited the *Roscommon Herald* from his father and further wealth from his wife’s ownership of the Royal Hotel in Boyle. Tully was an influential figure in the region’s politics, but he was also one of the most obsessive, quarrelsome and litigious. For one local historian, Frances Kielty, his world was ‘a welter of animosities, hatreds and personal obsessions’. He inherited the family dislike of the Haydens, and carried abuse of them to new levels of invective and incoherence. For Tully in 1892, Luke Hayden MP was ‘a fitting, greasy type of the intelligence of the ignorant, besotted districts that elected him. Fortunately, he can do no harm to no one [sic] but himself’. Luke Hayden was ‘a man who can barely read and write, who cannot spell properly and is seldom totally sober’. The Tullys’ rivalry with the Haydens tracked John Hayden’s move to Westmeath; in 1891 Jasper and his brother George W. founded the *Westmeath Nationalist* (later the *Midland Reporter*) in Mullingar, explicitly to take on Hayden’s *Westmeath Examiner*.

Tully could hardly be expected to be a friend of the Parnellite John Fitzgibbon, but he went further and tore apart the UIL’s reunion in Roscommon in the years 1902-03. This he did during a bitter land campaign, led by Fitzgibbon, on the de Freyne Estate near Frenchpark. When Tully allegedly supplied data on the grazier connections of leading UIL officials to

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19 Tully’s marriage was distinctly fraught and it was Tully who, after his wife’s death, redirected her post with the message: ‘Not Known At This Address, Try Hell’ (Hugh Oram, *The Newspaper Book*, p. 164).
Dublin Castle, he was expelled from the UIL in 1903. He remained an independent nationalist MP until 1906, allying with anyone (Tim Healy, even Parnell’s brother Howard), who would oppose his enemies. In the later 1900s, one of Tully’s closest allies was the increasingly bitter Westmeath enemy of John Hayden, the North Westmeath MP Laurence Ginnell. In Boyle, one of the main victims of his litigiousness was T.J. Devine. In 1905 Tully brought a court action to overturn the results of the county and district council elections, which he and his brother had narrowly lost, on the grounds of the bribery, ‘treating’ and corruption carried out by his opponents, including Devine. The Tullys won and were awarded ‘half costs’ of £800. Devine was effectively debarred from standing for election to the county council. In 1908, however, despite the support of Ginnell, Tully lost his own county council campaign for re-election.

At the end of 1909 Tully was, therefore, an ex-MP and ex-county councillor, but remained a Boyle town commissioner and district councillor. The Herald, circulating across North Roscommon, South Leitrim, South Sligo and Longford, still carried the lion’s share of local UIL and AOH reports and had successfully defended itself against the competitive efforts of the new Western Nationalist. Tully, as seen in Chapter 3, also retained his connections to the Boyle AOH, which he had first set up in 1905 to undermine the UIL, and which in turn prompted Devine to establish a rival ‘Curlieu Pass’ AOH division. However, despite this Hibernian connection, Tully differed from many opponents of Fitzgibbon and/or Hayden in being an outright opponent of the Irish party at both the local and national level. Some, such as his uncle and cousin in Roscommon town, continued to back the parliamentary party and Redmond while staying away from the local UIL. Others, such as O’Farrell and Maguire on Strokestown District Council, remained active in the county’s UIL and AOH. For Tully there was no such restraint. Through his newspaper, he remained a public and trenchant critic of the Irish party at all levels and denounced the Liberal alliance, free trade, placemen, job-hunters, socialists, the filth of foreign literature, assaults on Catholic education, the 1909 Land Act, the Lloyd George budget and, of course, Fitzgibbon and Hayden.

22 Bew, Conflict and Conciliation in Ireland, p. 98.
23 Ibid, p. 104.
24 Roscommon Herald, 9th December 1905. Devine was finally co-opted back on to the county council, amazingly with Tully’s support when Tully briefly became an enthusiastic co-Volunteer with Devine, in the summer of 1914.
In 1910, campaigns run by Tully related to the election victory of Laurence Ginnell over John Hayden’s protégé Patrick MacKenna in Westmeath, the ‘crusade’ against migrants coming into Roscommon and the ‘scandal’ of the profligacy of Roscommon county council. In the latter, Tully took the side of the dissident Strokestown councillors, both district and county, against the county surveyor Mulvaney. However, he gave the most coverage, column after column, week after week, to his own ‘State Trial’. During 1910 Tully was prosecuted on charges of publishing incitements to boycott. He relished the opportunity for martyrdom and as usual conducted his own defence, declaiming at one stage to presumably bemused magistrates: ‘We want no favours from the Crown. We didn’t come here for favours from the Crown. We came here to fight!’ By September, Fitzgibbon was concerned enough about Tully’s influence that he could write to John Dillon: ‘North Roscommon is not in a wholesome condition. Tully with his paper and constant intriguing is creeping in’.

At the beginning of 1911, Tully’s campaigning focused entirely on the issue of the rates. It cannot now be said whether it was a coincidence that Boyle’s rates were projected to go up and Castlerea’s down in that year, but the issue was a gift to Tully in his sniping at Fitzgibbon. The Herald in the first months of the year featured allegations of misappropriated accounts, illicit payments to a road foreman, the ‘mulcting’ of Boyle, overspending in the county council offices and (partly successful) calls for an LGB investigation. In his campaign Tully found allies on Strokestown RDC (notably John Shanly) and the Roscommon Guardians (the former Sinn Fein supporter John McGreevy). Complaints from public bodies in Boyle, Strokestown and Roscommon were sent to the county council, which was defended by its secretary John Heverin and its accountant (and bete noire of the Roscommon town Tullys) Charles O’Keeffe. Tully personally attacked Heverin and O’Keeffe in letters to the county’s newspapers. In the end, the issue died after the Boyle rate was revised downwards, but provided a platform for Tully’s campaign in the forthcoming county council

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25 Longford Leader, 16th April 1910. One of Tully’s co-defendants was J.P. Farrell and the Longford Independent speculated (14th May 1910) that the two men had become friends again because of the trial. Farrell’s case was finally tried in Dublin and the jury duly hung. The case against Tully was withdrawn in November.
26 John Fitzgibbon to John Dillon, 4th September 1910, Dillon papers, TCD, f 6754 478.
27 Roscommon Herald. 28th January, 4th February, 11th February. 1911.
28 Roscommon Messenger. 4th February, 8th April 1911.
29 Roscommon Journal, 18th and 25th February 1911

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elections. For Fitzgibbon, Tully was the ‘chief outcast’ who could produce nothing but an ‘endless cry’ to keep down the rates.30

Tully stood for election in two county divisions in 1911 - Frenchpark and Boyle - and lost in both, though his defeat in Boyle was relatively close at 286 to 338. In fact, for all the noise generated by the Herald, the elections were seen as relatively quiet. The Roscommon Journal, commenting on a low turnout, considered them tame and the quietest since the reform of local government.31 Nevertheless there were upsets. John Shanly, assailed as the ‘ex-policeman’ by the Roscommon Messenger and as Tully’s ‘satellite’ by the Western Nationalist,32 won a county seat in Elphin. In a district council election in Lough Allen (for Boyle No. 1 DC) John Keaveny, a close ally and later an auctioneering partner of Devine, was defeated by Tully’s allies in the Arigna Hibernians. Though Keaveny (UIL national director for North Roscommon) was promptly co-opted to the district council over Tully’s objections (and easily elected its chairman by 28 to 12 votes),33 Tully’s allies, if not Tully himself, were ‘creeping in’.

The campaigns run in Tully’s papers were local, but Tully’s personal world view extended far beyond Roscommon or Westmeath. The Herald, and to a lesser extent the Mullingar Midland Reporter, voiced opinions on a wider range of national and international stories than any other newspaper in the five counties. Tully’s readers could learn his views on the Balkan wars, the Italian invasion of Tripoli, the Portuguese revolution, the corruption of the French republic, the evils of socialism, the Marconi scandal, the global ‘Jewish’ oil and money rings, the ‘Siege of Sydney Street’,34 England’s strikes and, again and again, the inexorable decline of England in the face of an ever-stronger Germany. Top of the list of Tully’s Irish enemies was T.P. O’Connor, an ‘English radical’, ‘the little billiard marker’s son from Athlone’,35 controller of patronage and corruption in the Irish party and contributor to filthy foreign (i.e. English) newspapers. During 1911, he also inveighed repeatedly against the introduction of

30 Fitzgibbon speaking at Frenchpark. Roscommon Messenger, 3rd June 1911.
31 Roscommon Journal, 10th June 1911.
32 Roscommon Messenger, 6th May; Western Nationalist, 3rd June 1911.
33 Roscommon Herald, 10th and 17th June 1910; Leitrim Observer, 24th June 1910 (which wrongly reported Keaveny’s co-option as being to Boyle No 2 DC).
34 For the Midland Reporter of 5th January 1911 the siege was ‘Red Anarchy’. ‘All the outrages and all the bomb-throwing were traced to Jewish criminals. ‘The Russian pogroms had been terrible, but they had ended the bomb-throwing there.’ Now ‘England has got the rinsings of this evil crew’.
35 Midland Reporter, 30th June 1910.
national insurance - a socialistic, expensive plan taken up by extreme Liberals that would, he wrote, cost Irish toilers and ratepayers £4 million a year. The healthy Irish nation would have to pay for ‘the stunted and diseased populations of factory towns on the other side’. Even on this issue, though, he landed local blows, repeatedly deriding John Hayden’s support for the legislation and re-quotting Hayden’s rather incautious praise for it: ‘a glimpse of fairyland’.36

Locally in 1912 Tully covered at great length the disunity of the Castlerea town tenants (against ‘Foxy Jack’ Fitzgibbon), but his next significant campaign was the promotion of a county ratepayers’ movement. This did not begin, however, until the late summer of 1912. when meetings were held to protest against a one shilling in the pound rise in the rates. The movement was boosted by a fracas at the county council, with councillors shouting and waving sticks at supporters of Joseph Maguire.37 By early 1913, the ratepayers’ movement merited regular police reports by the RIC county inspector. In January he noted that two formal associations had been set up and in February:

There is a growing agitation against the county council on account of the increase of the rates and several meetings of protest by Ratepayers have been held. The prospects of Home Rule are very little discussed.38

The focus was purely local. Aside from the usual complaints - the roads programme, the extravagance of the county council and the onerous rates - there were two particular grievances. The first was no less than the cost of motorbikes used by the county surveyor’s assistants; the second the Hartley Bridge over the Shannon near Carrick. The latter had been a cause for dissension between Roscommon and Leitrim since 1910 (i.e. over who paid for it), but at the end of 1912 the county surveyor Mulvaney was agitated by the fact that the bridge had been built with no new roads connected to it.39 Who would pay for these? Whatever the apparent triviality of the issues raised, the ratepayers’ agitation dovetailed neatly with another of Tully’s pre-occupations, opposition to national insurance. The ratepayers now feared that a new county insurance society approved under the Act (and sponsored by Fitzgibbon) would become a charge on the rates, as would the county’s proposed TB sanatorium.40

36 Roscommon Herald, 6th, 13th and 20th May 1911.
37 Ibid, 7th September 1912.
38 Monthly reports of the Roscommon county inspector, January and February 1913 (PRO CO 904/89).
39 Leitrim Observer, 14th December 1912.
40 Roscommon Herald, 7th September, 7th December 1912; Roscommon Messenger, 15th February 1913; Roscommon Journal, 15th February 1913.
As the movement progressed steadily - by the beginning of 1914 there were six branches, with a county-wide executive and Tully a trustee of the new county association - the county's 'combine of disappointed men' joined in. John Hanson from Castlerea and Joseph Maguire, John Shanly and John Flanagan from Strokestown were all active. J.J. Healy, a Hibernian also on Strokestown council, brought with him a particular grievance against Fitzgibbon. He had been, according to the Roscommon Journal, 'the principal victim of the Ballybeg row ... where Mr Fitzgibbon so well advised his dupes.' A clear focus of support for the ratepayers was Strokestown; the town's newspaper, the Strokestown Democrat, was hailed in March 1913 by J.J. Healy as being known across the county as 'the ratepayers' friend.' Of all the men active in the ratepayers' movement, however, there was none more 'disappointed' than the first president of the county executive, Fitzgibbon's old associate Patrick Webb.

Webb had for many years been a Castlerea district councillor and a county councillor, and had been Fitzgibbon's chief lieutenant in the de Freyne campaign of 1902-03. By 1908 he had, however, fallen out with Fitzgibbon. In the county elections of that year, while easily re-elected in his own Loughlynn division, Webb also stood and lost against his former ally. A cattle-dealer and merchant in the village of Loughlynn, he was ruined in February 1910 when his premises burned down half-insured, with all of his records. He filed for bankruptcy in May 1910 and in 1914 was still undischarged with debts of some £4,000. When in 1911 he was re-elected to the county council, moves were immediately made to disbar him as an undischarged bankrupt. In the end, his seat was not declared vacant for another six months, when the council - with Fitzgibbon, Heverin and O'Keeffe in the lead - finally ruled that a formal 'declaration of willingness to serve' from Webb was out-of-date. (Such a declaration had to be approved by a magistrate and was in this instance signed, and back-dated, by no less than Jasper Tully.) Being disbarred was not, however, the low point of Webb's fortunes. His house had been sold over his head to pay off debts. In February 1912 a campaign of threatening letters sent to the new owner climaxed with Webb trying to break into his former

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42 Roscommon Herald. 20th December 1913.
43 Roscommon Journal. 23rd May 1914.
44 Strokestown Democrat. 22nd March 1913.
45 Roscommon Journal. 16th May 1908.
46 Ibid. 4th June 1910; Western Nationalist. 14th February 1914.
47 Roscommon Journal. 24th June; Roscommon Messenger. 9th December 1910.
house - to bum the place down according to the police; talking, when caught, of blowing it up according to the press. In June, he was sentenced to twelve months in prison for the attempted break-in. For the Roscommon Herald, Webb’s offence had been ‘an act little better than a mere drunken freak’ and the paper implied that the severity of his treatment stemmed from his status as an opponent of Fitzgibbon. Webb was released after six months in January 1913.

Almost immediately, Webb was active in the new ratepayers’ movement and with Joseph Maguire elevated its attacks from specific issues - including nearly always the assistant surveyors’ motorbikes - to a more general attack by ‘farmers’ upon shopkeeper-run public boards. A succession of meetings and speeches were assiduously reported in the Herald. For Maguire, the council was run by ‘a ring of commercial shoneens’, a clique, ‘the tail end of landlordism.’ In August, speaking as ‘a farmer’, he launched into all the shopkeepers on public boards. For Webb, something worse than landlordism had emerged in Roscommon, ‘the Clique’. In May he told an audience that if they wanted to get things done they had to wash out the clique and in particular wash out the shopkeepers (he added schoolteachers for good measure). Webb would claim, along with some other ratepayers’ leaders, that he was not hostile to the national leadership of the Irish party. However, he declared that ‘John’ (Fitzgibbon) would be voted out at the next elections and called for ratepayers’ candidates to stand. When the county ratepayers’ executive was formed in December 1913, Webb was its first president.

The ratepayers’ activity and press reporting of it tailed off in early 1914 - as will be seen in Chapter 9, the burgeoning Home Rule crisis and the inauguration of local Irish Volunteer companies were more pressing priorities. However, the movement did feature again in the 1914 local elections, achieving one notable success. Again, as in 1911, there was no real

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49 Roscommon Herald, 29th June 1912. The paper also claimed that Fitzgibbon had never forgiven Webb for beating him to become the first vice-chairman of the new county council in 1900.
50 Ibid, 15th February 1913.
51 Ibid, 16th August 1913.
52 Ibid, 1st March 1913.
53 Ibid, 24th May 1913.
54 Ibid, 16th August 1913.
55 Ibid, 20th December 1913.
surge of popular support. The *Westmeath Independent* noted that there was no general excitement and that the ratepayers were less active than in 1913.\(^{56}\) Campaigning involved either putting up ratepayers’ candidates or demanding of UIL men, as a condition of not opposing them, that they take a pledge not to approve any further county salary increases.\(^{57}\) Shanly was easily re-elected, but Webb was defeated and Tully lost again in Boyle. However Tully, who spoke in the campaign solely on the local issues of the rates and the clique,\(^{58}\) again fought in two divisions and this time won in one, Ballinlough, by 234 to 216 votes. Tully thus returned to the county council after a gap of six years.

The extent of popular support for Tully and the ratepayers should not be exaggerated. In the years 1910-14 there was no great wave of enthusiasm for their cause. In mid-1914, at the height of popular enthusiasm for another movement, the Irish Volunteers, the ratepayers could muster no more than six Roscommon branches. Both the 1911 and 1914 local elections were regarded by the press as relatively quiet affairs. However, Tully’s ‘creeping in’ continued in the years after 1910 and culminated in his own re-election in 1914 to the county council. Tully was more than just an irritant to Fitzgibbon and Hayden and did more than just bob up every now and then, as the *Western Nationalist* put it, ‘to let the world know he is still with them’.\(^{59}\) Rather he acted as a local rallying point, lending coherence to the motley dissensions of the county’s ‘disappointed men’ with their various grudges, particularly against Fitzgibbon. Throughout the pre-war years his relentless newspaper campaigning voiced the discontent that remained widespread, and almost permanent, beneath the monopolistic veneer spread by the UIL over Roscommon’s politics. Fitzgibbon’s 1910 judgement, that for the UIL North Roscommon was ‘not in a wholesome condition’, was just as valid in 1914.

**Roscommon Town’s ‘Strong Man’ - Thomas, Canon Cummins**

In the spring of 1910, Thomas Cummins returned from Sligo to Roscommon town to become the parish priest. He had previously been a curate in the town and in Loughlynn, County Roscommon, then parish priest in Tarmonbarry, County Roscommon and, from 1907, Elphin diocesan administrator in Sligo town. On his return to the county, the Roscommon and Sligo

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\(^{50}\) *Westmeath Independent*, 2\(^{nd}\) May 1914.

\(^{51}\) Peter Shanagher in Tulsk was one such UIL councillor who took the ratepayers’ pledge (*Strokestown Democrat*, 25\(^{th}\) April 1914); Joseph Dorr in Croghan was another (*Roscommon Herald*, 18\(^{th}\) April 1914).

\(^{52}\) *Roscommon Herald*, 16\(^{th}\) May 1914.

\(^{53}\) *Western Nationalist*, 29\(^{th}\) April 1911.
papers were unanimous in their comments on his character. For the *Roscommon Journal* he was ‘a priest of unflagging zeal and tireless energy’; for the *Sligo Independent* he had a ‘peculiar force of character and unbounded energy’. As already noted above on page 106, the *Sligo Champion* wrote of ‘the extraordinary energy which Canon Cummins threw into every progressive movement’ and went on to remark that he ‘thinks rather of a good end to be attained than of the obstacles that may have to be surmounted in attaining it’. The *Roscommon Messenger* was more succinct - Cummins was seen as ‘essentially a strong man’.

From the start, Cummins became an active participant in nearly every aspect of public life in the town. In 1910 and 1911 he led the county agricultural committee, the town’s pensions committee, the CDB parish committee, the revival of the Gaelic League, the promotion of a temperance society, the town’s classes in commercial and technical instruction, the waterworks committee and the amateur operatic company (whose 1910 production was ‘The Yeoman of the Guard’). He lectured his parishioners on the evils of ‘porter houses’, the need for compulsory primary education, the improvement of the roads and better conditions for teachers. He mediated in agrarian disputes. He became an active fixer in securing the supply of money, land and property for town improvements, whether the new Harrison Hall, the relocation of the post office or a new graveyard. His approach was epitomised in a letter, as so often with Cummins a public letter, written to the district council in 1911, calling on them to clean up the town by getting fairs off the streets and onto a fair green. There were, he wrote,

> several ways of doing one thing - there’s the right way and the wrong way - there’s the thorough way or the slipshod way - there’s the sure way and the real genuine way - there’s the half way or the whole way.

Cummins, who had been a senior UIL officer in Sligo, also threw himself into the town’s politics, but in the spring of 1911 he and the town’s UIL branch went through a major falling out.

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60 *Roscommon Journal* 30th April; *Sligo Independent*, 30th April; *Sligo Champion*, 23rd April; *Roscommon Messenger*, 7th May 1910.
62 The activities of Cummins featured in both of the town’s newspapers, the *Journal* and the *Messenger*, in virtually every edition from May 1910 to the end of 1911.
63 *Roscommon Journal*, 9th September, 1911
The story of the dispute was told by Cummins in a letter sent to the county’s newspapers; its cause was a personal snub administered to him by the UIL. The League had been looking for a candidate for the county council election and Cummins was an integral part of this process. Having been consulted by Hayden, he had approved the choice of one E.P. Murray, who said he would stand if unopposed. Cummins then approached the veteran dissident John McGreevy and persuaded him not to stand against Murray, telegraphing Hayden in London to secure his approval. It was then, according to Cummins, that a meeting of the town UIL - no more than seven or eight in number and including ‘Roscommon Messenger employees’ (i.e. H.I. McCourt and others) plus Charles O’Keeffe - chose the elderly Parnellite veteran Martin McDonnell instead of Murray. This dashed the deal worked out by Cummins and provoked McGreevy to stand. For Cummins, this was all a ‘detestable fraud’. A ‘clique’ was obviously at work. The League in Roscommon was an institution capable of being used by jobgrabbers and landgrabbers. He, Cummins, would now take no part in the impending contest. The most telling sentence in his letter showed what he now felt about the town’s branch. ‘What has the League done for Roscommon? - nothing, absolutely nothing.’

Did Cummins’s hostility to the local UIL pre-date this dispute? At the end of 1918, when Hayden and Cummins were outright opponents, Hayden would claim that the parish priest had nursed a ‘life-long enmity against those who upraised the banner of Parnell in this county’. By this, Hayden meant an enmity - against himself and other Parnellites - going back to the Parnell split. However, Cummins’s political behaviour, in both Sligo and Roscommon before the spring of 1911, was not consistent with Hayden’s claim. Cummins had for several years been active in the reunited UIL and showed no sign of a consistent ‘anti’ bias. Another possible source of historic friction was that Cummins had been the curate in Loughlynn in the years 1902-03, close to the epicentre of Fitzgibbon’s de Freyne campaign which was condemned by Cummins’s bishop, Dr. Clancy. Again, however, there is no evidence that Cummins brought with him any accumulation of animosity to the local UIL when he returned to Roscommon. In early 1911, he had been prepared work to with Hayden and secure nationalist unity in Roscommon town, in favour of the UIL candidate.

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64 Letter from Cummins to the county’s newspapers, Roscommon Journal, 6th May; Roscommon Herald, 6th May; Roscommon Messenger, 13th May 1911. The Messenger initially refused to publish the letter on 6th May, which it said Cummins, on calmer consideration, would regret having written.
65 Roscommon Messenger, 7th December 1918.
What Cummins did retain was a strong view of the importance of clerical leadership in local life. As he wrote to Dr. Clancy in 1912, the only way of keeping societies 'right' in Ireland was to 'have the priest closely in touch with them'. A singularly energetic priest, Cummins was seriously affronted when the town's UIL branch ignored his role in the selection of the UIL's candidate. The branch's actions in May 1911 could not, therefore, have been more damaging. Messrs O'Keeffe and McCourt had flagrantly undermined Cummins's personal and clerical status and the breach never healed.

Did this mean that Cummins broke entirely with the League? The answer is 'not exactly'. The dispute had not been in any way ideological. Cummins's brother, Patrick, remained throughout a UIL activist and Sligo county councillor. Cummins stuck to his word and, unlike Hayden's rivals the Tullys in the Roscommon Journal, took no part in the 1911 election and did not endorse McGreevy. He maintained, at least on the surface, polite relations with Hayden, who in the Messenger tried to put the incident down to a misunderstanding on Cummins's part and appealed for no personal bitterness. Cummins continued publicly to support, as he had for many years, the party's national leadership. In November 1911 he doubled his usual subscription to the parliamentary fund, saying that he would do all in his power to support the Irish party. In March 1912, after the Ulster Hall-related 'Orange hysteria', he donated another two guineas, saying that all Irishmen must now back the party. At the end of March he travelled to Dublin, with Fitzgibbon, for the great Home Rule demonstration.

With the town's UIL branch relations stayed frosty. Cummins's November 1911 donation to the parliamentary fund was coupled with a flat rejection of a request from H.I. McCourt for a church gate collection. For Cummins such collections could only be for charitable purposes. He called on the UIL to set up the 'good, strong branch' so much needed in the town. Nor

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66 Cummins to Dr. Clancy, 13th February 1912, Elphin Diocesan Archive. File C 1912.
67 Another brother. Jeremiah, also in County Sligo, was a retired RIC head constable and a fourth brother, John, was a Sligo J. P. See the account of Jeremiah Cummins's funeral in the Sligo Independent, 24th May 1913. Cummins officiated at the funeral for which the police provided an honour guard 20-strong.
68 Roscommon Journal, 13th May 1911.
69 Roscommon Messenger, 20th May 1911.
70 Ibid, 18th November 1911.
71 Ibid, 30th March 1912.
72 Ibid. 6th April 1912. Other town attendees were John Heverin and Charles O'Keeffe.
73 Letter from Cummins to the Roscommon UIL. published in the Roscommon Messenger, 18th November 1911.
did this duality of views towards the UIL change before WWI. In January 1914, he noted that some people said that he wanted to ‘knock out’ the UIL. No man, he said, had more respect than he for the League, for its past work and for what it was still capable of achieving. However, the UIL’s affairs could not be conducted ‘in a hole in a corner’. Personally, he would subscribe to the Home Rule fund, but there would [again] be no church gate collection.74

However, Cummins has been studied by historians not primarily as a ‘turbulent priest’, fighting minor battles over local status, but as a land radical and founder of the Roscommon Associated Estates Committee (RAEC) at the end of 1911. This committee arose, according to the historian David Seth Jones, ‘because of the limitations of the 1909 Land Act, disillusionment with the UIL and, especially, the failure of landlords in the Roscommon area to distribute their untenanted and nonresidential land’.75 For several years, the RAEC was to agitate for the compulsory purchase and redistribution of the grasslands surrounding the town. Cummins himself believed that landlordism and ‘grazerdom’ were the ‘vicious parent and the wastrel offspring’ of the Irish land system and went on to propose that no man should hold more than 300 acres.76 Moreover, the RAEC acted as a political focal point in the town independently of the UIL. In 1912 the RIC county inspector saw the potential for both the RAEC’s land radicalism and its rivalry with the UIL; he believed the committee was ‘likely to give trouble’ and did not work in unison with the UIL/AOH, but ‘rather seeks to take from them the credit for settling land questions’.77

The RAEC’s reputation for ‘radicalism’ is weakened, nevertheless, by the fact that its origins lay less in an aggressive demand for rural redistribution than in a desire to purchase town properties; it was in many respects just another town tenants’ association writ large. Among the estates owning and surrounding Roscommon, the largest was that of the Earl of Essex, who since 1908 had been talking of selling up. In October 1910, discontent emerged when it became known that his town properties would not be included in the sale.78 For the next year the existing Town Tenants association took the lead in trying both to accelerate the sale and to

74 Roscommon Messenger. 10th January 1914.
75 Seth Jones, Graziers, Land Reform and Political Conflict in Ireland, pp.199-200.
76 Cummins speaking at a Roscommon public meeting, Roscommon Messenger, 20th April 1912.
77 Monthly report of the Roscommon county inspector, April 1912 (PRO CO 904/86).
78 Roscommon Journal, 1st October; Roscommon Messenger, 15th October 1910.
get the town properties re-included. Both Cummins and Hayden were involved in these efforts. In February 1911, before his row with the town UIL, Cummins took on the presidency of the Town Tenants in succession to H.I. McCourt. 79 However, the problem was that they made little headway on either issue; the sale was not accelerated and the town was not included in it. All of the frustrations felt by town tenants in provincial Ireland seem to have applied in Roscommon. If town properties were not included in an agricultural sale, public funds would not be advanced to finance their purchase. Only ‘direct’ tenants of the estate could benefit; tenants of middlemen (there were lots in Roscommon and a number of other estates were also middlemen of the Essex estate) would be left out. It was not clear whether the Estates Commission and CDB would handle the sale. Efforts to ginger up the sale by calling for a 20% rent cut and withholding rents failed to gather momentum. During the summer of 1911 the association did not meet for several weeks for lack of a quorum and, when it did, noted that those few tenants withholding rents were giving in and paying up. 80 In October 1911, a leading article in the Roscommon Journal on the state of the town noted its improved public buildings, but lamented its population of under 2,000 and called for the settlement of ‘our young’ on the lands around it. The paper claimed that ‘prominent sources’ had disheartened the town’s tenants and that Roscommon’s Town Tenants association was now inactive. ‘Let us not be driven into despairing resignation.’ 81

Whether through impatience or loss of confidence in the Town Tenants association, Cummins took the lead in setting up a separate ‘Essex Estate Committee’ in September 1911. He did not immediately sever all ties with the Town Tenants, musing instead on the need for a ‘small, representative committee’ to take matters forward, and indeed on one day chairing meetings of both bodies. 82 By November, however, Cummins had given up on the old association and he then substantially enlarged the remit of the new committee. 83

79 Roscommon Journal, 18th February 1911. McCourt stood down, ostensibly, because the Town Tenants’ meetings clashed with those of the St. Vincent de Paul Society. Why Cummins would be able to attend both Town Tenants and St. Vincent de Paul meetings was not made clear. Indeed Cummins himself apologised to the Town Tenants in September for non-attendance because of the clash of meetings (Roscommon Journal, 16th September 1911).

80 Ibid, 22nd July 1911.
81 Ibid, 21st October 1911.
82 The Town Tenants association and Essex Estate Committee, both chaired by Cummins, met on 10th September 1911 (Roscommon Journal, 16th September 1911).
83 Roscommon Messenger, 11th November; 2nd December 1911.
for the town purchase to go through, there had to be greater co-operation with agricultural tenants to ensure a simultaneous sale of town and rural properties;

- for tenants of many middlemen to be included, all the relevant estates owning Roscommon (including those that were sub-tenants of the Essex estate) had to be sold, and at the same time;

- for anything to happen, one public agency had to have sole responsibility for the sale of all the estates - Cummins immediately set off to Dublin to meet both the Estates Commission and the CDB to get them to agree which it should be;

- for Roscommon town to be regenerated - and Cummins had long had a keen involvement in the town’s improvement - then the ‘wilderness’ and ‘prairies’ of grassland surrounding Roscommon had to be broken up and resettled.

The comprehensiveness of these goals was a classic case of Cummins going, as he had put it to the District Council in September, the right way, the thorough way, the ‘real genuine’ way and the whole way. The first meeting of the new Associated Estates Committee, the RAEC, with representatives of urban and rural tenants from all the town’s estates and with Cummins in the chair, was held at the end of November.

For the next three years, the RAEC campaigned on the programme of comprehensive town and country purchase laid out by Cummins. Rents were withheld, estate owners and graziers visited by delegations, properties valued and grazing lands left unstocked.84 The police noted the selective targeting of properties for attack, and in particular those of prominent townsmen who were graziers on the Essex estate and whose properties had rateable values in excess of £100 (notably J.P. Mulligan, James Neilan and William Scally).85 The RAEC also became a clearing house for minor, unrelated agrarian disputes in the locality, sometimes supporting the agitation; sometimes, as Cummins had already done as parish priest, mediating between both sides.86

The RAEC secured two early successes - town properties would after all be included in sale of the surrounding Essex estate and this sale would be handled solely by the CDB - but made

84 Westmeath Independent, 11th November 1911; Roscommon Messenger, 1st and 22nd June 1912; 11th January and 12th April 1913.
85 Roscommon Journal, 30th September 1911; Roscommon Messenger, 1st June 1912: monthly reports of the Roscommon county inspector, April and May 1912 (PRO CO 904/86 and 87).
86 For example see Roscommon Messenger, 3rd and 17th February 1912.
little headway thereafter. Routinely from 1912 onwards, the committee would lament the lack of co-operation between town and country tenants and the lack of response from landlords to its appeals to sell. Though a dispute on one farm, at Clonmurley, did lead to band parades, 'hooting', a cattle drive and arrests, Cummins was a consistent opponent of both driving and boycotting and Cummins remained the committee’s driving force. In July 1912, the police reported that the RAEC nearly collapsed when he briefly stopped attending. For three months in 1913, while he was in America raising funds for the town’s church, it got nowhere and in July 1913 the police view of the RAEC was that ‘it gave a good deal of trouble for a time, but it is not doing much at the present’. Cummins himself gave voice to his view of the staying power of his followers in February 1913. On being told that a number of town tenants had dropped off the committee, he told his fellow members: ‘That is characteristic of the Irish. They are great for the spurt, but they are lacking in perseverance’.

Leaving aside the specific land campaigning of the RAEC, the issue also has to be addressed of whether the committee provided a coherent, local political ‘opposition’ to the UIL. Some existing opponents of the UIL and/or the Haydens did gravitate to it; the former Sinn Fein supporter Michael Finlay, expelled from the UIL in 1907, became the RAEC’s vice-chairman. The town’s Tullys, father and son, were also regular attendees and the Roscommon Journal provided detailed coverage and editorial support. However, other dissidents were not active participants. Neither George Geraghty nor John McGreevy attended regularly. Indeed McGreevy in January 1914 outraged Cummins’s clerical dignity and allied with one of the RAEC’s grazier victims, J.P. Mulligan, by getting the District Council to charge water rates on the Harrison Hall and on Cummins’s presbytery. The more formidable figure of Father Michael O’Flanagan, recently on the Sinn Fein national executive and soon to be a committed land radical, was actually one of Cummins’s curates in the town from 1912-14. While he became particularly active in the town’s Gaelic League, and was hailed in 1914 by Cummins as his ‘dear friend’, he seems to have played no active part in the RAEC.

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87 Roscommon Messenger, 3rd February 1912.
88 Monthly report of the Roscommon county inspector, July 1912 (PRO CO 904/87).
89 Ibid, July 1913 (PRO CO 904/90).
90 Roscommon Messenger, 11th January 1913
91 Ibid. 10th and 24th January 1914. According to McGreevy, Cummins wrote ‘bellicose and vituperative’ letters to the District Council on the subject.
92 At a Gaelic League reception to welcome O’Flanagan back from lecturing in Rome in May 1914 (Roscommon Journal, 16th May 1914).
Other than Cummins, the RAEC’s officers were all professionals and traders from Roscommon town. The vice-chairman, Finlay, was a baker and the secretary, Thomas Larkin, was headmaster of the Roscommon Boys’ School. The committee’s legal adviser, Michael Moran, was a town solicitor and secretary to the District Council. The other two most active committee members, Hugh Flynn and H. Hynes, were a grocer/general trader and a draper respectively. Of these, only Finlay had ‘form’ as a committed opponent of the UIL. Larkin at least seems to have been close to Hayden, in that Hayden, unusually for the time, in 1912 addressed him in a public letter as ‘My Dear Tom’. In March 1914, Larkin, Moran and Flynn all made donations to the Home Rule fund (though support of the Irish party nationally was hardly conclusive proof of local unity and harmony, as has been seen already across County Roscommon). Cummins himself remained a public supporter of Home Rule and Redmond. Only once before the war did he let any exasperation with the Irish party above the level of the town branch come to the surface. In May 1914, the RAEC was discussing yet another disappointing statement from the CDB about what town purchases it could finance, triggering Finlay to call for a ‘No Rent Manifesto’. Cummins remarked that the CDB could not be regarded as a democratic body and, when Finlay said that their ‘representatives’ were mocking them, added that it was almost impossible to get Fitzgibbon to do anything. This remark triggered the observation from the Roscommon Messenger that nationalist unity was essential at a time when Home Rule was in danger, and in turn provoked the following Cummins observation at the RAEC’s June meeting:

If anyone of honest convictions tried to direct public attention to these things the old bogey was held up. “Hush! Do not embarrass the party and do not jeopardise Home Rule.” A little Home Rule of the genuine sort around Roscommon would be very desirable.

As for Hayden and Fitzgibbon, they remained careful not to voice any opposition to the RAEC or public criticism of Cummins. Hayden actually chaired the first public meeting of

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93 Roscommon Messenger, 20th April 1912. Hayden had written a letter of regret that he could not attend an RAEC rally. Cummins, who chaired the rally, was also a ‘Thomas’, but normal practice at the time would have been for Hayden to send his apologies to the secretary, Larkin.
94 Roscommon Journal, 7th March 1914.
95 Roscommon Messenger, 9th May 1914.
96 Sligo Nationalist, 27th June 1914.
the RAEC's precursor, the Essex Estate Committee, in September 1911. His newspaper, the Messenger, gave as much coverage to the RAEC as did the Tullys' Journal - nearly always it was supportive. Fitzgibbon met early with the committee and in early 1912 took credit for the CDB's decision to take on the sale of the Essex and other estates. The RAEC was sufficiently all-embracing that leaders of the town UIL branch, including H.I. McCourt and Charles O'Keeffe, were also members from December 1911 onwards. However, there was also a succession of minor turf battles - more jostling for position than outright contests - between the UIL and the RAEC in the pre-war years. When in 1911 Hayden tried to have his ally John Heverin made solicitor to the Essex Estates Committee (Heverin was also secretary to the Town Tenants), this move was blocked by Cummins, who successfully promoted Michael Moran (Heverin's main rival as a local solicitor) to the role. In January 1912, Hayden snubbed the RAEC in a public letter to H.I. McCourt, praising one Roscommon organisation for its work on the sale of the Essex and other town estates - the UIL. In January 1914, Cummins called for a public meeting to foster national unity in the town and this call was backed by the Tullys in the Roscommon Journal, which went further, urging a UIL/RAEC merger so that the UIL could be broader-based and not 'tending to privacy'. However, the initiative was quickly blocked in the Roscommon UIL by Charles O'Keeffe. Nationalist 'unity' had its limits, and while it would be going too far to say that the RAEC crystallised hostility to the UIL, it did provide a nucleus of independent campaigning activity.

It took three years from the formation of the RAEC for the Essex estate to be sold to the CDB. When that happened, in November 1914, tenants of middlemen were still unable to purchase; the town’s other estates were still largely unsold and its surrounding grasslands not redistributed. Had Cummins achieved much more than the old, discredited Town Tenants would have done? There is no doubt that he gave the RAEC energy, a comprehensive programme and coherence of purpose, but ultimately the RAEC was neither more radical in its methods nor more effective in its results than other town tenant campaigns (for example those of J.P. Farrell in Longford, George O’Reilly in Strokestown or even John Fitzgibbon in

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97 Roscommon Messenger, 23rd September 1911.
98 Ibid. 23rd December 1911: 6th and 20th January 1912.
99 Ibid. 2nd December 1911. Bizarrely, the grazier John Neilan, one of the prime targets of the committee. was also on the RAEC (Ibid, 1st June 1912).
100 Ibid, 23rd September: Roscommon Herald, 30th September 1911.
101 Roscommon Messenger, 20th January 1912.
102 Roscommon Journal, 10th January: Roscommon Messenger, 24th January 1914.
Castlerea). Also, whereas Jasper Tully in his incessant campaigning provided a focal point for many of the discontented across County Roscommon to come together, Cummins's movement remained based only in Roscommon town and its immediate surroundings. When the RAEC had the opportunity to ally with other dissident 'town tenants' - the Castlerea opponents of John Fitzgibbon in May 1912 - Cummins blocked any public expression of the RAEC's 'sympathy' for them, saying that such an action might be misunderstood.103 Nor did Cummins form any alliance with Tully and the county's 'ratepayers'. In early 1913 Cummins even became a trustee of the new county insurance society,104 the potential costs of which so alarmed them.

Unlike Tully, Cummins remained loyal to the leadership of the Irish party and - mostly - on bearable diplomatic terms with its MPs. However, like Tully, Cummins was a strong campaigner who tackled issues head on, without great consideration for the sensitivities of those against whom (or even with whom) he campaigned. Both men were dominant personalities who pitched into every aspect of small-town life. The 'inner wheels' of their pursuit of local influence and status, magnified by the campaigning of a competitive local press, generated sufficient animosities and tensions significantly to weaken the unity of the county's nationalists in the immediate pre-war years.

**War and Sinn Fein**

Though national and international issues inevitably dominated local political debate in the war years, many of the local allegiances formed in pre-war Roscommon persisted. Thus the Irish party’s leading ‘clique’ figures (O’Keeffe and H.I. McCourt in Roscommon; Devine and Keaveny in Boyle, Heverin, Hayden and Fitzgibbon) all went down with the party ship in the elections of 1917 and 1918. By contrast many dissidents (Shanly and Maguire in Strokestown, George D. Tully and the former Sinn Fein supporters McGreevy, Geraghty and Finlay in Roscommon, many of the rebellious Castlerea town tenants of 1912) became Sinn Feiners. Two of the first newspapers to come out as pro-Sinn Fein in early 1917 were the *Roscommon Journal* (inherited by George D. Tully when his father died at the end of 1915) and that ‘ratepayers’ friend’ the *Strokestown Democrat*.

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103 *Roscommon Journal*. 18th May 1912.

104 *Roscommon Messenger*. 18th January 1913.
However, the correlation between pre-war dissidence and later Sinn Feinism must not be overstated. Of the prominent lay RAEC men, though none publicly supported the Irish party, only Finlay became an active Sinn Feiner. Thomas Larkin came to promote the cause of the ITGWU, while Flynn and Hynes seem to have dropped out of politics altogether. (Michael Moran died in 1917.) Of the ‘ratepayers’, the same abstinence from all politics befell John Hanson in Castlerea and, more surprisingly, Patrick Webb. Three leading Strokestown dissidents, J.D. O’Farrell, John Flanagan and J.J. Healy, stayed loyal to Redmond, the war effort and the party. When Healy left for Swansea in February 1918, his parting shot was to denounce those who now followed the ‘rainbow flag’ of Sinn Fein.

The two most important adherents to the new cause were, nonetheless, Jasper Tully and Canon Cummins, though each came to be aligned with Sinn Fein by a very different route.

Tully
For Tully, local considerations were pushed aside by the overriding priority of the war, the outbreak of which vindicated his predictions of a coming clash between a resurgent, militaristic Germany and a decadent England. He revelled in the opportunity given to sound off on military strategy - every week with a hand-drawn map of the relevant ‘front’ - and boost the Herald’s circulation. The major part of the paper came to be taken up with war news and reports. His hostility to ‘England’, the Asquith government and the Irish party leadership was unabated. By the end of September 1914, the Herald was listed by the RIC inspector general as one of a handful of ‘extreme’ newspapers in Ireland.

However, Tully was not overtly against the cause of the Allies. He strongly opposed ‘Prussian’ militarism and lamented that ‘Catholic’ Austria had been dragged into the war by Germany. Moreover, despite the Herald’s being classed as ‘extreme’ in September 1914, Tully was careful to stay on the right side of the authorities, and successfully so. In September 1915, the Roscommon county inspector could report that ‘the tone of the local

105 Roscommon Journal, 12th October 1918.
106 Roscommon Messenger, 23rd February 1918.
107 Monthly report of the Inspector General. September 1914 (PRO CO 904/94). The others were the Enniscorthi Echo, Leinster Leader, Irish Volunteer and Meath Chronicle.
108 Roscommon Herald, 22nd August 1914.
press is moderate and in favour of the Allies in the War'.\textsuperscript{109} The paper broke the habit of a lifetime and rarely carried a leading article. Instead, Tully’s barbed criticisms were carried in comments, sometimes not very obscurely coded, attached to news pieces. The 1916 new year edition of the \textit{Herald} was typical in this respect. Thus the paper carried the following remark about a visit by Redmond to the front line: ‘Imagine Parnell going to the front to fire off a gun, in order to get a bit of cheap notoriety’. Other news stories featured a Liverpool riot against Irish emigrants and a claim that the Battle of Loos could have been won if only an English general had not fallen asleep.\textsuperscript{110} This edition then devoted the most space to a piece on the O’Conors and the O’Connors - literally columns were devoted to the issue of one ‘n’ or two. The reason for this became apparent when the article related the story told by one Mat O’Conor about ‘Ballldreag O’Donnell’. O’Donnell, ‘the Redmond of his day’, was a 17\textsuperscript{th} century soldier who switched sides to support William of Orange only to find that his soldiers did not follow him.\textsuperscript{111} Doubtless most of Tully’s readers got the message.

Tully’s relentless but coded sniping against the government and Irish party did not stop him from being a bitter critic of the Easter Rising. The \textit{Herald}’s immediate response to the Rising has been outlined by J.J. Lee. For Tully the Rising was a socialist plot. The rebels’ proclamation was of a ‘socialistic republic’ which he likened to the Paris Commune. He reminded his readers that ‘Portuguese Sinn Feiners’ had killed priests and nuns in the revolution of 1910 and he dismissed the Dublin events as nothing more than another ‘Red Week’.\textsuperscript{112} Tully’s views were widely disseminated. According to the \textit{Longford Independent}, during Easter Week the \textit{Herald} became close to the only source of information in the Midlands; a series of special editions were run off and close to 100,000 copies disposed of.\textsuperscript{113}

After the Rising, Tully remained in all other respects a bitter, advanced opponent of England, Lloyd George’s Ulster initiative, recruiting and Redmond’s party. When the North Roscommon by-election was triggered at the end of 1916, he initially stated that he had no desire to stand, having already had fourteen years of parliamentary life.\textsuperscript{114} However, in the

\textsuperscript{109} Monthly report of the Roscommon county inspector, September 1915 (PRO CO 904/98).
\textsuperscript{110} Roscommon Herald, 1\textsuperscript{st} January 1916.
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{113} Longford Independent, 13\textsuperscript{rd} May 1916. The report also claimed that because of the inflated cost of newsprint the \textit{Herald} made no profit on its extra sales.
\textsuperscript{114} Roscommon Herald, 6\textsuperscript{th} January 1917.
end he could not resist standing as an independent and splitting the advanced nationalist vote. This may have been because he personally disliked, from years back, the Irish Nation League candidate, Count Plunkett, who, apart from being 'an amiable old Whig' was one of Tully's pet hates, a 'place-hunter'. Or it may have been that he was furious that he himself had not been selected instead of Plunkett. Perhaps he felt that he had to stand personally against his old enemy in Boyle, the UIL candidate T.J. Devine. Perhaps it was simply that he had to keep bobbing up, 'to let the world know he is still with them'. Whatever his motivation, he now stated that he was not against 'Sinn Fein' and that he 'would always stand down in favour of a real Sinn Feiner' such as Eoin MacNeill. The election over, Tully hailed the result as an 'anti-Irish party' vote of 3,700 to Devine's 1,700 (glossing over his own total of 608 votes). But he pledged himself now to be a supporter of Sinn Fein. Thereafter the Herald was the leading campaigning paper for Sinn Fein in counties Roscommon, Leitrim and Longford.

Cummins

For Cummins, the outbreak of war triggered two instinctive responses. First, he supported the moral purpose of the war; he particularly praised Catholic, independent and virtuous Belgium. His second response was to organise, whether backing a collection for Belgian refugees or, in December 1914, chairing a meeting in the Harrison Hall to raise funds for the Connaught Rangers. However, for Cummins war was also a terrible evil, a 'deluge of human blood' and in the same week that he raised funds for the Connaught Rangers, he gave voice to his disgust at the hypocrisy and false eloquence of much of the war’s coverage, in a sermon preached at the Sacred Heart church. The lies, treachery, deceit and 'grab' of international diplomacy were the cause of this terrible war. Irish public life was now characterised by 'hypocrisy masquerading in the garb of patriotism', and the press and politics by 'torrents of frothy eloquence'. The press had been 'prostituted for party purposes' and the truth was lacking, 'even in small communities'. It was now true that 'you could not believe a word that you hear'.

115 Ibid, 27th January 1917.
116 See Laffan, The Resurrection of Ireland, p. 80.
117 Roscommon Herald, 27th January 1917.
118 Ibid, 10th February 1917.
119 Roscommon Messenger, 28th November 1914.
120 Ibid, 19th December 1914.
121 Roscommon Journal, 19th December 1914.
Cummins was not active politically for most of the war. His response to the Rising was more symbolic than outspoken. While prayers were said in the immediate aftermath for those killed, those said by him for the rebels were for 'misguided' men. However, he also made a point of visiting in their cells those local men detained by the authorities. Two months later, moreover, Cummins presided at a High Mass for the souls of Irishmen who had lost their lives in the rebellion. One of his fellow priests at the mass was Michael O’Flanagan.

Periodically Cummins let his frustrations show, usually on agrarian matters and especially concerning the county’s politicians. One forum was the county agricultural committee. In February 1917, he lamented that nothing had yet been done concerning the land around Roscommon - the bullocks were still there. The RAEC had received nothing but hopeful promises and the MPs, particularly the representatives around Roscommon, had given little help. Five months later, he returned to the theme: politicians had always had ‘pious platitudes’ ready to respond to the RAEC, but had offered no aid or influence. At the RAEC (which still met) he went further. He told about how the MPs had repeated the ‘hackneyed and illusive songs’ of ‘Home Rule is on the Statute Book’, ‘Trust the Liberals’ and ‘Depend on the Party’. He quoted the warnings of Father O’Flanagan that the people of Ireland would be allowed to starve before the people of England and Scotland felt the pinch.

Such observations indicated that Cummins was now seriously disenchanted with the Irish party, both locally and nationally, but while he was seen to attend some Sinn Fein meetings in the second half of 1918 (not speaking and not on the platform), he did not publicly declare for Sinn Fein until November 1918. When he did so, it was with all the decisiveness and energy that he had shown as the prime organiser of the town’s public life. On November 24th, he wrote a public letter, this time to a Sinn Fein rally for the South Roscommon candidate Harry Boland (the rally was chaired by Cummins’s RAEC deputy Michael Finlay). Cummins stated that it would not have been proper for him to attend because of his work for victims of the influenza epidemic. However, Ireland had been doomed to wait for the ‘weary and hopeless

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122 Ibid, 13th May 1916.
125 Roscommon Herald, 13th July 1917.
process of so-called constitutionalism'. Force was out of the question, but the Irish party could never again be effective in the British parliament. It was ‘enfeebled and moribund’. It was now vital to unite Ireland’s best elements with its younger generation, to make a ‘new, virile Irish Party’.  

By 7th December, Cummins had sufficiently escaped his influenza responsibilities to speak publicly for Boland and thereafter was Boland’s lead nominator, stump speaker and, predictably, campaign organiser. His November public letter to Boland had used an image that could just as easily have applied to his replacement of the Roscommon Town Tenants by the RAEC seven years earlier:

Does a man continue to live in a house when its roof is battered in, because it sheltered him through the storms of many a previous winter? If he is wise he will put on a new roof.  

It would be quite wrong to say that there was a significant ‘Sinn Fein’ movement in County Roscommon before the First World War. Instead, politics was dominated by purely local issues and personalities. Energetic priests, obsessively-bickering politicians, family feuds, newspaper rivalries, disappointed placemen and a bankrupt arsonist all played their part. Mass campaigns for ‘The Land for the People’ had given way to agitations about the rates, negotiations for the purchase of towns and attacks on whomever happened to form the ruling ‘clique’. As the RIC county inspector had noted at the time of the formation of the ratepayers’ movement: ‘The prospects of Home Rule are very little discussed.’  

The pre-war Irish party may have been the only party political show in town, but its structure was fissured and weakened by a medley of local disputes. Some conflicts were long-running, traced back to the Ranch War, the brief revival of Sinn Fein in the mid-1900s, the Parnell split or, in the case of the Tullys, almost to pre-history. Others disputes sprang up from nowhere, were purely personal and often trivial. These incessant conflicts did influence the sides taken in the years 1917-18 (though the correlation was anything but perfect) and at the least reduced the number of those willing to stand by the Irish party locally when it came seriously to be

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126 Roscommon Journal, 30th November 1918.
127 Ibid.
128 Monthly report of the Roscommon county inspector, February 1913 (PRO CO 904/89).
challenged. Wedged apart, in particular, by the activities of Tully and Cummins, the local fissures in the Irish party widened in the pre-war years. Even if the county was still 'so free from Sinn Fein and the rebellion taint', the party in Roscommon was poorly equipped to withstand the shocks which were shortly to fall upon it.
Chapter 6: Laurence Ginnell’s Revolt

Laurence Ginnell, the MP for North Westmeath, was expelled from the Irish parliamentary party at the beginning of 1910 and never readmitted. Throughout the years 1910-16 he sustained a separate party organisation in North Westmeath - the ‘Independent UIL’ set up its own executive in 1910 - and contested nearly all succeeding local elections against the North Westmeath UIL led by John Hayden. In the autumn of 1914 Ginnell became the first nationalist MP openly to side with the Sinn Feiners, condemning Redmond’s pro-recruiting stance unequivocally and calling for Irish neutrality in the world war. In the autumn of 1916, he was the founder, in Westmeath, of one of the only branches outside Ulster of the Irish Nation League, which opposed the Irish party. In 1917 he became an active member of the reconstituted Sinn Fein party led by Eamon de Valera. His lieutenants in North Westmeath almost to a man became prominent local Sinn Feiners in 1917-18. Ginnell was easily elected MP and TD for Westmeath in 1918 and later became, briefly, Minister for Publicity in the first Dail. Re-elected TD he was sent to Argentina as an envoy and, staunchly anti-Treaty, he ended his days as a republican envoy in the United States.¹

Ginnell’s long association with individual Sinn Fein activists, his later prominence as a Sinn Feiner and the smooth transition of his local organisation into Sinn Fein in 1917 all support the belief that ‘Ginnellism’, in the years 1910-14, was at least a precursor of advanced and even revolutionary Irish Nationalism. However, just as convincing a case can be made that the roots of Ginnellism lay not in any ideological difference from John Hayden’s parliamentary nationalists, but rather in a realignment of the bitter local rivalries which had characterised North Westmeath politics for nearly 30 years.

Nor was Ginnellism seen by contemporaries as synonymous with, or particularly linked to, Sinn Fein. Even as late as 1916, local observers as diverse as the strongly pro-Ginnell Midland Reporter and the RIC county inspector had no such perception. Instead, in that year

¹ Almost the only biography of Ginnell in this period is that by Charles Kelly, Laurence Ginnell -1852-1923, A Short Biography (unpublished, written in 1970 and lodged in Westmeath county library, Mullingar). Kelly had access to hand-written transcripts of extracts from the shorthand diaries of Ginnell and his second wife, Alice. Though the original of these has since been lost, Mr. Kelly retained a photocopy which is now in the possession of the author. The provenance of these extracts is discussed in Appendix C. See also the brief biographical notes on Ginnell in Maume, The Long Gestation, p. 229 and in Jeremiah Sheehan, Worthies of Westmeath (Kilkenny 1978), pp. 44-46.
both observers were agreed that there was virtually no Sinn Fein movement in North
Westmeath. After the Easter Rising, the Midland Reporter wrote of local Sinn Feiners that
‘they cannot be found’. The paper then mocked the Mullingar UIL for supposedly attacking
local Sinn Feiners, for they had ‘no existence, except in the minds of certain individuals’. Later, in a special report on the county at the end of 1916, the RIC county inspector stated that
political societies were dormant, that there had been ‘singularly little’ activity by Sinn Feiners
before the Easter Rising and that no more than a dozen people (nearly all in Athlone, in the
south of the county) had openly identified themselves with the Sinn Fein movement. A
section of opinion in the north of the county still supported Laurence Ginnell, he noted, but
‘chiefly on account of his advocacy of cattle driving some years ago’. Both of these
Westmeath sources, therefore, saw ‘Sinn Feiners’ as having almost no presence in the county
in 1916. Ginnell’s followers were seen, and in the case of the Midland Reporter saw
themselves, to be something different.

Even Ginnell’s personal, pre-war road to Sinn Fein and separatism was circuitous and his
breach with the Irish party was not absolute. As will be seen, his support for the Home Rule
bill in 1912 was genuine if ambivalent, and he remained willing to act with other Irish MPs to
secure its passage. Two years previously in 1910, after electoral victory had secured his
position as the leading nationalist in North Westmeath, one of Ginnell’s first actions was to
seek readmission to the Irish party. When this failed and he changed tack to a policy of
setting up a rival ‘Independent UIL’, his ally Christopher Lennon, who had wanted instead to
unite with William O’Brien’s All for Ireland League, insisted that Ginnell’s new policy was
one of ‘sticking to the UIL’. Why, if the UIL was so dreadful, Lennon asked, should the dog
‘keep returning to its own vomit’?

The Split: 1906-10

Laurence Ginnell first stood for election in 1900 (unsuccessfully) and then in 1906
(successfully) as the reunited UIL’s parliamentary candidate for North Westmeath. His
credentials were strong. Though he had been based in Dublin and London for many years,
his family came from the small Westmeath town of Delvin and he had long been a protégé of

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2 Midland Reporter, 4th May 1916.
3 Special reports of county inspectors on the condition of their counties, end-1916 (PRO CO 904/120).
4 Midland Reporter, 6th October 1910.
both Michael Davitt and John Dillon, personal secretary to Dillon, 5 assistant secretary of the national UIL and briefly, for 18 months from August 1904, national secretary. In the years before his election, his main political roles were as a UIL functionary and leading opponent of landlordism. He showed particular hostility to the 1903 Land Act (which he called the 'Landlord Relief Act'), to the conciliationist policies of William O'Brien and to his particular personal bete noire and predecessor as UIL secretary, the O'Brienite John O'Donnell. 6

In North Westmeath prior to Ginnell’s election, the main political fault line was not, however, between party men and local O'Brienites, nor was it the one that would emerge later, between Ginnell and John Hayden. Instead, the county’s nationalist politicians were divided between on one side the Catholic church and its political allies (mostly ‘established’ local men who became anti-Parnellites in the 1890s) and on the other side more radical nationalists, most of whom had been Parnellites. Both sides had battled continuously for office since even before the Parnell split, under the leadership of the then bishop of Meath Dr. Nulty (for the clericalists) and the owner of the Westmeath Examiner John Hayden (for what became the Parnellites). The Parnell split set the feud in stone, and saw the establishment of a clerically-backed rival (the Westmeath Nationalist) to Hayden’s newspaper. Jasper Tully regularly travelled over from Boyle to help his brother George edit the paper, which later became the Midland Reporter. By this means the County Roscommon feud of the Hayden and Tully families was extended to Mullingar. The struggle climaxed in 1894, when Dr. Nulty decreed that reading the Westmeath Examiner was a sin calling for the refusal of absolution; 7 the paper for years retained the nickname of ‘the mortal sin’. 8 This long fight remained centred on Mullingar and has been analysed by A. C. Murray, as an illustration of Hoppen’s model of the pervasive localism of 19th century Irish politics. 9 As well as the wider, national issue of the Parnell split, matters contested by the two factions ranged from clerical control of party branches and funds to the bishop’s proposals for local sanitation. At one stage the contest centred on a fight to control the town band’s instruments.

5 Kelly, Laurence Ginnell, pp. 11-12.  
8 Interview with Nicholas Nally, retired editor of the Westmeath Examiner, 11th October 1999.  
Throughout the 1890’s the clericalists and anti-Parnellites maintained the upper hand in Westmeath politics, but the balance of power began to shift at the end of the decade. Dr. Nulty died in 1898, while Hayden was elevated to parliament in 1897 (albeit by inheriting his brother Luke’s South Roscommon seat). Hayden built up his support in Westmeath by harnessing the Irish party’s reunion, the new UIL and increasing land radicalism to his cause; he duly became president of the North Westmeath UIL. The UIL’s adoption as its 1900 candidate of the fierce, Westmeath-born Ginnell, protégé of John Dillon and thus appealing to local anti-Parnellites to embrace reunion was not, however, a knockout blow. Many Westmeath anti-Parnellites were loyal not to Dillon, but to the fractious and clerically-allied Tim Healy. Hayden’s local opponents - the clergy and, according to the Westmeath Examiner, ‘leaders of public bodies’ prepared to oppose the new UIL - put up their own candidate, P.J. Kennedy. The victorious Kennedy was then, moreover, admitted to the parliamentary party. However, when Ginnell came to stand again in 1906, Kennedy had retired, reunion had finally been accomplished in Westmeath and the UIL had expanded to encompass both the local clergy and their lay supporters. Thus in 1906 the residue of the old, local war was fought out within, rather than against, the UIL. At a UIL nomination convention in that year, attended by 19 priests under the bishop’s administrator Rev. Daly, Hayden chaired the proceedings at which Ginnell, still with no clergy backing him, defeated the clerically-backed North Westmeath gentleman, Sir Walter Nugent, by 99 votes to 72.

Ginnell’s election in 1906 - having beaten Nugent at the convention he was unopposed - was, therefore, the first parliamentary victory for supporters of John Hayden in North Westmeath since 1886. It was also to be their last and was almost immediately followed, from mid-1906, by suppressed political warfare between Hayden and his new MP. In part, this was an uncomplicated turf battle over which of the two was to be the leader of North Westmeath’s nationalists, though the strength of Ginnell’s personality, dogmatic to say the least, also ensured that he was bound to be a rather rampant bull in Hayden’s reconstructed china shop of party unity. Ginnell’s O’Brienite enemy and rival in the national UIL. John O’Donnell, considered him to be bad-tempered, mercenary and ‘one step removed from lunacy’, while

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10 Westmeath Examiner, 6th October 1900.
his former mentor Dillon came to consider him ‘a clever but quite wild man’. 13 Tim Healy, writing of Ginnell in the 1920’s, could be almost charitable in describing Ginnell as ‘so sincere, he was incapable of invention’, 14 but went on to add that Ginnell’s despatch to be an envoy in Argentina and the USA was due to his being ‘hardly a workable colleague’. Healy described Ginnell thus: ‘Afflicted with a harsh voice he had an unsympathetic manner, and was not good “to look upon”’. 15

For all that Ginnell may not have been good ‘to look upon’, the Ranch War of 1906-08 dramatically enhanced his position in Westmeath. His uncompromising land radicalism made him the perfect standard-bearer for the campaign locally. As the first public advocate of the tactic of cattle-driving he was to acquire the title of ‘the father of the hazel’; in the process he eclipsed the former radical Hayden and their rivalry became intense. According to his biographer Charles Kelly, Ginnell was by mid-1906 already ill-disposed to Hayden, seeing him as a friend of local ‘ranchers’. 16 In his book *Land and Liberty*, Ginnell put ‘the land’ at the heart of the dispute and alleged that as soon as they knew of his autumn 1906 meeting at The Downs, where he launched the idea of cattle-driving, the Mullingar UIL tried to sabotage it. 17 (Nevertheless the meeting went ahead in October with Hayden chairing it.) 18 At the end of 1906, there was a heated confrontation at the North Westmeath UIL executive over who should be the representative on the UIL’s national directory, Hayden or Ginnell; Hayden won comfortably by 84-36. 19 However, both men publicly promoted the Ranch War in 1907, and it was not until October 1907 that their conflict again became public, when Hayden’s brother Joseph (based in Roscommon town) was accused of land-grabbing by allies of Ginnell. 20 In early 1908 Ginnell achieved the enhanced status of being jailed but, shortly after his release in June, he formed a National Democratic Club for his supporters in Mullingar. 21 In the same month his alliance with that perennial scourge of the Haydens, Jasper Tully, was cemented by

15 Ibid. p. 565.
16 Kelly, *Laurence Ginnell*, p. 44.
19 *Westmeath Independent*, 5th January 1907.
20 Bew, *Conflict and Conciliation in Ireland*, p. 158.
his campaigning for Tully against UIL candidates in the Roscommon county council elections.22

One manifestation of Ginnell’s disaffection, from 1906 onwards, was his open association with known Sinn Fein supporters, particularly at the annual August commemoration, at the bridge of Finea on the Westmeath/Longford/Cavan border, of the exploits of ‘Myles the Slasher’, one of the Confederates of the 1640s. The event had been taken over by the IRB man and separatist Bulmer Hobson and in his memoirs Hobson related how he was approached by Ginnell, the night before the August 1906 rally, asking if he could also speak.23 At the rally Ginnell reiterated his support for the parliamentary party, but said that he would not put obstacles in the way of any other body of Irishmen who thought they could help Ireland by any other policy.24 The response of the Mullingar UIL was to meet immediately and pass a resolution repudiating the Sinn Fein policy.25

Ginnell’s association with Sinn Fein was therefore another causus belli from the start of his feud with Hayden. Ginnell repeated the offence of attending the Finea rally, with Hobson and figures such as the County Longford Sinn Fein supporter William Ganly, in 1907 and 1908. Ginnell was a personal friend of Ganly, staying at his house several times.26 Moreover, Hobson was sometimes a fellow guest and on August 1908 Alice Ginnell recorded that while staying with the Ganlys: ‘We had a long talk with Mr. Hobson last evening about the possibility of mutual action between Sinn Fein and honest UI Leaguers. L said that Sinn Fein should take up some practical question for the country and that the last thing that could happen would be a reorganisation of the national forces.’27

Ginnell was right; ‘reorganisation of the national forces’ had not progressed by 1908, either locally or nationally, and his breach with the party, while real, had not widened. Specifically, he made no move to resign from the parliamentary party when other MPs did so in 1907. He focused instead on the promotion of the Ranch War and took no side in the 1908 ‘Sinn Fein’

22 Western Nationalist, 1st January 1910.
23 Hobson, Ireland, Yesterday and Tomorrow, p. 27.
24 Ibid. p. 28.
25 Crime Special Branch report, August 1906 (PRO CO 904/117).
26 Diaries of Laurence and Alice Ginnell, 9th-10th July 1906 (p. 44); 6th January 1907 (p. 51); 2nd August 1908 (p. 70).
27 Ibid., 3rd August 1908, p. 71.
election in North Leitrim. (He was, however, in jail in early 1908.) When Irish party and Sinn Fein supporters held rival Finea demonstrations in August 1908 - the time of Ginnell’s private debate with Hobson - the party rally attracted 6,000 (though according to the police ‘the vast majority were holiday sightseers’) against Hobson’s 200. Ginnell did appear at the Hobson rally, but actually spoke with Hayden at the UIL one getting, again according to the police, a mixed reception from the crowd.

Ginnell made his mark as a dissident on a national stage in early 1909; he was one of those speakers shouted down at the UIL’s national convention (known afterwards as the ‘Baton’ convention for the tactics used by its stewards), when he tried to move a resolution calling for abstention from parliament - the key ‘Sinn Fein’ demand of the time. In that month he was asked to leave a meeting of the parliamentary party when he persisted in calling for an enquiry into the workings of the parliamentary fund; his diary claimed that he was ‘dragged out of the room and the door locked against me’. Though he did continue to attend parliamentary party meetings until at least June, his breach with the local UIL became final. When in April 1909 the North Westmeath executive censured him by 40 votes to 4, he never attended it again.

In December 1909, the local UIL convention selected Patrick McKenna as its candidate for the January 1910 general election and party-supporting newspapers across the region predicted oblivion for Ginnell. However, Ginnell had by then accumulated a broadly-based coalition of support across North Westmeath and it was the Irish party which was solidly beaten in January 1910. Despite the personal campaigning of Hayden and a number of MPs, it was Ginnell’s supporters who turned out the crowds and Ginnell claimed to have the support of no fewer than 32 local election committees. Ginnell won by 1,993-1,373 votes on an 80% turnout. The nationalists of North Westmeath thus reverted to their normal position since the mid-1880s, of being fractured into warring factions and with Hayden and

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28 Crime Special Branch report, August 1908 (PRO CO 904/118) and August 1908 monthly report of the Westmeath county inspector (National Archives, 3/716 box 14).
29 Westmeath Examiner, 25th December 1909.
30 Crime Special Branch report, August 1908 (PRO CO 904/118).
31 Diaries of Laurence and Alice Ginnell, 11th February 1909 (p 74).
32 Westmeath Examiner, 25th December 1909.
33 Westmeath Guardian, 28th January 1910.
34 Westmeath Independent, 29th January 1910.
his followers in the minority. Ginnell and his followers formed the majority, up to and beyond the Easter Rising.

**Ginnell's Support**

Over the years 1906-10, several strands of support had combined to give Ginnell his electoral victory over McKenna. First above all, Ginnell was undoubtedly the ranch warrior and land radical in Westmeath, comprehensively outflanking Hayden and his allies. As a result, the police were unequivocal that much of Ginnell's support came from 'small farmers and landless men'.

Ginnell's rhetoric was unrelenting, and undoubtedly told against the former Parnellite radical Hayden, now portrayed by Ginnell as the owner of the 'Rancher's Gazette' and of over 500 acres, riding to hounds in his red jacket. Secondly, Ginnell's following was boosted by the strength of the rural labour movement in Westmeath, a county polarised not so much between large and small farmers as between 'large', cattle-fattening 'ranchers' and labourers, with the latter agitating in the 1900s for the redistribution of land, the re-housing of rural labourers and the restoration of jobs driven out of the county by the 'ranches'.

Branches of the Land and Labour Association (L & L) in North Westmeath almost all supported Ginnell in 1910 and William Gillivan of the Walshestown L & L had been a supporter of Ginnell from 1900 on. By July 1910 the police reported that L & L associations, now with eight branches in the county, still appeared to be gaining ground and to be 'pulling against' the UIL.

The Clonlost L & L, under Joseph O'Neill, denounced not only the local UIL but the national leadership, and in particular inveighed against 'Toss Pot O'Connor'. Ginnell’s followers consistently portrayed themselves as leaders of labour and working men. ‘All the working classes and fighting Nationalists’, according to the *Roscommon Herald* in January 1910, ‘are on Mr Ginnell’s side’.

Ginnellite rhetoric undoubtedly mirrored and promoted the ‘class’ basis of much of his popular support in North Westmeath. However, there remained a gulf between truth and verbiage. Thus, barring Gillivan, none of Ginnell’s key lieutenants were ‘small’ men, but

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36 Midland Reporter, 13th January 1910.
38 Monthly report of the Westmeath county inspector, June 1910 (PRO CO 904/81).
39 Midland Reporter, 22nd September 1910.
40 Roscommon Herald, 15th January 1910.
rather came from exactly the same pool of Mullingar bourgeoisie and/or successful farmers and landowners as had produced the leading Haydenites. These included the Mullingar draper and cap manufacturer Patrick Brett, the Mullingar auctioneer James Donohue, the long-standing Mullingar rural district councillors and farmers Christopher Lennon and Joseph O’Neill (also president of the Clonlost L&L) and the county councillor Hugh O’Neill, owner of over 1,000 acres of land.\(^\text{41}\) The ‘labour’ credentials of Ginnellite candidates could also be obscure. In the 1911 county council elections, the Ginnellite champion was the ‘friend of labour’ and Mullingar plumber Richard Mullally, who claimed that he had the support of all ‘artizans and labourers’ because he had ‘at all times paid the highest rates and given preference to Mullingar men’.\(^\text{42}\) When he was defeated by another local employer, J.P. Dowdall, this was ascribed by the *Midland Reporter* first to the machinations of the Midland Great Western Railway, but secondly to ‘the remains of the corrupt labour organisation’.\(^\text{43}\) Clearly, not every labour man in Mullingar was a Ginnellite. Even Ginnellite enthusiasm for labour had its limits. When in August 1913 Lennon appealed to the now strongly pro-Ginnell Mullingar RDC to support the Dublin strike leader Jim Larkin, not one member of the council supported him.\(^\text{44}\)

Ginnell’s support did have a clear geographic bias, in the north of the parliamentary division and in particular, according to the *Westmeath Independent*, in the large villages/small towns of Castlepollard, Delvin and Rathowen.\(^\text{45}\) Delvin was, after all, Ginnell’s home town and his relatives were active in his cause. Support seems also to have been spurred by resentment of Mullingar, and in particular of its ‘clique’ which, it was alleged, corrupted the UIL. Ginnell regularly contrasted the virtues of ‘genuine’ branches of the UIL - such as Delvin - with ‘bogus’ branches manipulated by wire-pullers.\(^\text{46}\) Hayden’s key followers, William Barry (victualler), Christopher Corcoran (grocer), J.P. Dowdall (merchant), Robert Downes (lawyer), N.T. McNaboe (shopkeeper and farmer), P.J. Weymes (wool merchant) and Owen Wickham (town landlord), certainly provided a target for such rhetoric. With Hayden they were relatively well-off men, in trade, the professions and/or land-owning and all were

\(^{41}\) *Westmeath Examiner*, 27th April 1918.

\(^{42}\) *Midland Reporter*, 18th May 1911.

\(^{43}\) Ibid, 8th June 1911.

\(^{44}\) *Westmeath Examiner*, 20th August 1913.

\(^{45}\) *Westmeath Independent*, 29th January 1910.

\(^{46}\) Ginnell outlined his theories of ‘perfect’ and ‘bogus’ branches in *Land and Liberty*, pp.187-195.
prominent in Mullingar’s networking of societies and committees. In the 1910 election Ginnell abused them as ‘the Rabbis’ but they were more commonly attacked, as were their counterparts in many other provincial towns, as the ‘clique’.

Again, however, the geographic split of support in North Westmeath may have been less clear-cut than supposed. In the January 1910 election, the popular vote in that supposed Haydenite bastion, Mullingar, was evenly split between Ginnell and McKenna. Ginnell’s followers also already formed a substantial presence on Mullingar RDC (elected in 1907) which in May 1910 divided 19-19 over whether to send delegates to the Irish party’s national convention. Similarly, support for Ginnell was not monolithic in the north of the county, even in Delvin, where in March 1910 the RDC split only 12-11 in favour of an anti-party resolution.

Ginnell certainly derived support from long-standing, clericalist anti-Parnellites, enemies of Hayden from former days. The most prominent of these were Jasper and George Tully and Christopher Lennon. The Tullys had quickly championed Ginnell in pursuit of their more than 20-year feud with the Haydens, thus providing him with a ready-made press platform. The church itself held aloof from the January 1910 election, but it was Ginnell, not Hayden, who publicly thanked the bishop of Meath, Dr. Gaughran, for this neutrality (which the Midland Reporter had also welcomed). There was, however, no simple, clear-cut reallocation of old clericalist loyalties to Ginnell. By 1910, former leading clericalists such as P.J. Weymes and N.T. McNaboe were allied to Hayden, as was Sir Walter Nugent, the clergy’s candidate for the 1906 UIL nomination and from 1907 MP for South Westmeath. For the bishop, Dr. Gaughran, the political neutrality of the church was quite genuine and he had no desire to emulate the political forays of his predecessors. In reply to an appeal for support from Redmond in March 1910, Dr. Gaughran acknowledged that Redmond’s ‘position’ was difficult, but was most unwilling to pursue an ‘active part in matters political’. He was determined not to interfere in politics ‘except in so far as to safeguard the interests of

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47 Roscommon Herald, 15th January 1910.
48 Westmeath Independent, 29th January 1910.
49 Midland Reporter, 26th May 1910.
50 Westmeath Examiner, 12th March 1910.
religion. This position was maintained right up to the world war and Dr. Gaughran was equally even-handed when he denounced cattle driving (see Chapter 2), making no distinction between either side.

The political neutrality of the church was matched, ostensibly, by that of the Mullingar family most closely tied to the clergy. The leading members of the Shaw family were the brothers Patrick (ironmonger, seed merchant and general store owner), Thomas (grocer), James (draper) and Edward (solicitor). Thomas Shaw, chair of the town commissioners for several years and prominent both in the Holy Family co-fraternity and the St Vincent de Paul society, had been one of the leading backers of P.J. Kennedy in 1900. When another brother, Richard, died in 1910, 30 priests officiated at his funeral, and 27 priests attended his anniversary mass in 1911. The family was wealthy and well-connected. Richard for example left over 500 acres of land on his death at 39 and had been a member of the Catholic Commercial Club, the Golf Club, Poultry Show Committee and the Westmeath Hunt. Between them his surviving brothers, particularly Patrick, Edward and Thomas, were members of just about every society and public committee going. Formally, in the phrase of a later biographical note on Patrick Shaw, they were ‘not associated with any political movement’ until Patrick’s adherence to Sinn Fein in 1921, but their influence and status in Mullingar appeared to rise inexorably as Ginnell’s political position strengthened and that of Hayden declined. The Midland Reporter, never a paper to hold back on its criticisms, spoke well of them, and when in 1910 Thomas and Patrick arranged a deferential address to the Liberal peer Lord Greville and his new wife on their return to the area, incurring the wrath of the supposedly reactionary Haydenites, they were defended by the Tullys against the ‘clique’. Moreover, in January 1911, when six of the seats for the Mullingar town commission were up for election, the Ginnellites contested only five and did not oppose Thomas Shaw. After the election, in which the Ginnellites won four seats and control of the town commission, (the UIL won only one seat and Thomas Shaw the other), Patrick Shaw

52 Dr. Gaughran to Redmond, 11th March 1910, Redmond Mss., National Library of Ireland, Ms. 15188.
53 Midland Reporter, 4th October 1900.
54 Westmeath Examiner, 30th April 1910.
55 Westmeath Guardian, 28th April 1911.
56 Westmeath Examiner, 23rd April 1910 and 29th July 1911.
57 See Sheehan, Worthies of Westmeath, p. 114. Patrick Shaw joined Cumann na Gaedheal in 1922 and was a TD from 1922 to 1933.
58 Midland Reporter, 11th August 1910.
was duly made chairman, to the pleasure of the *Midland Reporter*. More blatantly, it was Patrick Shaw who stood against, and defeated, J.P. Dowdall for his county council seat in 1914, much to the dismay of the *Westmeath Examiner* and the delight of the Tullys. The Shaws’ interests advanced steadily and their ‘neutrality’ was tilted distinctly towards the Ginnellites, even though they epitomised the land-owning, commercial, wealthy, Mullingar-based influence and conservatism against which so much Ginnellite agrarian and class rhetoric was directed.

The rivalries and ambitions of Mullingar traders and shopkeepers shaped other alliances. Patrick Brett had been one of the founders, with Hayden, of the UIL in Mullingar. In the later 1900s his personal project was the establishment of a cap factory in the town, on premises adjacent to the old jail. Only recently established, by 1910 the factory was already struggling and employing only 7 to 10 girls. From April 1910 his landlords the county council (particularly Dowdall, Downes and Wickham, who sat on the ‘old jail committee’), who were keen to redevelop the site, tried to evict him from his premises. A succession of court cases and county council initiatives alleging breaches of the terms of Brett’s lease kept the issue alive - with the factory still struggling on in situ - right through to the end of 1914. The *Midland Reporter* and leading Ginnellites on the county council, notably Hugh O’Neill, were Brett’s strongest supporters. Was it coincidental that from May 1910 onwards Brett appeared regularly on Ginnellite platforms, often punctuating his speeches with at least one reference to the persecution of his business? It appears likely, however, that the county council’s moves against Brett’s factory followed rather than caused his disaffection from the UIL. Certainly his animosity to Owen Wickham dated back to 1906-07 (Brett was then chair of the Town Tenants), when he denounced Wickham as the most extortionate middle landlord in Mullingar. There was also suppressed tension between Brett and Hayden in 1906, when Brett complained about lack of UIL support for the Town Tenants. In 1908 another Hayden

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59 Ibid, 12th and 26th January 1911.
60 *Westmeath Examiner*, 2nd, 16th and 23rd May, *Midland Reporter*, 4th June 1914. Dowdall retained the chairmanship of the county council, despite losing the election to Shaw, after being co-opted back on by his Irish party colleagues.
63 See *Westmeath Examiner*, 5th December 1914.
64 See Brett speaking with Ginnell at Rathconrath on 1st May 1910 (*Midland Reporter*, 5th May 1910) denouncing the efforts of Wickham and Dowdall to kill the cap factory.
65 *Midland Reporter*, 1st August 1907.
66 Ibid. 13th September 1906.
supporter, William Barry, and Wickham had him ejected from a Mullingar UIL meeting because he was said to lack a membership card. It was the spring of 1910, though, which saw the two clearly-related events of Brett’s appearing on Ginnell’s platforms and the initiation of over four years of moves against his business by the county council.

One element of support for Ginnell conspicuous by its silence was that of Sinn Fein. Ginnell’s attendance at the annual Finea rally, and his abstentionist proposal at the 1909 ‘Baton’ convention had both been highly public, but as Ginnell’s split from Hayden widened there was no evidence of Sinn Fein supporters becoming active in Ginnell’s organisation. Thus Mullingar’s Sinn Fein supporters from 1906-07 (who had been centred on a short-lived branch of the ‘AOH Irish-American Alliance’) were absent from Ginnell’s movement in 1909-10. Similarly, none of Ginnell’s key local lieutenants were earlier Sinn Fein supporters. The only prominent Sinn Fein supporter to give public support to Ginnell in his 1909-10 campaign was his friend, County Longford’s William Ganly.

Nor was there any public record of Ginnellites paying even lip-service to formal ‘Sinn Fein’ rhetoric - particularly on the key issue of parliamentary abstention - in their many speeches, and Ginnell’s local rhetoric in the years 1909-10 did not label him as a Sinn Fein supporter. Of course, his speeches contained long passages devoted to the need to revive Irish culture and language, industry, sports and morals, the curse of emigration, the appalling evils of landlordism and English rule, and the need for a strong organisation to win Irish freedom. None of these themes, however, was unique to Sinn Fein and they were also regularly expounded from Irish party platforms. Where Ginnell differed from many Irish party speakers was in the sheer intransigence and consistency of his rhetoric - there was no trace of ‘Redmondism’ and not even lip-service was paid to it. There was no advocacy of conciliation and no praise for English democracy. Ginnell’s fullest local exposition of his views occurred at a rally at Rathowen, Westmeath in late-November 1909, which effectively launched his 1909-10 campaign. The Roscommon Herald hailed his ‘New Fighting Policy’ and showed by

67 Ibid, 14th May 1908. Brett subsequently tried to have Barry and Wickham tried for assault.
68 Ibid, 28th June, 5th July, 27th September 1906; 3rd October, 13th December 1907. The ‘AOH IAA’ leading lights were E.J. Gammons, P.J. English, O.McGovern and T.J. O’Boyle. Gammons was known as ‘a prominent Sinn Feiner’ who was ejected from a Home Rule rally for heckling William Redmond in September 1907. O’Boyle worked for the Midland Reporter, but that paper did not adopt a pro-Sinn Fein stance.
69 Leitrim Advertiser, 30th December 1909.
its headline that Ginnell’s focus was still on the land (‘The Hazel and the Plough’). After the meeting’s first resolution had pledged ‘full and implicit confidence in the Irish Party under the leadership of Mr. John Redmond’, all the remaining resolutions were about the land. Ginnell spoke on the failure of Irish party co-operation with the Liberals, the defects of the new Land Bill, excessive taxation, the need to use ‘the old methods’ of resistance and organisation, the ‘naked tyranny’ of landlordism, the cowardice of emigrants and a call to ‘spoil’ ranches now. He advocated a campaign by local young men to tour the county and plough up ranches and called for tenants to pool unpaid rents with ‘trustees’. Having devoted the bulk of his speech to the need for a land campaign, he moved on to the lack of local industries, the virtues of the ‘Industrial Revival Movement’, praise for Archbishop Walsh of Dublin and finally the betrayal of the Irish party by ‘a few of its most worthless members’ and ‘lick-spittle’ newspapers.\footnote{Ginnell speaking at Rathowen, 28th November. Roscommon Herald, 4th December 1909.}

On the central ‘Sinn Fein’ issue of abstention, which he had last raised at the 1909 national party convention, Ginnell was silent.

As the election progressed, Ginnell varied his appeal only to make more explicit attacks on the ‘cliques’ of his opponents who had, he said, fought him for the last four years in both Mullingar and Dublin. Though Hayden did try to portray Ginnell as a Sinn Fein supporter through his association with the Finea rallies and with Ganly,\footnote{Westmeath Examiner. 25th December 1909.} his \textit{Westmeath Examiner}, on losing, admitted the lack of ideological difference when it declaimed ‘they have preferred a person to principle’.\footnote{Ibid, 29th January 1910.} Why, lamented ‘Observer’ in a letter to the \textit{Midland Reporter} in December 1909, was Patrick McKenna opposing Ginnell? On past public pronouncements their views were the same.\footnote{Midland Reporter, 23rd December 1909.}

The bases of Ginnell’s support were, therefore, far more varied than the simplicities of his rhetoric suggested, and his support was energised as much by rivalries within the local Mullingar elite as by ideological, class and/or geographic challenges to that elite. Clericalists, the Mullingar bourgeoisie and squabbling local antagonists could be found on both sides of the divide. Only the church hierarchy was studiedly neutral. If his ferocity as a land warrior, intransigent rhetoric and dogmatism of personality made Ginnell distinctive and carried him

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\footnote{Ginnell speaking at Rathowen, 28th November. Roscommon Herald, 4th December 1909.}
\footnote{Westmeath Examiner. 25th December 1909.}
\footnote{Ibid, 29th January 1910.}
\footnote{Midland Reporter, 23rd December 1909.}
to local electoral success in 1910, he equally could not have succeeded without an alliance with much of the county's Catholic, nationalist establishment, many of whom had opposed one another, one way or the other, for nearly thirty years.

The Split Cemented

On winning the election, Ginnell called for the ad hoc committees which had supported him to form themselves into branches of the UIL. 74 Although his supporters on Mullingar and Delvin RDCs voted for various anti-party resolutions, Ginnell made no move to set up any organisation beyond the branch level. In the campaign he had pledged loyalty to the Irish party under Redmond's leadership. Of, course, he said, he would take the party pledge if elected. 75 He was always careful to make a distinction between his loyalty to Redmond - 'a capable and shrewd man' 76 - and the 'self-serving cliques' who manipulated the party. 77 Some peace feelers were put out. The Meath MP Patrick White approached Ginnell after the election to see whether he would return to the party fold if invited; the response was 'Oh certainly'. 78 In February, after a press interview by Ginnell in which he said that he could not believe that he would be kept out of the party, 79 Dillon wrote to Redmond: 'I take Ginnell's interview as tantamount to an application for admission & his case might be dealt with on Tuesday'. 80

However, no reconciliation occurred. Ginnell did not take the route of so many predecessors, including P. J. Kennedy in 1900, of first defeating the party's candidate and then taking the pledge to 'sit, act and vote' with the parliamentary party. The Roscommon Herald reported on 19th February that Ginnell was being denied notice of parliamentary party meetings and Ginnell later claimed publicly that he was being kept out by only two MPs, both of whom lived in Westmeath (i.e. Hayden and Nugent). 81 Such a claim is quite credible, but Ginnell himself was hardly conciliatory to his county rivals. Though he called for new UIL branches

74 Westmeath Guardian, 28th January 1910.
75 Ginnell speaking at Castlepollard on 9th January, Midland Reporter, 13th January 1910.
77 See Westmeath Independent 8th January: Midland Reporter, 3rd February; Roscommon Herald, 5th February 1910.
78 Kelly, Laurence Ginnell, p. 85 and the diaries of Laurence and Alice Ginnell, 25th February 1910 (p. 79).
79 Midland Reporter, 3rd February 1910.
81 Midland Reporter, 14th April 1910.
to pool their subscription fees and send them direct to Redmond\textsuperscript{82} (rather than to the party organisation in Dublin), his offer was conditional on the local UIL executive being dissolved.\textsuperscript{83} Ginnell can hardly have hoped that such a public humiliation of Hayden was possible, but he continued to pledge his loyalty to Redmond and in April publicly repeated his pledge that he would sit, act and vote with the parliamentary party.\textsuperscript{84} From February to June a succession of supporting branches called for his readmission, as did at least one South Westmeath branch\textsuperscript{85} and also the executives of the South Longford and South Leitrim UIL.\textsuperscript{86} At the end of April Ginnell sent in the accumulated UIL subscription fees of his supporters, not as originally planned to Redmond, but to the party’s standing committee. The party again rejected this approach and the cheque was returned by Joe Devlin within a week.\textsuperscript{87}

At the end of July the idea was first floated, by Christopher Lennon, of starting a branch of the O’Brienite All for Ireland League in the area. A week later the \textit{Midland Reporter} cited the conciliatory ‘welcome home’ address to landlords Lord and Lady Greville - organised by the Shaws and attacked by the Mullingar UIL - as the first sign that the All for Ireland League might come to Mullingar.\textsuperscript{88} During September the Ginnellites were still debating whether to link up with William O’Brien, again with the initiative in public coming from Lennon.\textsuperscript{89} The idea, though, did not build up any broad support and, given the Ginnellites’ defining commitment to aggressive land agitation and Ginnell’s own historic, bitter hostility to O’Brien and his followers, such a lack of enthusiasm is unsurprising. The issue of allying with anyone else - such as Sinn Fein - was never publicly discussed.

In September, Ginnell tried a last stunt of leading a delegation from the county to ‘attend’ the UIL national directory meeting in Dublin. According to the \textit{Midland Reporter}, the UIL men were frightened of the Westmeath delegates and called for police protection to repel them. According to Hayden’s \textit{Westmeath Examiner}, one policeman asked the ‘excited crowd’ to move along - and they did.\textsuperscript{90} Finally, on 13\textsuperscript{th} October, the Ginnellites abandoned the tactic of

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{82} \textit{Roscommon Herald}, 19\textsuperscript{th} February 1910.
\item\textsuperscript{83} \textit{Midland Reporter}, 5\textsuperscript{th} May 1910.
\item\textsuperscript{84} Ginnell speaking at Kilrush on 3\textsuperscript{rd} April: \textit{Midland Reporter}, 7\textsuperscript{th} April 1910.
\item\textsuperscript{85} Sir Walter Nugent to John Redmond, 1\textsuperscript{st} February 1910. Redmond Mss., NLI, Ms. 15191.
\item\textsuperscript{86} \textit{Leitrim Advertiser}, 9\textsuperscript{th} and 16\textsuperscript{th} June 1910.
\item\textsuperscript{87} \textit{Midland Reporter}, 19\textsuperscript{th} May 1910.
\item\textsuperscript{88} Ibid, 28\textsuperscript{th} July and 4\textsuperscript{th} and 11\textsuperscript{th} August 1910.
\item\textsuperscript{89} \textit{Westmeath Examiner}, 24\textsuperscript{th} September 1910.
\item\textsuperscript{90} \textit{Midland Reporter}, 22\textsuperscript{nd} September. \textit{Westmeath Examiner}, 24\textsuperscript{th} September 1910.
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\end{footnotesize}
seeking readmission to the party fold, but kept the name ‘United Irish League’ (thus, according to Christopher Lennon, still returning to their own ‘vomit’) by establishing an ‘Independent UIL’ executive for North Westmeath.91 Nine months after Ginnell had defeated McKenna the organisational split in the county was formal.

While Ginnell’s revolt took root in North Westmeath, it was far more limited in the south of the county. He regularly had the support of 10-15 ‘UIL’ and L & L branches in the north, but of only two UIL branches in South Westmeath - at Tyrrellspass, where the president, James King, was Ginnell’s father-in-law and at Milltown-Rathconrath, right on the border of the county’s two parliamentary divisions. King had until recently been president of the South Westmeath UIL, but his successor was the Moate auctioneer Eugene Robins. just as fierce a land warrior and ‘labour champion’ as many Ginnellites, but loyal to the Irish party. Robins was not outflanked by Ginnellite agrarian radicalism in the way Hayden had been and remained at the head of the local land movement, assisted by Patrick McKenna who now became UIL ‘national organiser’ in South Westmeath and from 1911 a county councillor. As in the north, the Land and Labour movement continued to spread, but here it was more firmly anchored to the party. When in 1912 the Moate AOH was formed, the Moate L & L (president Eugene Robins) merged into it immediately. The new Hibernian division’s first president was, unsurprisingly, Robins.92

Outside Westmeath, Ginnell’s main support came from County Longford. His association with William Ganly has already been noted, but as Paul Bew has written, Ginnell’s ‘natural ally’ in the Ranch War years had been Ganly’s enemy J.P. Farrell.93 Though Farrell, described by Bew as ‘one of nature’s loyalists’ (i.e. to the Irish party) 94 did not publicly support Ginnell in the years 1910-14, unlike many local MPs he stayed neutral. Invited to Ginnell’s Rathowen rally in November 1909, he missed it owing to a possibly diplomatic illness; his Longford associate Joe Callaghan, introduced as a ‘political prisoner’, attended in his place.95 In the subsequent election campaign Farrell, unlike his Longford rivals John Phillips and Patrick McKenna, took no part against Ginnell. When the South Longford

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91 Midland Reporter, 20th October 1910.
92 Westmeath Independent, 15th June 1912.
93 Bew, Conflict and Conciliation, p. 178.
94 Ibid, p. 158.
95 Roscommon Herald, 4th December 1909.
executive called in June 1910 for Ginnell’s readmission to the party, the lead was taken by Callaghan and Farrell’s chief lieutenant, Frank MacGuinness. In October 1910, Farrell made his only public comment on Westmeath affairs, when he warned Ginnell that to support William O’Brien would mean that he followed O’Brien into obscurity at the next election. After October, with the Independent UIL formed, Farrell and his followers made no further comment on and played no public part in North Westmeath politics.

The Haydenite UIL weakened steadily after the January 1910 election. Though its executive continued to meet, it was now rare for representatives of more than 3-4 branches to attend and only the Mullingar UIL continued to meet regularly. As already seen above (page 73), the number of affiliated, paid-up branches recorded for all of Westmeath in the UIL National Directory minute book fell from 35 in the year to the end of January 1910 to only 16 two years later. Ahead of the December 1910 general election, non-partisan newspapers (i.e. not owned by Hayden or the Tullys) reported that a UIL candidate could not even be found and that Ginnell was likely to be unopposed. Though Hayden and Wickham subsequently organised a meeting to select McKenna, that meeting was interrupted by a telegram from John Redmond telling them to take no action; the telegram was debated for over two hours before it was obeyed. Ginnell was therefore unopposed, but there is no reason to believe that he would not have won comfortably against McKenna.

In 1911, many of Hayden’s lieutenants stood down from their public offices: Weymes as chairman of the Mullingar town commissioners before his replacement by Patrick Shaw, Wickham as member and chairman of Mullingar RDC, McNaboe as member and chairman of the Mullingar Guardians and Downes as member and chairman of the county council.

96 *Longford Leader*, 18th June 1910.
97 *Leitrim Advertiser*, 13th October 1910.
99 *Midland Reporter*, 8th December; *Westmeath Guardian*, 9th December; *Westmeath Examiner*, 10th December 1910.

Ginnell’s was not the only case in which Redmond ordered no action. There was no contest in South Monaghan against another lone independent nationalist, John McKean. Patrick Maume in *The Long Gestation*, p. 114, notes that, ‘even Ginnell and McKean were left undisturbed as the party concentrated on O’Brien and the Unionists’.

100 *Westmeath Guardian*, 27th January 1911.
101 Ibid, 10th February 1911.
102 *Westmeath Examiner*, 3rd June 1911.
103 *Westmeath Independent*, 29th April 1911.
Their reasons for doing so were various, but each one stood down ahead of probable defeat by the Ginnellites. Even Sir Walter Nugent, long a North Westmeath county councillor, stood down, claiming lack of time and leaving his Ginnellite opponent unopposed. As seen, the Mullingar town commission election in January 1911 was easily won by Ginnellites - and the Shaws - and both Mullingar RDC and the Guardians followed in June. The fight was not completely over, though, and the Mullingar county council seat was retained for the party in June 1911 by J.P. Dowdall. The party’s main stronghold continued to be the county council, where loyalists from South Westmeath provided a comfortable majority, allied to the few Haydenites elected, or co-opted, from the north.

The one discernible attempt to rebuild the Irish party’s organisation came in 1912, with the extension of the Hibernians into North Westmeath and the formation of the Mullingar AOH in May. The party stalwart P.J. Weymes presided at the inaugural meeting and the AOH county president was Michael Ronan, who had long been both a UIL land agitator and loyal to Hayden. Ginnell himself was critical of the AOH, as a ‘secret society’, in January 1912. However, it did not expand far and though individual divisions were large, the local police counted only five in the whole county in January 1913 (the comparable police count of both party and Ginnellite ‘UIL’ branches at the time, though many were defunct, was 33). In the north of the county there were only two AOH divisions. Moreover, the Order in Mullingar did not consist solely of Hayden-loyalists. The chairman of the town’s division, T.F. O’Shea (a draper and tobacconist), was a Gaelic enthusiast who had played no part at all in recent disputes. He was not an active UIL man; his last political involvement had been as a Town Tenant with Brett in 1906 and he had been on the platform at the Bulmer Hobson-organised ‘Myles the Slasher’ rally at Finea in 1907.

Though the Ginnellites were effective electorally, the impetus of their agrarian campaign faded away as the level of rural conflict in Westmeath declined (see Chapter 2). If there was continuing land campaigning in the county, it was more that of Eugene Robins around Moate than of Ginnell in the north. From the end of 1911 the number of disputes and agitations was

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104 Westmeath Guardian, 5th May 1911.
105 Westmeath Examiner, 11th May 1912.
106 Midland Reporter, 11th January 1912.
107 Monthly report of the Westmeath county inspector, January 1913 (PRO CO 904/89).
108 Midland Reporter, 25th January 1906 and 8th August 1907.
insignificant compared with previous years. Ginnell’s personal involvement also declined, and while in 1910 he had addressed a succession of local meetings in his call for a ‘hurricane’ of drives, in later years his focus shifted almost entirely to Westminster. He would still return regularly to Mullingar to address his executive, and he did launch one brief campaign in October-November 1912, to secure a moratorium on land purchase annuity payments to offset the damage of foot and mouth restrictions. However, other than this one campaign, his speaking activity at local public meetings, let alone any attempts to incite disorder, became sparse.

In parliament, by contrast, Ginnell was outstandingly active, asking a huge number of questions on matters local and national, voting assiduously, repeatedly tabling private member’s bills to give labourers the right to buy their cottages and, occasionally, staging a single-handed revival of the obstruction tactics of the 1880s and getting himself suspended for breaching the conventions of the House of Commons. In asking parliamentary questions Ginnell was head and shoulders above any other Irish MP. Thus the Leitrim Advertiser reported in October 1913 that in the last session Ginnell had asked 197 parliamentary questions. The next highest figure for an Irish MP, 123, was from the constitutional specialist J. Swift MacNeill (focused on the Home Rule bill). Ginnell’s parliamentary activities were reported at length in the Tully newspapers, and the focus of Ginnell’s political life from 1912 was away from North Westmeath.

Ginnell did, periodically, associate himself conspicuously with separatists and Sinn Fein supporters in Dublin. In June 1911 he was one of the platform speakers at a Dublin anti-coronation demonstration against George V. His fellow speakers included John MacBride, Arthur Griffith, James Connolly and Countess Markiewicz. The police reported that ‘the tone of the speeches was to demand independence and complete separation for Ireland, and denying the right of His Majesty to govern the Irish people’. The Roscommon Herald reported that there were several ‘exciting scenes’. That Ginnell may also have maintained some ties to Bulmer Hobson may be inferred from his repeated questioning, in parliament, on

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109 Roscommon Herald, 16th November 1912.
110 Leitrim Advertiser, 23rd October 1913.
111 Crime Special Branch report, June 1911 (PRO CO 904/119).
112 Roscommon Herald, 24th June 1911.
the 1907 theft of the Irish Crown Jewels, with its allegations of government cover-ups, incompetence and debauchery in high places. When in November 1912 Ginnell named the brother of Sir Ernest Shackleton, the Arctic explorer, as one of the thieves, or in December accused Birrell of covering up the affair to avoid sexual scandal, he was giving voice to allegations already made in a New York press campaign by Hobson.

In Westmeath, however, there was no public association with Sinn Fein supporters, nor were Sinn Fein ideas propounded locally by Ginnell. When the Home Rule bill was published, in April 1912, Ginnell told the Independent UIL executive of his qualified acceptance of it. He would do all in his power with other Irish MPs to amend the bill and if that failed he would still vote for it. Even a crippled Irish parliament would bring to the front ‘the great virtue of self-reliance in the nation’. Three days later he said that the bill answered ‘to some extent the ambition of our lives’. There had to be ‘cordial co-operation’ to get it passed into law and even to pass it without amendment, ‘because even as it stands it would be an improvement on our present position.’ … ‘Let there be no bickering and finding fault with Nationalists who are working for Home Rule.’ In February 1913 his Westmeath executive praised him for his attendance at parliament and for his assiduous voting.

Political activity had slackened off considerably in the county in 1912. When, in April, the RIC county inspector reported that four UIL branches were active, he was referring to the whole county and to all UIL branches, both Haydenite and Ginnellite. By July he would report of political organisations that ‘none can be said to be at all active’.

Cohabitation

By February 1913, the Independent UIL executive was known as the ‘Westmeath Nationalist Executive’, but only its name had changed. It remained a broad nationalist alliance of

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113 Leitrim Observer, 23rd November 1912.
114 Roscommon Journal, 28th December 1912.
115 See Hobson’s account of the Crown Jewels affair. which does not, however, mention Ginnell. in Ireland, Yesterday and Tomorrow, pp. 85-90. Hobson was the Dublin correspondent of John Devoy’s ‘Gaelic American’ and his source was the ex-Parnellite, ex-MP. Pierce O’Mahony.
117 Ibid, 25th April 1912.
118 Ibid, 27th February 1913.
119 Monthly report of the Westmeath county inspector. April 1912 (PRO CO 904/86).
120 Ibid., July 1912 (PRO CO 904/87).
factions and individuals across North Westmeath, united in opposition under Ginnell’s leadership to a not dissimilar but weaker alliance loyal to John Hayden. Ginnell’s followers were still demonstrably ‘parliamentary’ and barring the Tullys (see Chapter 8), supported the Home Rule bill. The defining Ginnellite ideology was not Sinn Feinism but agrarianism and. with the end of the land wars, Ginnell’s relentless agrarian rhetoric had at the least lost its edge. The ideological gulf between Hayden’s and Ginnell’s followers was now infinitesimal and the prime reason for a continuing split into two organisations was the residual momentum of grudges, rivalries and competition for office and influence. In this competition the Ginnellites were clearly the more successful, but politically they gave the appearance, had they not had Hayden and his ‘clique’ to attack, of not having very much to do.

The Ginnellites remained, though, a successful electoral machine. They maintained their hold on the Mullingar town commissioners in each annual election. In the 1914 local elections they retained the district councils and, in alliance with the Shaws, went further and defeated the Haydenite J.P. Dowdall in the contest for the Mullingar county council seat. The old UIL limped along; still only 3-4 branches met at their executive, which in June 1913 had to adjourn its meeting because of poor attendance. The number of fully paid-up UIL branches across the county held just about steady. When an agrarian dispute revived a handful of UIL branches in 1913, these were all in South Westmeath, under the direction of Robins. There was no such revival in the north. The AOH made no further significant progress in the county, growing from five to only six divisions in the two years 1913-14.

The Ginnellites could rely on anything between eight and eighteen parishes and branches being represented at well-attended, quarterly executive meetings. Nevertheless, when they were not fighting elections, the activities of the ‘Westmeath Nationalists’ were also minimal. The Westmeath county inspector in March 1913 commented of political organisations in the county, north and south, that they were ‘generally nominal’, while in August he remarked that ‘all political societies have only a nominal existence’.

121 Westmeath Examiner, 28th June 1913.
122 See Midland Reporter. 27th February, 25th October 1913: 12th February, 23rd April 1914.
123 Monthly reports of the Westmeath county inspector. March and August 1913. (PRO CO 904/89 and 90).
In March 1912, Patrick McKenna had referred fancifully to a 'reign of terror' in North Westmeath and in that year periodic faction fights did occur. In June, the UIL's William Barry tried unsuccessfully to unseat Joseph O'Neill as chairman of Mullingar RDC and in the same month Brett, in attendance at the county council, clashed again with his cap factory's persecutors. However, there were also plentiful signs of peaceful coexistence between the two sides in the years 1912-13. These were relatively quiet, largely election-free years, characterised by the absence of both Hayden and Ginnell in Westminster for much of the time. In April 1912, the Mullingar town commissioners appointed representatives to an Irish party convention in Dublin - Patrick Brett and Patrick Shaw. In May, senior figures of both factions, with the bishop's administrator Rev. Duffy in the chair, shared the platform at a Mullingar Foresters' meeting to review the workings of the National Insurance Act. In January 1913, the Mullingar RDC, chaired by Joseph O'Neill, that earlier scourge of 'Toss Pot O'Connor', unanimously passed a resolution congratulating John Redmond for his achievements. In February 1913, all Mullingar's leading figures collaborated, under the lead of the Shaws, in setting up a fund to alleviate temporary economic distress in the town.

The biggest event in Mullingar in 1913 was the Gaelic League procession, rally and ceilidh of 18th May, visited and addressed by the league's president Douglas Hyde (accompanied by Eamon de Valera). Ginnell, long an active Gaelic Leaguer and on the league's national education committee, made one of his now rare local public speeches, but the rally was very much an all-party affair and all sides collaborated in its organisation. The Hibernians, UIL, Foresters, Gaelic League, National Teachers' Association, Temperance Society, town commissioners and rural district council all turned out, together with 13 priests. Hibernians from across the county processed, led by the Athlone pipers' band, and heard Hyde praise 'that great Order [i.e. the AOH] which had spread through the length and breadth of the world'. Hyde then appealed for a struggle on 'the battlefields of the mind', for Ireland's own

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124 *Westmeath Examiner*, 30th March 1912.
125 *Midland Reporter*, 6th June 1912.
126 *Westmeath Examiner*, 15th June 1912.
127 *Midland Reporter*, 11th April 1912.
128 *Westmeath Examiner*, 4th May 1912.
129 *Westmeath Examiner*, 25th January 1913.
130 *Westmeath Guardian*, 7th February 1913.
131 Kelly, *Laurice Ginnell*, p. 97. Ginnell also became more active in the Irish Literary Society in London, of which he had been one of the founders. Locally, Ginnell had played little or no part in the 1911/12 revival of the Mullingar Gaelic League.
language, books, songs, music, games, tobacco, furniture, clothes and even shoe leather. His audience had, he said, to be self-reliant, but politics had to be left at the door of the Gaelic League and (possibly with his audience in mind) he emphasised that there was no room for faction. ‘Faction’ was certainly set to one side for the rally. Every major figure in Mullingar politics was there, with the exception of Hayden. Hyde’s fellow speakers were Ginnell, Sir Walter Nugent and Dowdall. 132

The emergence of a Home Rule crisis in September-October 1913 (see Chapter 9) appeared, briefly, to galvanise Ginnell locally. The realisation that a significant body of English Liberal opinion was now succumbing to the relentless ‘bluff’ of the Ulster unionist campaign angered him. According to George Dangerfield, he was also one of the friends of Bulmer Hobson excited by the phantom Athlone ‘Midland Volunteers’, which sprang fully armed from the head of the editor of the Westmeath Independent in October. 133 When he met his local executive shortly afterwards he made an unequivocal call to arms. He still believed, he said, that Carson’s followers would not fight, but they had ‘succeeded in alarming a number of timid Englishmen’. It was now ‘common prudence’ he said, ‘for us to be ready if they do renge…it will be for us the Nationalists to adopt and put into practice those rights of rebellion and their rights which Sir Edward Carson has been loudly preaching in Ulster with impunity’. If the long struggle of Irishmen was to be frustrated, ‘we must and will remember what is due at our hands to a cause that has survived fire and sword, pitchcap and jibbet [sic], through generations of privation and effort’. 134

However, neither Ginnell nor any of his followers made any attempt to follow up such bellicosity for several months and the Mullingar Volunteer corps was not formed until April 1914. When Ginnell met his local executive in February 1914 the subject did not come up. 135 For Irish party stalwarts, such a delay was more commonplace and in many parts of Ireland

132 Westmeath Independent, Westmeath Examiner, 24th May 1913. Hyde’s biographers, J.E. and G.W. Dunleavy (Douglas Hyde: A Maker of Modern Ireland (Berkeley, 1991), p. 321) state that Hyde, in a 1912 speech in Mullingar, was close to Patrick Pearse’s position on the use of force. This assertion appears mistaken. First, the speech appears to have been the one made in 1913 and there is no record of a 1912 speech. Secondly, Hyde explicitly told his audience that they were not called upon to shed blood, as four nations of Europe (in the Balkans) had done that year. Instead they were fighting ‘in the realms of thought…on the battlefields of the mind’.


134 Midland Reporter, 23rd October 1913.

135 Ibid, 12th February 1914.
the reluctance of the national leadership to endorse volunteering still provided an effective brake. For example, in Longford town the party loyalist Farrell in October 1913 displayed an enthusiasm for action comparable to Ginnell’s, only to follow this with nearly seven months of silence on the subject (see Chapter 9). In North Westmeath both Ginnellites and UIL men were conspicuous by their lack of volunteering until the spring of 1914, despite the fact the former remained an extensive, ostensibly militant, nationalist organisation operating outside the restraints of the Irish party.

In addition, there was no discernible increase in tensions between the two sides in North Westmeath over the winter of 1913-14. Several different Shaws (brothers and sons, and including Patrick and Edward) chose to contribute publicly to the Irish party’s Home Rule fund in January 1914.136 The Shaws were still ostensibly ‘neutral’, but the contribution to the Home Rule fund made at the same time by Joseph O’Neill (Ginnell’s vice-president on the Westmeath Nationalist executive) was rather more startling.137 O’Neill then went further, not only attending the Irish party’s Home Rule rally in Moate in February138 (Joseph Devlin, Hayden and Nugent were the speakers), but calling on all his fellow Mullingar district councillors to support it.139 In March, the Delvin RDC by 13 votes to 8 passed a resolution praising Redmond for his efforts to obtain Home Rule by consent.140

It was the Ginnellites who took the lead in volunteering in North Westmeath, but only in April 1914 after the Curragh mutiny. The first company was formed, fittingly, in Finea early in the month141 and was followed on 16th April by public calls for action when Joseph O’Neill and Christopher Lennon both appealed to Mullingar RDC for a corps to be formed. Already, however, this call was bipartisan and the Haydenite William Barry strongly backed them.142 The public meeting to form a Mullingar corps, now with the enthusiastic support of all sides, followed only three days later. It was attended by the national Volunteer organiser, The O’Rahilly, with Joseph O’Neill in the chair and the Haydenites Barry, Dowdall, Ronan,

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136 Westmeath Examiner, 17th January 1914.
137 Ibid.
138 Westmeath Independent, 7th February 1914.
139 Westmeath Examiner, 17th January 1914.
140 Midland Reporter, 12th March 1914.
141 Westmeath Examiner, 11th April 1914.
142 Ibid, 18th April 1914.
Weymes and Wickham all firmly on the platform, which pledged all present to resist any invasion from Ulster.\(^{143}\)

The volunteering movement then spread across North Westmeath, as it did across nationalist Ireland, in the months leading up to the outbreak of war. Unity was not always perfect and the two opposing political factions continued to contest the local elections with, as seen, the Ginnellites winning. They also squabbled over who should take the credit for initiating the Mullingar Volunteers. Joseph O’Neill clashed publicly with McKenna over who had chaired the inaugural meeting - himself or Dowdall.\(^{144}\) However, the unity of the local Volunteers did hold, and when the Irish party supposedly took over the national movement in June 1914, Lennon put a resolution to the Mullingar Guardians, passed without dissent, endorsing Redmond’s move.\(^{145}\) On the outbreak of the world war, both Mullingar and Delvin RDCs praised Redmond’s 3rd August offer of the Volunteers for domestic war service in the defence of Ireland.\(^{146}\) All turned out for the county Volunteer rally in Mullingar on 15th August where over 2,500 Volunteers were inspected and the platform party included Sir Walter Nugent, Patrick Shaw, Lord Greville and, making his first platform appearance in Mullingar that year, Ginnell.\(^{147}\)

### War and Sinn Fein

It was Ginnell who in September 1914 broke irrevocably with the consensus of support for the war and from then on was totally associated with the ‘Sinn Feiner’ opponents of recruiting, Redmond and Irish participation. In October, he spoke at a Dublin rally organised by Volunteers still loyal to Eoin MacNeill’s Provisional Committee. For Ginnell, recruiting on behalf of Ireland’s enemy, England, was a betrayal, and everything Redmond and his followers were saying was a betrayal of Ireland.\(^{148}\) Ginnell reiterated his anti-recruiting views in a letter to the *Midland Reporter* in December: Ireland could spare no more young men while the English practised ‘business as usual’ at the expense of Irish lives.\(^{149}\)

\(^{143}\) Ibid. 25th April 1914.  
\(^{144}\) *Westmeath Independent*, 27th June 1914.  
\(^{145}\) Ibid. 20th June 1914.  
\(^{146}\) *Midland Reporter*, 6th August 1914.  
\(^{147}\) Ibid, 20th August 1914.  
\(^{149}\) *Midland Reporter*, 10th December 1914.
There were also public gestures of ‘Sinn Feiner’ dissent from some of Ginnell’s followers in Mullingar. The *Midland Reporter* published another of its long series of polemics against the Irish party in early October. The Tullys, who were also strongly anti-Prussian, argued with some percipience that the Germans had lost their chance to win the war, were now stalemated and would ultimately lose. However the passing of the Home Rule Act was a ‘hoax’ and the men responsible for that hoax (the party) were now going round Ireland in ‘Kitchener’s red coats’ recruiting for the British army. Going to the front was reserved for those ‘mugs’ who had confidence in Redmond and Dillon.Patrick Brett also stood out from his fellow Mullingar burghers. At the Town Commissioners, he alone dissented from their approval of Redmond’s September, pro-recruiting manifesto. In November, he and James Donohue irritated their fellow commissioners by refusing to join in a vote of sympathy for the families of two Protestant officers killed in the war. This prompted the chairman, Patrick Shaw, to call their actions ‘disgraceful’ and William Barry to call Brett ‘pro-German’, while Brett reciprocated by calling Barry a ‘very loyal Englishman’. The next week, Brett wrote to the *Reporter* to deny that he was pro-German and to affirm that his sympathies in the war were entirely with the Allies. He meant, he wrote rather disingenuously, no disrespect to the two dead men, but did want respect paid to the more than 20 soldiers formerly stationed in Mullingar who had already been killed.

The strongest, unambiguous expression of anti-war, anti-recruiting sentiment in Mullingar came from a source that was not traditionally Ginnellite, the church. In early October, the Holy Family co-fraternity heard its spiritual director, the Rev. Hugh Carpenter, preach in the cathedral. He believed that the war was not of Ireland’s making and that she had no direct part in it. A few months ago, Ireland’s blood would have boiled at being told to take the King’s shilling - ‘this criminal betrayal of Ireland’s sons’. The patriots of England stayed at home and captured German trade while Irishmen fought. Ireland’s sons were needed at home to till the fields. He ended by asking the Mother of God to be the mother of those ‘brave lads’ fighting in Flanders. The sermon was picked up by Eoin MacNeill’s *Irish Volunteer* under

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150 Ibid, 8th October 1914.
151 Ibid.
152 *Westmeath Examiner*, 7th November and *Midland Reporter*, 12th November 1914.
the headline ‘Straight Talk by an Irish Priest’. Though this appears to have been a lone outburst, there is no record of any public episcopal rebuke for Carpenter, who stayed attached to the cathedral.

For all these expressions of individual hostility to the war - and Brett’s was ultimately a qualified one - the Ginnellites did not follow their leader en masse. Following the publication of Redmond’s overtly pro-recruiting manifesto in mid-September, it was unanimously praised by the Westmeath county committee of the Volunteers, chaired by Dowdall but including Patrick Shaw and Joseph O’Neill. With only Brett dissenting, the Mullingar town commissioners passed their resolution supporting Redmond’s manifesto - so too did Delvin RDC. The Mullingar Volunteers were reorganised following the split of the movement nationally and certain individuals, none of them prominent Ginnellites (but including the Hibernian T F O’Shea) left the committee. Patrick Shaw and Joseph O’Neill, the latter still vice-president of Ginnell’s Westmeath Nationalists, stayed on the committee. Individual dissidents dropped out of the Volunteers, but no formal MacNeillite Volunteer branches were set up in North Westmeath. Leading figures on both sides of the old factional divide continued to cohabit on the town’s War Distress Committee through to the end of the year.

Even after the outbreak of war, it was, therefore, difficult to discern a real ideological gulf between many of Ginnell’s followers and those of Hayden. Despite the clear break made by Ginnell himself, the factions remained the Tweedledum and Tweedledee of local politics. As already noted, the perception right through to 1916 was that there were no ‘Sinn Feiners’ in North Westmeath. That pattern was not fundamentally to change until 1917, when Ginnell’s organisation was absorbed into the new, nationalist coalition represented by yet another incarnation of ‘Sinn Fein’. Loyalty to Ginnell had, however, endured for many years, and the pre-war factional affiliations of North Westmeath became almost an exact predictor of which pre-war politicians would in later years embrace Sinn Fein and which would go down with the ship of constitutional nationalism. Thus every one of Ginnell’s lieutenants - Brett,

153 Midland Reporter, 8th October. Westmeath Examiner, 10th October. Irish Volunteer, 17th October 1914. Carpenter had been a leading light in the town’s Gaelic League. His fellow Gaelic League activist, Rev. B. O’Farrell, took a different path and served as an army chaplain for the duration of the war.
154 Westmeath Independent, 19th September 1914.
155 Midland Reporter, 8th and 22nd October 1914.
156 Westmeath Examiner, 26th September 1914.
157 Ibid, 4th December 1914.
Donohue, Gillivan, Lennon, Hugh O’Neill and Joseph O’Neill - supported Ginnell and Sinn Fein in 1917-18. Almost all of Hayden’s men - Downes, McNaboe, Ronan, Weymes and Wickham - stayed loyal to their leader. (Dowdall died in 1916 and the Hibernian T F O’Shea, who did embrace Sinn Fein, was never one of Hayden’s lieutenants.) Even Patrick Shaw remained consistent in his ‘neutrality’, rising ever higher to become the vice-chairman of the Sinn Fein-dominated county council in 1920.

Though few local Irish party activists made the transition from the party to Sinn Fein during the war, there was, therefore, significant continuity in North Westmeath politics as a whole. The area’s pre-war divisions hardly changed as political allegiances were re-labelled. Alliances formed in the years 1906-10 stayed in place right through to the War of Independence. In February 1917, the veteran nationalist Tim Healy wrote to his brother Maurice, discussing whether the Irish party could sustain its organisation after the North Roscommon by-election. Healy believed that the party would have more local durability where it had already fought an ‘anti-Party organization’, concluding: ‘Where the Irish take sides they stay on that side.’

Chapter 7: The Aldermen, the AOH and Labour in Sligo Town

The Secret of Labour's Success

The labour movement flourished in Sligo town in the years 1910-14. In those years its leadership passed from a medley of craft unions to the Larkinite, socialist, Irish Transport and General Workers' Union (ITGWU), which organised 'unskilled' labourers and which arrived in the town in 1911. So well organised did labour unions become in Sligo that they won major strikes in 1912 and 1913. Trades unionism spread throughout the town's unskilled and skilled workers and by 1914 the Sligo Trades Council could list among its achievements pay rises of 100% for asylum workers and 50% for Corporation workers, the virtual end of night work for bakers, a successful cabinet makers' strike, action against tailors' work being sent out of town, better conditions for women workers and triumph for the dock workers.\(^1\) Two months later, in April 1914, the RIC county inspector could write that 'the Transport Union is now in complete control of the quays'.\(^2\) This industrial power also found political expression. Labour candidates won almost all of the Sligo Corporation seats up for election in 1913 and 1914. In 1914, according to the historian Arthur Mitchell, their success contrasted sharply with the failure of labour candidates elsewhere in Ireland: 'only in Sligo did labour score a significant success, when a labour man and Transport Union member was elected mayor.'.\(^3\)

Traditionally, the Irish labour movement has been portrayed as increasingly distinct from, and hostile to, the Irish party and as one of the new nationalist political forces which cast the party aside in the years after 1916. This hostility went back many years. Larkin's fellow ITGWU organiser James Connolly, while still in the USA in 1908, proclaimed the political goal of taking 'the control of the Irish vote out of the hands of the slimy seoinini who use it to boost their political and business interests to the undoing of the Irish as well as the American toiler'.\(^4\) Such feelings were often mutual, and John Dillon could thus in 1913 privately describe the founder of the ITGWU, James Larkin, as:

\(^1\) Sligo Nationalist, 21\(^{st}\) February 1914.
\(^2\) Monthly report of the Sligo county inspector, April 1914 (PRO CO 904/93).
a malignant enemy - and an impossible man - he seems to be a wild international syndicalist and anarchist - and all along he has been doing his best to bust up the Party and the National movement.\(^5\)

The Dublin strike and lockout of 1913-14 triggered particular antipathy between the strike leaders and the AOH. AOH men fought strikers over the issue of whether strikers' children should be 'deported' to England, while furious accusations of AOH strike-breaking were also made. A notable bete noire of labour was J.D. Nugent, the Hibernian national secretary and later an Irish party MP. In 1915, Connolly's newspaper the \textit{Workers' Republic} would write of Nugent that he was 'the ready agent of every evil thing that sought to darken the National soul and sully the character of the race'.\(^6\)

Such alienation has been reflected in histories of the labour movement. Thus C. Desmond Greaves wrote that at the 1912 Irish trades union congress there was 'bitter resentment against the policy of Redmond's party'\(^7\) and described 'the alienation of Irish labour' and 'the movement towards an independent [labour] party' from that time on.\(^8\) Even though later writers have portrayed a more subtle labour-Irish party relationship, with increased focus on the industrial, rather than the political, role of the trades unions, emphasis has still been placed on the withering of the old 'Lab/Nat' alliance and the subsequent re-energising of the labour movement, on more advanced nationalist lines, by the ITGWU.\(^9\) In relation to Sligo, Michael Farry's narrative history of the years 1914-1921, while it mentions that individual Hibemians did become 'labour' councillors, essentially treated the labour movement as a phenomenon quite independent of the Irish party.\(^10\) John Cunningham, in his \textit{Labour in the West of Ireland}, wrote of the Sligo labour movement in industrial and social terms. He did give credit to the initial support of the nationalist mayor of Sligo, Daniel O'Donnell, for the ITGWU in 1911,\(^11\) but in contrasting the success of the Sligo quay workers to that of a parallel movement

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\(^5\) Dillon to T P O'Connor. 16\(^{th}\) October 1913. Dillon papers, TCD, f 6740/207.
\(^8\) Ibid, p. 77.
\(^9\) See Emmet O'Connor, \textit{A Labour History of Ireland} (Dublin 1992), which wrote of the withering of Lab/Nat ties from the 1890s as the unions became anglicised and de-politicised (pp. 60 and 201) and of the ITGWU's use of nationalism as an 'enabling ideology' to 'decolonise labour consciousness' (p. 69).
\(^10\) Farry, \textit{Sligo 1914-21.} pp. 7 and 15.
\(^11\) Cunningham, \textit{Labour in the West of Ireland}, p. 152.
in Galway, Cunningham wrote solely of non-political factors: a greater sense of grievance among Sligo workers, a focus in Sligo upon controlling the conditions of work rather than just pay levels and greater organisational support from the national ITGWU. He also noted profound class divisions, concluding that Larkinite trades unionism was quite unacceptable to employers in both towns and that ‘any but the meekest type of trades unionism would have been quite unacceptable to the majority of Irish merchants’. In 1919, W.P. Ryan wrote more graphically that sympathy strikes and the refusal to handle tainted goods were, to employers, on a par with conspiracy and assassination. The press, professions, clerics and nearly all politicians agreed, according to Ryan, that Larkin and his kind ‘should be treated as outlaws’. 

Yet the industrial and political success of labour in Sligo was startling and in stark contrast not only to Galway but especially to the failure of the Dublin strikes of 1913-14. The reasons for this success can be glimpsed from newspaper accounts of the February 1914 funeral of Daniel O’Donnell, proprietor of the Imperial Hotel, alderman and mayor, Sligo guardian, Connaught provincial director and national trustee of the AOH, friend of Joe Devlin and the only speaker from the region at Redmond’s great Dublin Home Rule rally of 1912. The bishop of Elphin, Dr. Coyne, and 19 priests officiated. 1,000 Hibernians, including J.D. Nugent, that ‘ready agent of every evil thing’, paraded. So too, however, did the ITGWU band and John Lynch, the Larkinite leader of the Sligo ITGWU, republican and, possibly, a long-standing IRB man. Lynch, by now himself a member of the Corporation, gave the epitaph to O’Donnell - ‘the greatest friend the workers of Sligo ever had’.

The Lab/Nat Alliance and the Arrival of the Transport Workers Union

It was the Sligo Trades Council which in September 1911 invited the socialist Walter Carpenter (the unionist Sligo Times sneered at ‘this paid English agitator’ with his ‘Cockney accent’) to speak in the town and launch a branch of the ITGWU. The Trades Council had been in existence since 1895 and had pursued a pragmatic agenda of defending the interests of

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12 Ibid, pp. 171-172.
15 Dr. Coyne succeeded Dr. Clancy as bishop of Elphin at the beginning of 1913.
16 Cunningham, Labour in the West of Ireland, p. 160.
17 Sligo Independent, 21st February 1914.
18 Sligo Times, 30th September 1911.
the town’s various craft trades.\(^{19}\) Moreover, it was also closely allied to the AOH and UIL. The council’s president and the man who invited Carpenter, the house-painter Henry Reilly, was both an active Hibernian and the vice-president of the North Sligo executive of the UIL.\(^{20}\) North Sligo’s MP, P.A. McHugh, had been until his death in 1909 a noted champion of worker’s rights, and it was the Trades Council which in 1910 took the lead in raising funds for a memorial to him.

This Lab/Nat alliance was unsurprising, given that for many years the common enemy of labour and nationalists had not been Catholic merchants and employers - of whom there were many - but the Protestant, unionist, commercial establishment which dominated the docks (the harbour commissioners), shipping (the Sligo Steam Navigation company) and the mills (Pollexfen’s). A letter from ‘Disgusted’ to the *Sligo Champion* in 1913 itemised the extent of Protestant commercial and official influence in the town and claimed that Catholics were still oppressed. The following were all claimed by ‘Disgusted’ to be Protestant: the Lord Lieutenant, his deputy, the high sheriff, the resident magistrate, the clerk of the crown and peace, his deputy, the RIC county inspector and district inspector, the senior inspector of national education, both Local Government Board inspectors, the postmaster and his deputy (and at least 10 other GPO staff), the superintendent of the railway station, the harbour board chairman (plus the harbour clerk and engineer), the managers of the Provincial, Ulster and Belfast banks (and most of their clerks), the clerk of the asylum, the clerk of the Agricultural Society and the head of the Model School. For good measure, six magistrates on the town bench were Protestant, plus 90% of the officials at Pollexfen’s Mills and the holders of all the best jobs at Lyons’s drapery emporium.\(^{21}\)

Protestants in Sligo were self-confident, socially active and politically assertive, not only through unionism (though there was only one unionist on Sligo Corporation, Robert Smyllie of the *Sligo Times*), but also though a barrage of ‘ratepayer’ criticism of the appalling finances of the nationalist Corporation. Sectarian, nationalist/unionist antagonism was always close to the surface. When ratepayer objections secured a local plebiscite on yet another parliamentary bill to restructure the Corporation’s finances in 1911, the Ratepayers

\(^{19}\) Cunningham, *Labour in the West of Ireland*, p. 67.
\(^{20}\) *Sligo Champion*, 13th May 1911.
\(^{21}\) Ibid, 22nd February 1913.
Association was called a ‘gang of slum landlords’ by Thomas Scanlan and ‘a gang of narrow Orange bigots’ by John O’Dowd. Just before the plebiscite (the ratepayers lost by 744 to 433), the future alderman and mayor John Jinks brought the sectarian leitmotif firmly to the fore. Publicly. Jinks thanked God that Sligo still had a ‘Catholic’ Corporation and asked, ‘are the Tories in this town to walk upon the Catholics of Sligo?’

The alliance of craft labour and nationalist politicians had been enhanced by the rapid growth of the Catholic AOH in the town in the mid-1900’s. Here, the leading figure was Daniel O’Donnell, an active supporter of the Trades Council and agitator for better labourers’ housing. O’Donnell was assisted by Jinks (post-house owner, undertaker, auctioneer, grocer and publican) and by P.N. White (chemist, bottler of ‘Holy Cross’ mineral water and mill-owner). All three men were seen as ‘strong’ nationalists, occasionally rocking the boat. In 1906/07 they had fallen foul of both the then bishop of Elphin, Dr. Clancy, and P.A. McHugh for being privately over-assertive of lay control of the Catholic AOH. Moreover, White, endorsed by O’Donnell and Jinks, had the temerity to make a public assault on the local church. However, all three men rallied behind the Irish party at the time of the ‘Sinn Fein’ North Leitrim by-election in 1908. They were firmly part of the town’s nationalist, business leadership, whose key figure had for years been McHugh, the owner of the county’s nationalist mouth-piece, the Sligo Champion. The other leading nationalist politicians in the town, all active UIL men, were John Connolly (one of the town’s richest merchants), Thomas Flanagan (provision and coal merchant), James Higgins (owner of several bakeries, groceries and general stores) and Edward Foley (owner of the town’s brewery). Three of these men had at one time or other been mayor of Sligo, while Higgins was mayor in 1910. All four were aldermen (Connolly had been on the Corporation since 1878). The three most influential politicians in the town after McHugh’s death were Higgins, Jinks and O’Donnell.

The unity of the Catholic establishment was, however, fragile in 1911. Jinks and O’Donnell (who was elected mayor in 1911) were increasingly rivals for the mantle of being ‘the next P.A. McHugh’ and McHugh’s death also spawned a division in the nationalist media.

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22 Ibid, 13th May 1911.
23 Sligo Independent, 18th March 1911.
25 Sligo Champion 24th November, 1st December. 8th December 1906; 26th January. 16th March 1907.
Bernard McTernan, manager of the Sligo Champion, left that paper in late 1909 to found the Sligo Nationalist, competing for readers, advertisers and public contracts (though the Nationalist remained a ‘party’ paper, and McTernan was secretary of the North Sligo UIL executive). Tensions among Sligo’s nationalists were building up, with the main disputes relating to renewed labour unrest and the award of public contracts to the town’s newspapers. The summer of 1911 saw a rash of labour disputes, including a national railway dispute and local strikes by gas workers, workers at Pollexfen’s mills and even boys at the Marist School. Secondly, a number of politicians (particularly White, still allied to O'Donnell), persistently attacked the award of advertising contracts to the Champion. In this climate, in September, the Trades Council invited Walter Carpenter to launch the ITGWU in the town.

Nationalist Feuds and Opponents of the New Unionism

O’Donnell, now mayor of Sligo, identified himself with the ITGWU from the start. As mayor, he offered the town hall free of charge for Carpenter’s meeting and chaired it himself, while he, Henry Reilly and Carpenter were the main speakers.26 Despite strong criticism from the strongly anti-socialist (and still anti-O’Donnell) Bishop Clancy27 and from typographical union leaders, several hundred men joined the union which quickly affiliated itself to the Trades Council. O’Donnell soon came under personal attack, and in the best party tradition was ambushed at a committee meeting of the county’s agricultural and technical committee - on 17th October. Here, the pretext for war was the annual award to rival newspapers of the committee’s advertising contract. John Jinks led the case for the Sligo Champion, even though its quoted rate was twice as high as that of any other paper, while O’Donnell argued against. Jinks was supported both by town oligarchs such as Alderman Flanagan and by ‘county’ politicians such as O’Dowd (in the chair) and Peter Cawley, the UIL organiser for South Sligo. Jinks soon called O’Donnell a ‘b.... liar’ and was in turn threatened with ‘a good kicking’. Cawley brought in the issue of ‘labour’ by referring repeatedly to O’Donnell’s ties to Walter Carpenter, asking what O’Donnell had got for chairing Carpenter’s meeting and shouting out: ‘Carpenter! Carpenter! Look at the Nationalist Mayor of Sligo!’ This earned the riposte from O’Donnell that Carpenter was a considerably more respectable man than

26 Sligo Champion, 23rd September 1911.
27 According to the Roscommon Herald, Dr. Clancy said that he would drive the ITGWU out of Sligo ‘at the sacrifice of my life if necessary’ (Roscommon Herald, 28th October 1911).
Cawley. O'Donnell, the 'bushwhacker', lost the vote to Jinks, the 'next P.A. McHugh'. The Roscommon Herald carried the story as 'An Insult to Hibernianism'.

O'Donnell did not, though, lose his grip on the Corporation and it rapidly passed a resolution condemning the insult to its mayor. Moreover, however bitter their rivalry, both O'Donnell and Jinks (with Alderman Foley, Henry Reilly, P.N. White, Bernard McTernan and John Treacy of the town’s new Gaelic Club) turned out to fete the IRB man Major John MacBride, 'that gallant soldier' for the annual November commemoration of the Manchester Martyrs (see also page 120). O'Donnell chaired the proceedings and a large crowd escorted MacBride to his stay in the Imperial Hotel. Jinks and Reilly gave the vote of thanks. It was on this occasion that MacBride said that he did not have a regard for the promises of the English, but also that he 'did not want in any way to hamper the work of Mr. Redmond'. The Irish party would, so far as he was concerned, be given a chance. Of course, if Home Rule failed, other means would have to be considered. The RIC Crime Special Branch report of the meeting noted that 'some of the old IRB party attended the lecture, but were not satisfied with it; they considered he was milder than his name'.

In January 1912 another nationalist/labour fault line opened, this time between the Sligo guardians under Alderman Higgins and the Trades Council. Again it was Jinks who led the charge, angrily objecting to allegations of improper contract-tendering. These were made against the guardians by the secretary of the Trades Council, James (Seamus) McGowan, an advanced nationalist and journalist on the Sligo Nationalist. The row culminated in the guardians rescinding all resolutions ever passed at the request of the Trades Council, including a long-treasured 'fair wages' resolution. Meanwhile, the ITGWU continued to organise, and its local leader John Lynch became vice-president of the Trades Council. Lynch’s standing was if anything enhanced when he was jailed for seven days by the town magistrates. Lynch had refused to put up bail on a charge of intimidation of another quay worker - a charge probably engineered by Arthur Jackson, manager of the Sligo Steam

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28 Sligo Champion, Sligo Independent, 21st October 1911; Roscommon Herald, 4th November 1911.
29 Sligo Champion, 4th November 1911.
30 Ibid, 18th November 1911.
31 Ibid, 2nd December 1911.
32 Crime Special Branch precis, November 1911 (PRO CO 904/119).
33 Sligo Champion, 13th January, 20th January and 17th February 1912.
Navigation Company. O'Donnell chaired the magistrates who jailed Lynch - the mayor declined to stand down even though he was himself an ITGWU member and he emphasised that he was not one of the majority in favour of jailing Lynch. When Lynch was freed, a crowd and bands marched to the Imperial Hotel to thank O'Donnell for his support.\(^{35}\) In the Corporation elections in January 1912 two labour candidates, William Gibbons and Ned Harte, easily defeated two independent nationalists in the west ward. Both the victors were craft union men; Gibbons was a plasterer while Harte, a carpenter, was now president of the Trades Council (replacing Reilly, who had become clerk of the new Sligo labour exchange). Both men claimed that they represented the ITGWU in the election and Harte thanked the AOH, among others, for their support.\(^{36}\)

Nationalist hostility to the new unionism was, however, again manifested with the arrival of no less than James Larkin in the town on 24\(^{th}\) March. This visit moved Bishop Clancy to issue a public letter denouncing socialism and concluding:

I therefore expect and hope that no respectable citizen of our town or county, and no faithful member of the Church, will take part in the meeting at which this man is advertised to speak.\(^{37}\)

The *Sligo Champion* was moved to write its first anti-Larkin leader, denouncing Larkin's wildness and stating that he cared nothing for the men of Sligo. However the paper was careful to state that it did not oppose labour, only Larkin.\(^{38}\) This time, even O'Donnell and the Trades Council leaders did not attend the meeting, which though attracting a large crowd was held outside the town hall.

A range of divisions had been widened in Sligo nationalist and labour politics by the arrival of the ITGWU - merchants vs. workers, AOH men vs. UIL men, town vs. county, church vs. socialists, *Sligo Nationalist vs. Sligo Champion* and Jinks vs. O'Donnell. The nationalist movement in the town appeared to have divided on class lines, with many traditional Irish party leaders taking the side of reaction. Most notably, when a major ITGWU-led strike did erupt in June 1912, the leading UIL aldermen Higgins, Connolly and Flanagan all joined the

\(^{34}\) Cunningham, *Labour in the West of Ireland*, pp. 156-157.

\(^{35}\) *Sligo Independent*, 24\(^{th}\) February, 2\(^{nd}\) March 1912.

\(^{36}\) Ibid, 20\(^{th}\) January 1912.

\(^{37}\) Ibid, 30\(^{th}\) March 1912.

\(^{38}\) *Sligo Champion*, 30\(^{th}\) March 1912.
Employers’ Federation set up by the Protestant businessman Arthur Jackson. Higgins became a vice-president.\textsuperscript{39}

\textbf{Jinks and O’Donnell - Unity Restored and ‘Labour’ Triumphant}

However, this model of nationalist-labour polarisation did not take account of John Jinks. At some stage at the end of January 1912 Jinks made a temporary peace with O’Donnell. By the beginning of February, Jinks was openly nominating O’Donnell for office on the North Sligo UIL executive\textsuperscript{40} and by mid-February was trying, unsuccessfully, to make peace between the Sligo Guardians and the Trades Council.\textsuperscript{41} Thereafter, though he still occasionally sniped at O’Donnell, Jinks was publicly alongside him on the issue of supporting labour. O’Donnell was, without any hint of a contest, re-elected mayor and remained the town’s leading local nationalist politician. As seen in Chapter4, it was O’Donnell who led Sligo nationalists to the Dublin Home Rule rally of 31\textsuperscript{st} March and was the only Connaught platform speaker at that rally (speaking on Joe Devlin’s platform).\textsuperscript{42}

When the dock workers went out on strike in June, in a dispute between the ITGWU and the Sligo Steam Navigation Company, the union was able to rely on consistent support from a substantial body of nationalist opinion led by O’Donnell, Jinks (now an alderman) and P.N. White - all of them still leading Hibernians - and from virtually all the craft unions on the Trades Council. The ITGWU organiser P.T. Daly was sent up from Dublin to run the strike. Daly was emphatically not an Irish party man; he was secretary of the Irish TUC, a member of the Socialist Party of Ireland and of Sinn Fein, a former long-standing IRB man and an alleged embezzler, who always appeared in ‘the black felt sombrero and costume affected by dock leaders’.\textsuperscript{43} Daly, together with Jinks, Harte and Gibbons, led a march out of the town to Rosses Point to support the UIL branch there in stopping strike-breaking.\textsuperscript{44} Most importantly, the \textit{Sligo Champion} came out in support of the strikers, praising their admirable conduct, saying that the stevedores held too much power, noting that the men should not be bilked of their wages by middlemen and demanding a quick compromise settlement.\textsuperscript{45} An ailing Dr.

\textsuperscript{39} \textit{Sligo Independent}, 15\textsuperscript{th} June 1912.
\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Sligo Champion}, 10\textsuperscript{th} February 1912.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid, 17\textsuperscript{th} February 1912.
\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Sligo Times}, 22\textsuperscript{nd} June 1912.
\textsuperscript{43} \textit{Sligo Times}, 6\textsuperscript{th} April 1912.
\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Sligo Independent}, \textit{Sligo Times}, 15\textsuperscript{th} June 1912.
\textsuperscript{45} \textit{Sligo Champion}, 15\textsuperscript{th} June 1912.
Clancy (he was to die in October) made no public comment on the strike, which was over in just over a week with the union winning virtually every concession it had demanded.

During the second half of 1912 and into 1913, O'Donnell concentrated on the still-atrocious finances of the Corporation, on ineffective schemes to raise funds for steam-rolling and housebuilding and on consolidating his power base in the town. When Larkin revisited Sligo in July, Dr. Clancy was silent and Larkin's meeting was this time held inside the town hall, with all the leading Trades Council men and P.N. White on the platform. Tom Scanlan, the MP, indicated his solidarity with labour at a presentation to O'Donnell at the Sligo Trades Club on 8th September; McTernan, Reilly, Harte, Gibbons and Lynch were all present. At this presentation, O'Donnell said that his cause was always that of the worker, that the spoils of the world had not been fairly divided and that they were branded as socialists because they demanded for labour the right to a decent life and a fair wage. Scanlan's contribution to the evening was to claim that he too was a trades unionist as a member of the legal profession! On 8th December, O'Donnell and P.T. Daly were the speakers at an ITGWU meeting at which O'Donnell called for 'one solid phalanx' at the forthcoming Corporation elections, and for more workers to be co-opted onto public boards. At an election meeting for the Corporation in January 1913 O'Donnell, speaking with Lynch, said that his critics accused him of trying to boss the town and promote the Hibernians. Let them say what they chose - he was not afraid of them. He called on the men of Sligo to vote for 'his candidates'. This they duly did and the elections resulted in a clean sweep for a labour-AOH slate which won all six seats being contested. Lynch was elected a councillor, as were two Hibernian proteges of O'Donnell, Henry Monson (a furniture retailer) and Harry Depew (a carpenter and director of the Hibernian brass and reed band). Monson, the vice-president of the town AOH, was particularly close to O'Donnell, who described him as a man 'who has been under my particular care'. O'Donnell's election for the third time as mayor was crowned by a public pledge of friendship and loyalty made by Alderman Higgins. (The long-running dispute

46 *Sligo Times*, 27th July 1912.
47 *Sligo Independent, Sligo Times*, 14th September 1912. Scanlan remained closely associated with Jinks, who acted as his election agent until 1918. Both men had originally come from the same village, Drumcliffe, and the same school class (Hennessy. *The Life and Career if John Jinks*, p. 4).
48 *Sligo Champion*, 14th December 1912.
49 *Sligo Times*, 18th January 1913.
50 *Sligo Independent*, 25th January 1913.
between the Higgins’s Sligo guardians and the Trades Council had been resolved in November.) Higgins, only seven months previously the vice-president of the Employers’ Federation, was hereafter regarded as a staunch labour man; a year later in January 1914, Lynch was so effusive in his praise for Higgins as to say: ‘If it were in my power I would not hesitate to put the crown of Ireland on his head.’

As for Jinks, throughout 1912 he sat on a plethora of public committees and maintained close relations with the senior nationalist aldermen - Connolly, Flanagan, Foley and Higgins. While O’Donnell continued to use the AOH and the trades unions as his main political base, Jinks focused on meetings of the town and North Sligo UIL. He also developed a role as patron of Irish-Ireland initiatives in the town. He unsuccessfully backed John Treacy of the Gaelic Club for the job of headmaster of the Technical Schools in July, after the previous incumbent, a Protestant, had effectively been hounded out on sectarian grounds by O’Donnell. Jinks was vice-chairman of the Gaelic Club from January 1912 and supported a number of meetings to revive the town’s Industrial Development Association. His rivalry with O’Donnell again surfaced at the end of the year and it was he, with Lynch, who spoiled the overall impression of perfect harmony at O’Donnell’s 1913 mayoral election. Lynch went out of his way to attack Alderman Flanagan for aiding and abetting ‘the robbers of Sligo in the past’, while Jinks, pushing the case for the rotation of the mayoralty and, backed now by Flanagan and Foley, first lobbied hard for his own elevation and then withdrew when it was obvious O’Donnell would win. While both Jinks and Foley were publicly pro-labour throughout 1913, both would continue to snipe at O’Donnell over the next six months on issues such as market tolls, the siting of the McHugh memorial and/or the mayor’s pay. Conspicuously though, the extent of Jinks’s support within the wider, county UIL was shown in February when he defeated O’Donnell (who had only attended twice in the last year) for the position of deputy vice-president of the North Sligo UIL by 17 votes to 3.

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51 Ibid, 31st January 1914.
52 Roscommon Journal, 27th July 1912.
53 O’Donnell alleged anti-Catholic prejudice in the Technical Schools, saying that the headmaster, G.H. Smith, should no longer ‘think he is man and master here’ and that he must show more consideration for ‘my co-religionists’ (Sligo Champion, 20th April; Sligo Independent, 4th May 1912).
54 Sligo Times, Sligo Independent, 25th January 1913.
55 Sligo Champion, 8th February 1913.
In the first half of 1913, the defining issue in Sligo town politics continued to be ‘labour’ rather than Home Rule. Local circumstances - the organisation of the town’s dock workers and the jostling among the town’s nationalists to fill the gap left by the death of McHugh - counted for far more than ‘national’ political issues. The town’s Lab/Nat alliance was undoubtedly cemented by there being a Protestant economic ‘commanding height’ to assault. Local figures simply did not speak much about Home Rule at this time, let alone define themselves relative to their allies and rivals by reference to it. Nor was there any significant gulf between advanced and ‘party’ nationalists in the town. The town’s known advanced men and/or Gaelic enthusiasts -

- the linguists Patrick O’Donnellan and John Treacy,
- the new head of the Technical Schools D.A. Mulcahy,
- the linguist, temperance man and chronic organiser of clubs Rev. Crehan,
- the GAA enthusiasts J.J. Clancy and Owen Healy and
- the journalist Seamus McGowan

nearly all maintained close ties to the town’s Catholic, nationalist leadership. Treacy, as noted above, came into the orbit of Jinks, while Donnellan was persuaded to appear with Jinks and O’Donnell on a Home Rule platform in 1912. Crehan was the president of the St John’s UIL branch, while Clancy, the nephew of the late bishop, in February 1913 secured the job, supported by all the leading town politicians, of secretary to the county agriculture and technical committee. Only Healy, a long-standing IRB man, appears to have become relatively marginalised, though McGowan, standing in the Corporation elections of 1913, came almost at the bottom of the poll.

The balance of power in the conflict of Catholic labour and nationalism against Protestant capital was largely resolved by the next, long, transport workers’ strike from March to May 1913. This strike was effectively the second round of the conflict, between the Steam Navigation Company and the ITGWU, which had erupted in 1912. It was marked by its length, its violence and a general disruption of trade in the town. Nationalist political support for the strikers, however, did not weaken and was expressed most vocally by Jinks and P.N. White. Jinks called on his ‘fellow workers’ to stand up and win their fight, and urged ‘a long

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56 Sligo Independent. 13th April 1912.
57 Sligo Champion. 7th March and 25th July 1914.
pull and a straight pull.\textsuperscript{58} He also stressed that as a UIL man he would press the employers to give way to ‘the people of Sligo’.\textsuperscript{59} O’Donnell was quieter, though he did lead a delegation of workers to ‘attend’ on the employers. Many of the strikers’ meetings were chaired by White, and the main speakers were usually Jinks and P.T. Daly, up from Dublin throughout the strike and rapidly blaming it on Orange and Masonic influences.\textsuperscript{60}

The strike was violent and unrest persisted for several weeks after the death of one of the strikers, Patrick Dunbar, who was killed in a fight triggered by strike-breakers brought on to the quays from Liverpool. Subsequent violence included an assault on Colonel Wood-Martin, one of the town’s leading Protestants, attacks on Pollexfen’s clerical workers, and window-smashing across the town. The strike involved seamen, dockers, carters and mill-workers, triggering a wave of sympathy actions when other businesses took delivery of ‘blacked’ goods from the docks. The violence was deplored by all parties, disowned in public by the strike leaders and bitterly criticised by the unionist press. The \textit{Sligo Times} described the sight of ‘women with hatchets’ on the streets, deploring their language as ‘filthy of the filthy’.\textsuperscript{61} However, it did not cause anything like the wave of nationalist, anti-Larkinite rhetoric unleashed months later by events in Dublin. The \textit{Sligo Champion} was admittedly more neutral than in 1912, but the RIC county inspector was wrong when he wrote that ‘the local press of all shades of politics is against the strike’.\textsuperscript{62} While the \textit{Champion} repudiated the violence, it emphasised that recent attacks had not been by the strikers but by ‘irresponsible rowdies’.\textsuperscript{63} It did regret the strike, lamenting lost trade and the costs of all the extra police drafted in. It asked for concessions by both sides, but specifically called on the employers to abandon their right to employ non-union men,\textsuperscript{64} the key union demand. Nationalist papers outside Sligo refrained from attacking the strikers. The pro-labour J.P. Farrell’s \textit{Longford Leader} blamed the violence on the employers’ importation of strike-breakers and asked why the authorities could not put the same energy into protecting Belfast Catholics that they put into repressing Sligo strikers.\textsuperscript{65} Even the rabidly anti-Larkinite Jasper Tully in the

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{58} \textit{Sligo Times}, 5\textsuperscript{th} April 1913.
\bibitem{59} \textit{Sligo Independent}, 12\textsuperscript{th} April 1913.
\bibitem{60} \textit{Sligo Times}, 5\textsuperscript{th} April 1913.
\bibitem{61} Ibid, 29\textsuperscript{th} March 1913.
\bibitem{62} Monthly report of the Sligo county inspector, April 1913 (PRO CO 904/89).
\bibitem{63} \textit{Sligo Champion}, 29\textsuperscript{th} March 1913.
\bibitem{64} Ibid, 12\textsuperscript{th} April 1913.
\bibitem{65} \textit{Longford Leader}, 29\textsuperscript{th} March 1913.
\end{thebibliography}
Roscommon Herald, while he was convinced that Larkin was an anti-national agent in the pay of Dublin Castle, thought the employers had acted with great unwisdom in provoking the strike and attacked Arthur Jackson for trying to bring in English workers. He added, nonetheless, that the entire government of the country, from the lord lieutenant down, backed the strike! The church, in the form of the new bishop of Elphin, Dr. Coyne, made no public statement on the strike, though the administrator of Sligo Rev. Doorly, acting with O'Donnell, tried to initiate settlement talks. The strike ended, again, with victory for the union, which won its key demand of a closed shop across the quays. Union closed shops, with the Corporation itself adopting the principle, subsequently spread across the town.

New Strains in the Alliance.
The Lab/Nat alliance may have withered in Ireland, but the 1913 strike represented in many respects the greatest success of the still-thriving partnership in Sligo. Was this another instance of the Irish party acting as a ‘vampire’ to assimilate and control other movements? Certainly the key, aspiring nationalist politicians - O’Donnell and Jinks - attached themselves and their AOH, UIL and craft union followers to the new mass union. By doing so they maintained both the vigour of their political base and the pursuit of their own personal rivalries. Individual union leaders were in turn only too willing to ally themselves to the party’s leaders in Sligo and worked in close harmony with them, both industrially and electorally, for a number of years. Many of their followers were also members of the UIL and AOH.

Despite this, the key union leaders, whether local men such as Lynch or organisers sent into the town such as Daly, were not party men. The town’s Trades Council came increasingly to be dominated by Lynch and the ITGWU and its rhetoric was resolutely ‘labour’ throughout the period. Even though elections were fought by candidates on a joint AOH/labour slate, they were almost invariably described as ‘labour’, ‘workers’ or even ‘Larkinite’. Other than briefly in August 1913, when he served with Jinks, Foley and Monson on a nationalist committee organising an autumn rally (which improbably discussed getting John Dillon and P.T. Daly on the same platform) Lynch played no part in any party organisation or meeting. The Transport Union neither affiliated to the Irish party nor sent delegates to party meetings.

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66 Roscommon Herald, 29th March and 12th April 1913.
67 Sligo Champion, 16th August 1913.
As elsewhere in Ireland, it set up its own range of social organisations, whether a band, an approved insurance society or Sligo's own 'Liberty Hall'.

One particular impetus to the localism of Sligo politics - the contest of O'Donnell and Jinks to succeed P.A. McHugh - appeared to be resolved at the end of June 1913 when O'Donnell became seriously ill. O'Donnell played no further active part in politics until his death in February 1914. While O'Donnell was incapacitated, Jinks and Higgins took over the running of the Corporation. It was Jinks, as rather more than Arthur Mitchell's 'labour man and Transport Union member' and now regularly supported by Higgins and Foley, who succeeded O'Donnell as mayor in January 1914. However, Jinks did not succeed O'Donnell as leader of the AOH in either town or county. That role passed to Henry Monson, who now ran the Sligo town division and the AOH county board, and in 1914 was elected one of two Connaught regional directors. Monson's main Hibernian associates were his fellow councillor Harry Depew and the new secretary of the town division, Michael Nevin, a young grocer's assistant. Even with O'Donnell stricken, intra-party tensions persisted and at the end of 1913 the police reported 'increasing jealousy' between the UIL and AOH, though whether this was within the town or elsewhere in the county is not clear. Certainly outside Sligo town there was resentment at the extra police costs being levied on the rest of the county because of the town's protracted strike.

Both the Lab/Nat alliance and the loyalties of the Hibernians came to be tested during the Dublin strike and lockout. The Trades Council and Corporation were initially as one, with the former denouncing the Dublin tram company's lockout and the latter condemning police violence, but as the dispute became protracted cracks began to show. By early October a prominent clerical lecturer, Rev. Coleman, was in town publicly attacking socialism and syndicalism. On the county council, 'county' UIL men such as Peter Cawley successfully passed resolutions against Larkinism. Though the Sligo Nationalist refrained from any condemnation of the Dublin strikers and called from the start for conciliation, the Champion wrote that the grievances of the workers did not warrant this level of paralysis, attacked the 'sinister' support of the English TUC for the strikers and opposed any attempt to 'deport' the

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68 Monthly report of the Sligo county inspector, December 1913 (PRO CO 904/91).
69 Sligo Champion, 29th November and 20th December 1913.
70 Sligo Nationalist, 30th August 1913.
strikers’ children to England.\textsuperscript{71} Later comment by the paper condemned the bitter class struggle launched by the union leaders and said that they were guaranteeing nothing but the instability and destruction of Irish industry.\textsuperscript{72} In this respect the Champion was in line with the anti-union line taken by most of the nationalist press in the five counties outside Sligo.

It was the issues of the ‘deportation’ of strikers’ children and alleged AOH ‘scabbing’ in Dublin, rather than insignificant attempts at sympathy strike action in Sligo, which strained loyalties most. In early November, Daly came back to town to address two pro-striker meetings at the new Liberty Hall and at the Town Hall. Lynch was a fellow speaker and P.N. White chaired both meetings. At the Town Hall meeting, attended by 500, White publicly praised Larkin, saying that he would do for capitalists (presumably not including White himself) what Davitt had done for landlords. Daly went out of his way to attack J.D. Nugent. He knew, he said, that he was speaking in front of many AOH members, in the hope that they would see that justice was done. The Hibernians, said Daly, were paying Nugent £600 pa, and for this Nugent should not be supplying scabs to run Dublin trams.\textsuperscript{73} The response of the town’s Hibernians under Monson two days later was, however, to pass a resolution congratulating Nugent on his ‘heroic’ stand against the deportations and his defence of the church in Dublin. The Champion’s headline was ‘Hibernians Protest Against Larkinism’.\textsuperscript{74}

\textbf{The Alliance and Home Rule Crisis}

For all the tensions generated by the Dublin strike, the alliance did not fracture. Its unity was if anything confirmed by the new, external threat materialising in the shape of successful Ulster unionist opposition to Home Rule (see Chapter 9). For the first time in the pre-war period, a national crisis came to dominate political alignments and developments in the town. The first local manifestation of this came at end of November. Unionists from across County Sligo sent an address to a Dublin rally addressed by the Conservative leader Andrew Bonar Law. Monson at the AOH and Jinks at the UIL took the lead not only in criticising the 27 Unionist townsmen who had signed the address, but also in organising what was effectively a

\textsuperscript{71} Sligo Champion, 25\textsuperscript{th} October 1913. This cry of ‘deportation’ related to a plan to send strikers’ children to stay with English families.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid. 15\textsuperscript{th} November 1913.
\textsuperscript{73} Sligo Independent, 15\textsuperscript{th} November 1913.
\textsuperscript{74} Sligo Champion, Sligo Independent, 22\textsuperscript{nd} November 1913.
boycott. The *Sligo Nationalist* wrote of the intolerance and exclusiveness of Protestant traders in the town, who imported assistants from the North and relied in turn on the ‘tolerance’ of their Catholic customers. The *Champion* supported the campaign by listing all the local unionists who had signed the address. Then, at the beginning of 1914, Jinks and Lynch jointly promoted the Irish Volunteers in the town. Through the Corporation, they summoned the first public meeting to form a Volunteer corps. UIL men, Hibernians and labour men all collaborated in the establishment of Sligo’s corps, one of the first in the country, on 1st February. Shortly afterwards, almost the whole nationalist and labour movement of the town came together to pay their respects at the funeral of Daniel O’Donnell.

The Lab/Nat alliance was also quite solid in the January 1914 Corporation elections. ‘Workers’ candidates were elected across the board. Lynch, Foley and Higgins were all elected unopposed as aldermen in what the *Sligo Independent* called the quietest elections in years. In early 1914, the alliance under Jinks was almost as all-encompassing as it was ever going to be. Advanced Nationalists such as O’Donnellan, Treacy, Healy and McGowan enthusiastically promoted the Volunteers, as did Monson’s Hibernians, the Trades Council and the ITGWU. Higgins and Foley were Jinks’s right-hand men on the Corporation. Jinks’s organisation was itself extended in March when a branch of the Town Tenants was revived in the town, run by UIL men, headed by Jinks and with Depew and Lynch as enthusiastic participants. Even the church now had benign relations. One leading cleric, Rev. P Butler had become chaplain of the town AOH and at the new mayor’s celebratory dinner Canon Doorly, the Sligo administrator, said that the church was well pleased with the appointment. Rev. Murphy pronounced that the church and municipality had always got on well and never better than under Daniel O’Donnell. It was at this dinner that Lynch, the new alderman, announced his wish to offer the crown to Higgins.

There was a small if not very coherent nationalist opposition to this united front. If anything it was characterised by hostility to the dominant power of the unions, increasing distaste for the Corporation’s cronyism and alarm at its still ruinous finances, which had prevented any

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75 *Sligo Times*, 6th December 1913.
76 *Sligo Nationalist*, 6th December 1913.
77 *Sligo Champion*, 29th November 1913.
78 *Sligo Independent*, 10th January 1914.
79 Ibid, 31st January 1914.
real progress on plans for new housing or road surfacing. Individuals such as Sam Tarrant, a
cantankerous, 'loner' lawyer and Thomas Fitzpatrick, a chemist, both tended to such views
and were at the least semi-detached from Jinks's machine. In April Fitzpatrick caused an
upset, as an independent nationalist, by defeating an AOH candidate in an aldermanic by-
election. Nor were some of the town's elderly Catholic grandees integral to the ruling
group. One was Alderman Connolly, though he remained on the Corporation and on friendly
personal terms with Jinks, who promoted his cause in the June County Council elections.
Another, Alderman Thomas Flanagan, quit the Corporation in January and failed to be elected
to the County Council in June. If this 'tendency' had a leader, it was the builders' merchant,
councillor and newly-appointed magistrate Dudley Hanley, who clashed with Jinks and Lynch
on a number of occasions in early 1914. Thus it was Hanley, alone on the Corporation, who
opposed Lynch being made a Harbour Commissioner in place of the departing Flanagan,
arguing that the 'labour party' (in the form of Jinks, Foley and Higgins) already had too much
representation. Such opposition was not driven, however, by the issue of nationality and
neither Hanley nor any of the men listed above displayed any 'advanced' nationalist
tendencies at this time. Indeed, Hanley opposed the early launch of the Volunteers in Sligo:
in January he criticised Jinks and Lynch for using the Corporation to launch the Volunteers,
arguing that none of those associated with the Irish Volunteers had won anything for
Ireland. It was presumably such opposition which led the RIC County Inspector to report :
'The formation of this body [the Volunteers] has caused great apprehension among the better
classes of both sides [i.e. nationalist and unionist] of politics'. Lynch's response to Hanley
was more caustic. At least, he said, the Volunteers could give the builders' merchant Hanley
an order to supply wooden guns.

The dominating rhetoric of the alliance in the coming months was that of nationality; its
leading organisation the Irish Volunteers. Jinks and Lynch had started the Volunteers and
Jinks, Monson and Foley now took the lead in attending parades, public oratory and the
promotion new companies, first in North Sligo and later across the south of the county,
Leitrim and into North Roscommon. Throughout the Volunteering upsurge, the town's two

80 Farry, Sligo 1914-21, p. 8.
81 Sligo Independent, 7th February 1914.
82 Sligo Times, 10th January 1914.
83 Monthly report of the Sligo county inspector, February 1914 (PRO CO 904/92).
84 Sligo Times, 10th January 1914.
nationalist newspapers provided voluminous coverage and enthusiastic support. The effect of this was to make Jinks and his associates the leading figures not just in Sligo town but right across the county, as more and more rural companies were mobilised. In the work of forming companies and stump speaking, they were assisted by Patrick O’Donnellan and two young party speakers, James McGurrin, a Leitrim-born ‘orator’ recently returned from the USA and Michael O’Mullane, a Sligo-born Hibernian and now president of a Dublin AOH division. As has been seen in Chapter 4 and will be seen in Chapter 9, the language of the leading Volunteer speakers, particularly Jinks, Monson and O’Mullane, was uncomplicatedly nationalist and made no bones about the future use to which the Volunteers would be put. Their speeches were not those of ‘weak’, constitutional politicians trying to rein in hot-blooded followers, but of men whose nationalist instincts had been aroused by the events of 1914, in Ulster, London and Dublin. As Jinks put it at the end of July 1914, ‘the enemies of our country’ must now feel the force of Irishmen’s protests and while Sligomen ‘were up for peace’, they could be ‘sure that if there was a war [i.e. with unionists] the men and women of Sligo would be at the front’. 85

Cemented by nationality, the burgeoning Volunteers and a sense of crisis, the labour-nationalist coalition in Sligo town held firm for much of 1914. The government’s concession of Ulster exclusion, the Curragh mutiny, the Larne gun-running, the Amending bill, and Bachelor’s Walk did not rupture it. Jinks, Monson, Foley, Higgins and Lynch all voted and spoke together on a range of committees. Jinks and Monson, with Lynch, still backed common candidates for appointments and co-options. In July, the Corporation approved a union closed shop for all its employees. In June, however, Lynch reaffirmed his separate ‘labour’ identity when he called for a formal labour party in Sligo 86 and this was repeated by Daly as late as 17th August, when he called for a separate labour organisation under the Home Rule bill, which he anticipated would soon pass. 87 There were also ‘wobbles’; Depew and Lynch clashed in April over Lynch’s support for Larkin’s offer to stand against Asquith in the East Fife by-election. 88 Later, Lynch was angered when the Sligo guardians co-opted Alderman Connolly to their ranks rather than a labour candidate, Ned Harte (though Lynch

85 Sligo Independent, 1st August 1914.
86 Ibid, 20th June 1914.
87 Sligo Champion, 22nd August 1914.
88 Ibid, 4th April 1914.
thanked those, including Jinks and Monson, who had supported Harte). Neith-
er of these upsets endangered the alliance and nor, even, did the outbreak of world war. When the Corporation debated Redmond’s offer of August 3rd, for the Volunteers to serve alongside the Ulster Volunteers in Ireland’s defence, they were unanimous in their praise. John Lynch, now an alderman and a harbour commissioner, served on the town’s War Distress Committee in August and September, not only with his usual allies but also with almost all the leading Protestants of town and county. As late as 16th September, Jinks and Lynch were still voting together on the Corporation to promote a labour man for the job of steam-rolling clerk.

**War and Sinn Fein - Divorce and Remarriage**

The alliance finally broke up over the issue of recruiting for the war. Following the Irish party’s formal endorsement of recruiting to the British army and service ‘in the firing line’, Thomas Scanlan returned to Sligo on 19th September for what was meant to be a triumphant celebration of the achievement of Home Rule. Instead, heckling and fistfights broke out when Scanlan referred to the empire and was met with the cry of ‘you are a d....d liar Scanlan’. Another voice called ‘to Hell with the Empire’. The heckling was led by Lynch, and his main collaborators were those long-standing councillors and Trades Council men William Gibbons and Ned Harte. Initially, a majority of the Trades Council, with Lynch absent, repudiated their actions, but at the next week’s meeting, with both Lynch and P.T. Daly present, the repudiation was itself reversed. Thereafter, the Trades Council remained under the control of Lynch’s men.

Paul Bew has concluded concerning this incident: ‘In short, the nationalist sub-culture of Sligo labour had made its point and stood its ground.’ However, the Lab/Nat alliance had not been part of Sligo’s nationalist ‘sub-culture’; rather it had been central to the politics of the town throughout the pre-war period. The demonstration on 19th September marked the end of that alliance. ‘Nationality’ rather than ‘labour’ was now the defining issue in Sligo politics. Lynch went on to crystallise his opposition by organising, with Daly, a public anti-

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89 Ibid, Sligo Independent, 4th July 1914.
90 Sligo Champion, 8th August 1914.
91 Ibid, 16th September 1914.
92 Irish Times, 22nd September 1914.
93 Sligo Independent, 26th September 1914.
94 Ibid, 26th September, 3rd October 1914.
95 Bew, Ideology and the Irish Question, p. 121.
recruitment meeting for 120 people in the town on 1st October.96 The number of outright dissidents, however, remained small, though they did include many of the town’s pre-war Irish-Irelanders - Treacy, O'Donnellan, D.A. Mulcahey, J.J. Clancy, Owen Healy, and Seamus McGowan. For some weeks, dissidents and Irish party stalwarts vied for control of the town’s Volunteers (see Chapter 10). The Irish Volunteer newspaper in Dublin, under the control of the MacNeillite Volunteers, claimed that the Sligo Corps was for MacNeill and the Provisional Committee.97 Whether this was a real attempt to defeat the local Irish party, or existed only in the mind of a ‘MacNeillite’ sending ‘Sligo Notes’ to a Dublin newspaper is unclear,98 but a reformed National Volunteers corps under Jinks could not meet until 10th November and on 27th November, Rev. Butler - firmly loyal to the party - reminded a National Volunteer audience of the ‘daring attempt’ recently made by ‘factionists’ to get command of the Sligo Volunteers.99

In the autumn of 1914, the majority of the former Lab/Nat alliance’s leaders remained loyal to the Irish party - in the words of Henry Monson, ‘right behind Mr. Redmond’. Monson, Depew, Nevin, Jinks, Higgins, Foley, P.N. White, Henry Reilly, McTernan, and a minority of the Trades Council all identified themselves with the new, reformed National Volunteer corps, of which Jinks was duly made the president. Monson and Nevin formed a ‘Joe Devlin’ AOH National Volunteer company,100 with similar companies coming from the temperance society and the Foresters. Both of the town’s nationalist papers also remained loyal to the party and, by November, the Sligo Champion had moved to an overtly anti-labour stance, devoting several columns to a detailed expose of the ITGWU’s affairs by James Stanford, its former Sligo secretary. Essentially, Stanford made new, thinly-veiled allegations of embezzlement against Daly as head of the Transport Union’s insurance section. Stanford went on to accuse Lynch and the union of first covering this up and then blaming Stanford.101 The gloves were now off.

96 Crime Special Branch report, October 1914 (PRO CO 904/120).
97 Irish Volunteer, 3rd October and 10th October 1914.
98 Sligo Champion, 21st November.
99 Ibid, 5th December 1914.
100 Farry, Sligo 1914-21, p. 50.
101 Sligo Champion, 14th November 1914.
The effect of this became apparent in the January 1915 municipal elections. There was no AOH/labour slate and labour candidates stood alone. In the north ward the editor of the now defunct *Sligo Times*, Robert Smyllie, retained his single unionist seat, and in the north and west wards three nationalists were easily elected (including Hanley, who was unopposed). In the east ward, the two Trades Council stalwarts and hecklers of Scanlan - Harte and Gibbons - faced two UIL members: Sam Tarrant, who stood on an explicitly anti-labour platform, and Jordan Roche, an auctioneer who represented the Town Tenants. The result was an easy win for Tarrant and Roche.  

An alliance of labour and nationalists had been a feature of Sligo town politics since the 1890s. Its later variant, between the ITGWU and the Irish party, had lasted almost exactly three years, from Walter Carpenter’s launch of the union in September 1911 to John Lynch’s heckling of Thomas Scanlan in September 1914. The achievements of the later alliance were substantial and relied throughout on the active support and encouragement of senior local Irish party figures, initially Daniel O’Donnell, and later O'Donnell, Jinks, White, Higgins, Monson and Foley. At first under O’Donnell, the lead was taken by Hibernians and in Sligo town this organisation appeared vigorous, aggressive and self-renewing throughout. By contrast, the UIL seemed initially to be challenged by the arrival of the ITGWU and contained a number of ‘merchant’ members who were semi-detached from, and even hostile to, the new alliance. However, as Jinks came to commit himself, in his rivalry with O'Donnell, to a pro rather than an anti-labour stance, and as successive town grandees and later the church got aboard the bandwagon, so the UIL itself recovered vigour and its meetings saw the active participation of trades unionists, Hibernians and in 1914 the newly re-formed Town Tenants. In Sligo town there was not a sense that the Irish party was in structural or irreversible decline.

It was the circumstances of Sligo town, and particularly the residual economic and political strength of the town’s Protestant commercial elite, which gave common cause to the Irish party and labour. This challenge generated a vigour and popular interest in Sligo politics that, ahead of the belated breaking of the Home Rule crisis in late 1913, was lacking elsewhere as ‘localism’ again became the driving force behind almost all provincial politics. This is not to

102 *Sligo Nationalist*, 23rd January 1915.
say that such localism was not also a recurring theme in Sligo. Newspaper contracts, job patronage, the Corporation's finances, feuds between societies and, above all, the leadership vacuum created by the death of P.A. McHugh were perennials throughout the period. However, as the Lab/Nat alliance went from success to success, the key leitmotif, of conflict between the town's Protestant minority and Catholic majority, and thus between unionists and nationalists, was played throughout. When the Home Rule crisis finally broke, this conflict intensified further, with the alliance of labour and party activists still holding firm.

Certainly, the new trades unionism had a defined 'labour' consciousness and retained sufficient institutional independence not to fall victim to vampirisation. However, though many labour activists sided with Lynch in September 1914, and thereafter formed a nucleus of Sinn Feiner opposition to the Irish party, the nature of Sligo's Lab/Nat alliance prior to this does not leave any impression that labour was a new, vital force which in due course would sweep away a decayed, conservative and weak Irish party. The success of labour in Sligo would have been impossible without vigorous Irish party leadership. That local party leadership held together as the national movement split after September 1914. However, it was subsequently to fracture under the pressures of recruiting, uprising and government repression, together with the inexorable progress of Sligo Corporation towards bankruptcy. When there was next an alliance of labour and nationalist politicians in the town, it was under the leadership of Sinn Fein.

However, the new alliance looked remarkably similar to its 1911-14 predecessor. When Sinn Fein swept all before it in Sligo town from the beginning of 1917 onwards, its ranks contained not just trades unionists and former Irish-Irelanders, but also a substantial body of Hibernians, shopkeepers, merchants, professionals, Corporation members, aldermen and clerics. Among their ranks were Monson, Depew, Nevin, P.N. White (now an alderman), Rev. Crehan, Thomas Fitzpatrick, D.M. Hanley and, in 1918, Sam Tarrant and Jordan Roche. With Connolly and McTernan dead, only Jinks and Higgins remained consistently loyal to the party. Even Edward Foley 'wobbled' and was seen to campaign for Count Plunkett in North
Roscommon. 103 By early 1917, ‘Brother Hanley’ and ‘Brother Lynch’ were both members of the Sligo town division of the AOH, together with the soon-to-be-expelled Monson, Depew and Nevin 104 and in January 1917 Dudley Hanley became the first Sinn Fein mayor of Sligo. In the case of Sligo town, the old pre-war alliance of merchants, Hibernians and labour had revived and old wine had definitely been decanted into new bottles.

103 So Sam Tarrant alleged in a letter, ‘Who’s Who in Sligo Politics’, to the Sligo Champion of 24th March 1917. Tarrant also related that a new town councillor, Charles Connolly, had sung ‘The West’s Awake’ first at a 1916 recruiting banquet for a Major Murphy, then at a dinner for Redmond when he unveiled the P.A. McHugh memorial and finally at the reception for Count Plunkett when he got the freedom of Sligo!

104 Sligo Champion, 10th February and 24th March 1917.
Chapter 8: 1910-13 - Before the Home Rule Crisis

The beginnings of the 'Home Rule crisis' have been dated variously to the general elections of 1910, the September 1911 launch of the 'Ulster campaign', the publication of the Home Rule bill in April 1912, that summer's Belfast riots, the Ulster Covenant of September 1912 or the formation of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) in January 1913. All or any of these events have been seen as initiating a deepening crisis, in which the issues of Home Rule and 'Ulster's' resistance to it dominated political life and alignments in Ireland. This was a period, according to one of the first biographers of Redmond, Warre B. Wells, in which parliamentary democracy became 'an impolitic fiction' and the Irish lost 'their habit of obedience and respect towards parliament'. More recently, George Boyce has written that in the years 1912-14 there was a sense that constitutional politics were failing, with Home Rulers paralysed and uncertain in the face of unconstitutional opposition, while the exclusion of Ulster was seen as an unmitigated wrong and Home Rule as being in jeopardy. The unionists' inexorable Ulster campaign has been chronicled by many and across Ireland there was certainly by 1914 what David Fitzpatrick has called an 'extraordinary outburst of mimetic militarism', with over 250,000 Irishmen participating to varying degrees in paramilitary organisations. Nationalists, as Fitzpatrick wrote, saw private armies acting with impunity in Ulster and also the propaganda value of backing constitutional demands with the threat of violence. Their response to Ulster developments was a mixture of 'outrage, admiration and envy, culminating in imitation'. According to the Irish party MP and writer Stephen Gwynn, 'the political effect of their [the UVF's] existence was so great that it inevitably called out a counterpart'.

Despite this, studies of nationalist opinion during the crisis have been conspicuous by their absence. Where the nationalist response has been described, the focus has been primarily on

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1 Wells, John Redmond, p. 15.
6 Stephen Gwynn, The Irish Situation, p. 28.
the rich source material of the papers of Redmond and Dillon, outlining their negotiations, fears and setbacks, rather than on the popular mood. This focus on the nationalist leadership is understandable; their reactions (and by inference those of their followers) to the menacing words and actions of unionist politicians and paramilitaries appeared distinctly muted. Trapped by their alliance with the Liberal government, they responded almost passively to events not in their control, believed that the Ulster paramilitary movement was a charade and a bluff, and were then caught in a series of humiliating climb-downs.7

There may, however, be another explanation for the limited analysis of the crisis outside Ulster. If, for much of the period, there was not a sense of crisis among southern nationalists, there would not be a popular ‘response’ to it. Contemporary writers instead wrote regularly of ‘apathy’ and nationalists routinely had to rebut unionist charges that their quiet meant they were apathetic. As late as September 1913, Redmond still had to deny publicly that there was apathy, conceding that nationalists had been silent, or nearly so, but seeing this as proof that they had been ‘law abiding and orderly’.8 Contemporaries often described a lack of ardour rather than a sense of crisis. In mid-1912, the pro-Home Rule English journalist Sydney Brooks confessed that he was sometimes troubled by doubts as to whether the Irish really wanted Home Rule: ‘they show none of the ardour and determination of the Poles or the Finns’.9 In the summer of 1913, Patrick Pearse voiced his discontent with Irish complacency to his former pupil Denis Gwynn (later a historian and biographer of Redmond). Pearse told Gwynn that he would rather see Dublin in ruins than that the ‘existing conditions of contentment and confident security within the British Empire’ should continue.10 Gwynn’s father, Stephen, wrote later of the years 1910-13: ‘In point of fact Ireland had at this time the good humour which comes of prosperity.’11

For nationalists in the five counties the ‘Home Rule debate’, until the autumn of 1913, was with one exception a spectator sport. That exception was the response triggered by rioting in

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8 Redmond speaking at Cahirciveen, County Kerry, ‘Home Rule Notes from the Campaign’, Western Nationalist, 4th October 1913.
10 Denis Gwynn, The Life of John Redmond (London 1932), p. 361; Pearse made this observation to Gwynn ‘fully a year’ before the Great War.
Belfast in the summer of 1912. Political activity relating to any sense of ‘Ulster crisis’ was minimal, and even the flurry of activity sparked by the Belfast riots was relatively short-lived. For long periods there was a paucity of news coverage, oratory and comment, let alone debate, about Ulster or the threat to Home Rule. Mostly, there was little for the locals to contribute until Home Rule had actually been achieved, while there was equally little perception that Home Rule was endangered. Complacency and Stephen Gwynn’s ‘good humour’ could still be seen in Roscommon in August 1913, when the Roscommon Journal wrote: ‘Now at last we rest somewhat contented, with the long lost goal appearing in view.’

Elections and the Balance of Power: 1909-10
At the end of 1909 the imminence of a general election did little to stir political enthusiasm in the five counties. In only one parliamentary division was there a contest - in North Westmeath where the long-standing disunity of nationalists climaxed in a straight faction fight between Laurence Ginnell and Patrick McKenna (see Chapter 6). Here, though Ginnell’s previous flirtations with Sinn Fein supporters were cited as one of his many ‘defects’ by Irish party campaigners, Home Rule - let alone any advocacy of more radical separation from Britain - was not a campaign issue. Elsewhere, more suppressed rivalries and tensions were likewise not about Home Rule. As already outlined in Chapter 2, the feud in Longford between the county’s two MPs, J.P. Farrell and John Phillips, was patched up temporarily. In North Roscommon there was brief speculation, doubtless encouraged by Jasper Tully, as to whether the invisible J.J. O’Kelly would actually stand. In South Leitrim, as noted on page 63, T.F. Smyth used his speech on his unopposed election to attack those who disagreed with his stance on the Cavan and Leitrim light railway. Only in North Leitrim did James Dolan, brother of the defeated Charles (the Sinn Fein MP and candidate in the 1908 by-election) attempt abortively in November to revive the idea of a Sinn Fein candidacy.

The declaration by the prime minister, Asquith, in London’s Albert Hall in December 1909 (that the hands of a Liberal government would be ‘entirely free’ to propose ‘full self-

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12 Roscommon Journal, 16th August 1913.
13 Western Nationalist, 11th December; Roscommon Messenger, 18th December 1909.
14 Leitrim Advertiser, 20th January 1910.
15 Sligo Champion, 4th December 1909.
government in regard to purely Irish affairs”) attracted less local press coverage than the various faction fights across Ireland, notably Ginnell’s in North Westmeath, Tim Healy’s against the party man Richard Hazleton in North Louth and the O’Brienite John O’Donnell’s against Conor O’Kelly in South Mayo, all three of which were won by the ‘factionists’. Such fights and the just-passed Land Act were the main national stories covered in the local press. Admittedly, prior to the campaign, Orange disorder in Ulster had been reported. Several papers carried the story of the August-September intimidation of Catholics by Protestants in Portadown. The most coverage was supplied by the Sligo Champion which displayed a menacing ‘conciliation’ by opining that ‘the King Billyites of Portadown will, sooner than they anticipate, realise Catholic omnipotency and its attendant conciliatory results’. However, no Ulster political discontent, threats or disorder reached the press in the five counties during the election campaign itself. In what was supposed to be the roughest general election nationally since 1892 - i.e. between nationalist factions - the RIC Inspector General could still report ‘less popular interest than in former years’. At the end of 1909, he wrote that there was ‘much excitement among Unionist societies in Ulster’, but added that ‘the Nationalists are sitting on the fence, waiting’.

Nationalists did not, however, have that long to wait and the result of the election - effectively a tie between Liberals and Conservatives/unionists with the balance of power held by the Irish and Labour parties - led to a genuine upsurge of coverage of Westminster politics by the local press. For the first time since the mid-1880s, Irish nationalist MPs held the parliamentary whip hand. The press reported in detail on the Irish party’s ‘No Veto, No Budget’ policy, whereby if the government failed to act against the House of Lords veto there would be no Irish support for its budget. Thereafter, the death of King Edward VII, the resulting Veto Conference between the British political parties and Redmond’s apparent espousal/denial of ‘Home Rule All Round’ were all major news stories. Local newspapers’ ‘own’ correspondents, syndicated reports and items culled from the Dublin, Belfast, London, English provincial or US press covered the unfolding events. In early 1910 in particular, and for the first time since Parnell, Irish politicians were seen to be winning against ‘English’ ones. Though Ireland’s alliance with ‘the English democracy’ was praised, the statesmanship

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Ibid. 9th October 1909.
18 Ibid., December 1909 (PRO CO 904/79).
and firmness of Redmond was repeatedly contrasted with the weakness of the Liberal cabinet. Thus in March the *Westmeath Independent* could write of a ‘Straight Fight’, with Redmond’s determined attitude the one redeeming feature in the present crisis and set against ‘the many equivocations’ of Asquith. The Irish and democratic forces in England wanted a straight fight against the Lords and luckily Asquith’s views did not count, as the Irish held the balance of power.\(^{19} \) T.P. O’Connor summarised the mood in March, writing to the Master of Elibank, the Liberal chief whip. For O’Connor, Redmond had to:

\begin{quote}
    pick his steps very warily owing to the feverish excitement in Ireland - not on the Budget - but on what they consider the bold tactic R has advised. Don’t make the mistake of thinking R’s attitude is due to the Budget. I believe by this time the Irish people are quite well informed about the Budget... But they cling to the Idea that No Veto, No Budget is the true, the courageous, the only policy.\(^{20} \)
\end{quote}

In this period, Redmond’s status in Ireland was undoubtedly high and possibly as great as it was ever going to be. As the Hibernian national secretary J.D. Nugent put it to a Sligo rally in April, Redmond stood ‘in the interests of Ireland and a united Irish race all over the world at his back, master of the situation and controlling the British Empire (cheers)’.\(^{21} \)

Only two local papers, those controlled by Jasper and George W. Tully, refused to give Redmond any credit and instead slated him, after April, for throwing away his control of the balance of power. The deal then made with the Liberals over the budget was a corrupt one, secured on the promise of government jobs and brokered by Jasper Tully’s pet hate, T.P. O’Connor, the supposedly true controller of the Irish party.\(^{22} \) After the King’s death led to a ‘Truce of God’ between the two main British parties and the following ‘Veto Conference’ excluded the Irish party, the Tullys pushed this line repeatedly. The rest of the press followed London events from the same sources as before, speculated on what was going on behind closed doors, called for unity ahead of what they saw as an imminent election and bulled up the prospects of Redmond’s forthcoming US fund-raising tour. However, Redmond’s public espousal in New York in October of ‘Home Rule All Round’, for both the United Kingdom and the wider empire, led to the marked contrast in coverage noted in Chapter 4. The Tully

\(^{19} \) *Westmeath Independent*, 19\(^{th} \) March 1910.
\(^{20} \) T.P. O’Connor to the Master of Elibank, 22\(^{nd} \) March 1910, Elibank papers, National Library of Scotland, Ms. 8802 f18. O’Connor added: ‘As you know, I don’t agree wholly with them in actual conditions’.
\(^{21} \) *Sligo Champion*, 23\(^{rd} \) April 1910.
\(^{22} \) *Midland Reporter*, 9\(^{th} \) June 1910.
brothers' papers reported Redmond's *Daily Express* interview and O'Connor's related Canadian speeches in detail, reprinted attacks on them and themselves denounced a betrayal of Ireland. The rest of the local press was by contrast much more muted and neutral, and not one local paper wrote in support of Redmond or O'Connor. As seen above (pages 113-16), only when Redmond disavowed the *Daily Express* interview did the bulk of the local press take up the issue, denouncing the 'fake'.

Police reports and press leaders indicating that there was only muted local political interest began to reappear in the second half of the year. In July, the Sligo county inspector reported that there was 'no stir in local politics', while in September the *Longford Leader* lamented the current 'laxity and apathy'. Likening the Irish to 'the Jews in their journey through the desert' it wrote that 'our people forget their ideals and past history almost at every moment'. In October the *Roscommon Journal* declared in a leader on the House of Lords: 'The county has never been so quiet as during the past year. Why? Because the people thought that the battle had been won'.

The collapse of the veto conference and the renewal of British party warfare led to a chorus of local press calls for unity ahead of the predicted general election, but coverage of the second 1910 election was more perfunctory than of the first. No seat was contested in any of the five counties, and during the election campaign a succession of RIC county inspectors reported on the lack of any interest locally. The CI for Leitrim reported 'little interest in the Election'; his Sligo opposite number stated that the UIL was less and less active; the Westmeath inspector noted that his county was completely quiet and in Roscommon, the inspector was specific when he wrote: 'The General Election did not cause any excitement in the county and little interest was evinced therein'. Though the rematch of Tim Healy and Richard Hazleton in North Louth was reported, coverage of contests elsewhere in Ireland was small. The *Westmeath Independent* commented: 'Here at home we have little more to do than to wait and see'. This clearly reflected the lack of any local contests and the relative anti-climax of

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23 Monthly report of the Sligo county inspector, July 1910 (PRO CO 904/81).
24 *Longford Leader*, 3rd September 1910.
26 Monthly reports of the Leitrim, Roscommon, Sligo and Westmeath county inspectors, December 1910 (PRO CO 904/82).
a predictable election following all the events of the year. It was assumed that the new parliament would see a renewed ‘coalition’ whose first priority would be a Parliament bill, while Home Rule would have to wait. The unionist Sligo Independent quoted the opinion that the Home Rule bill would not even be tabled until 1912 and that the whole of that year would be needed for it to pass. 28 Jasper Tully said the same and already attacked the delay involved. 29

The impact of Ulster events on the local press was sporadic in 1910. Coverage was mostly focused on the actions of the ‘carrion crows’ in parliament (Ulster unionist MPs) on matters such as the new King’s accession oath. In February though, the Roscommon Herald noted briefly that the cry of ‘Ulster will fight’ had revived 30 and, two weeks earlier, the Sligo Champion carried a piece headed ‘Grave, Silent Fellows’, reporting a London paper’s prediction that Home Rule would trigger civil war in Ulster. The formation of rifle clubs and the transformation of Orange lodges into ‘military units’ were cited. The Champion derided this, saying that Ulster opposition was a ‘cipher’ and ‘bluster’, but adopted the tone of its September 1909 Portadown piece: ‘When the sweeping process is completed we shall have, in that part of the country, Christian toleration, and civilisation instead of bigotry and barbarism.’ It noted that Ulstermen had not died in the ditch when the (also hated) University bill had passed - ‘More’s the pity’. 31

Barring reports on the ‘carrion crows’, the local press was, however, then silent on ‘Ulster’ for over nine months, until December. At that time bellicose threats from unionists during the second election campaign, notably James Craig’s Lisburn speech on the need to train men and acquire arms, did percolate through to the five counties. The Western Nationalist and Sligo Champion both attacked such rhetoric; the latter was also irate about the audacity of Sligo’s local unionists in daring to hold a public meeting and carried aggressive leaders almost throughout December. 32 The unionist Longford Journal reported that ‘there is a strong feeling at present that Home Rule should be resisted with force and sensible, level-headed

28 Sligo Independent, 24th December 1910.
29 Roscommon Herald, 17th December 1910.
31 Sligo Champion, 22nd January 1910.
32 Western Nationalist, 31st December. Sligo Champion, 3rd, 10th, 17th and 31st December 1910. Craig spoke at Lisburn on 24th December.
men have advocated the use of arms!" The paper went on to say that it could not for one moment envisage the religious persecution that would justify such a stance. At the end of the year, the Roscommon Messenger and Westmeath Independent reported a thoughtful letter to a London paper from Stephen Gwynn, saying that Craig, though he was being encouraged by men who would not risk their property or persons, was courageous, not a fool and not a joke. Gwynn predicted that both sides would arm and that one day the arms might go off.

Coverage of Ulster threats spilled over into January 1911. The unionist Sligo Times carried a report on the ballooning unionist clubs, saying they would soon have over 200,000 members. Sir Walter Nugent in Athlone publicly called for forbearance and toleration, arguing that nationalists must let Ulster unionists damn themselves. However, the tone of post-election press coverage rapidly turned to mockery. Henceforth, said the Western Nationalist, 'the “war in Ulster” will be associated in our minds with Rip Van Winkle'. The Roscommon Herald dismissed tales of the North arming as just ‘talk, talk’; the Sligo Champion called stories of Ulster mobilisation ‘clap trap’. The Leitrim Observer reported: ‘It is said the Ulster Orangemen are drilling all over the province, but a Northern farmer writing to the daily press says he sees them engaged only in drilling turnips.’ Had Ulster’s bluff already been called?

‘The usual monotonous story of a peaceful country’ - 1911

After the election-related flourish of Ulster coverage, press interest in both Ulster and the progress of Home Rule almost vanished. Admittedly, Redmond made it clear on 18th January that the whole year would be taken up with private negotiation, while the Roscommon Messenger now expected Home Rule to become law only at the end of 1913. London-sourced reports on the passage of the Parliament bill persisted, but later in the year the main ‘British’ news stories of interest became the many strikes and the passing of Lloyd George’s national insurance legislation.

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35 Sligo Times, 21st January 1911.
36 Westmeath Independent, 14th January 1911.
37 Western Nationalist, 7th January 1911.
38 Roscommon Herald, 21st January 1911.
39 Sligo Champion, 28th January 1911.
40 Leitrim Observer, 14th January 1911.
41 Roscommon Messenger, 21st January 1911.
Biographers of Redmond and Dillon have described the lack of political activity of both men in 1911 and Patricia Jalland has also described the government’s lack of focus on Home Rule in that year. Things were little different in provincial Ireland. After a poorly-attended Roscommon county meeting of nationalists in April, Hayden expressed surprise that the ‘advent of Home Rule’ had not awakened greater interest in the county. His *Roscommon Messenger* wrote in August of the need to fight ‘faction and apathy in the last days of the national fight’. The triennial local elections aroused little interest and the *Leitrim Advertiser* wrote that interest had been ‘never at such a low ebb’. In October, the *Westmeath Independent* wrote: ‘There is a an apathy of organisation all over the county which is simply surprising where there are so many interests at stake.’ As land tensions continued to subside, so quarterly assizes saw a rash of white gloves presented to judges to celebrate their ‘crimeless’ conditions. Reading repetitive monthly police reports at Dublin Castle obviously got to the ‘JBD’, the Under-Secretary Sir James Dougherty, who wrote to Augustine Birrell on one cover sheet in October:

> There is a distinct note of improvement in the more disturbed counties [meaning Clare and Galway]. As for the rest it is the usual monotonous story of a peaceful country.

Concerning Ulster, there was sporadic reporting of the Papal ‘Ne Temere’ decree (denounced by Ulster unionists as invalidating mixed-faith marriages) and on the McCann case (involving the messy end of one such marriage in which a Catholic husband deserted his Protestant wife) from January to April 1911, but only by four papers in total over the four months. More general articles from the London press by John and William Redmond, saying that unionists would not make civil war and that they did not speak for ‘Ulster’, were reproduced even less; in two papers for the first article and one for the second. When John Redmond wrote

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42 Wells, *John Redmond*, p. 95 and Lyons, *John Dillon* (London 1968), p. 322. Both Dillon and Redmond were also injured in car crashes during the year.
44 *Westmeath Independent*, 22nd April 1911.
45 *Roscommon Messenger*, 12th August 1911.
46 *Leitrim Advertiser*, 25th May 1911.
47 *Westmeath Independent*, 7th October 1911.
49 *Sligo Champion*, 4th February; *Longford Journal*, 11th February; *Westmeath Examiner*, *Sligo Times*, 4th March 1911.
50 *Western Nationalist*, 7th January; *Sligo Champion*, 14th January 1911.
51 *Roscommon Messenger*, 1st June 1911.
another London piece in March ('Does Home Rule Mean Rome Rule?') it was reproduced in only the unionist Sligo Times. 52 Though further sporadic reports covered the more outrageous remarks of 'carrion crows' or minor disturbances after the 'Twelfth', until September there was no perceptible sense of a rising tempo of Ulster events. The Sligo Champion in June pronounced that the Orange drum had ceased to roll, 53 while Hayden's Westmeath Examiner in July saw nationalist 'faction' as the main threat to Home Rule. 54 That obsessive factionist and commentator on world and Irish affairs, Jasper Tully, carried no Ulster stories in the Roscommon Herald between January and September.

Increased Ulster coverage from September onwards was undoubtedly triggered by the launch of the unionist Ulster campaign at the end of August and by Sir Edward Carson's rally at Craigavon, with its explicit threat of an Ulster provisional government. Though there was virtually no coverage of the Craigavon rally itself, threats by unionist politicians, scare stories in the London papers and a November arms seizure at Leith were reported across much of the local press. Belligerence and mockery were displayed towards such stories, both in leading articles and by local MPs. While Fitzgibbon responded to Carson's threat of marching to Cork by saying that if Orangemen came 'we would be ready for them (cheers)'; 55 Scanlan said that he thought Carson had no more desire to lead a rebellion than he had to commit suicide by leaping into Lough Swilly. 56 Sectarianism in Sligo town resurfaced when the Sligo Times wrote of a threatened 'creed boycott' against Protestants. 57 The Champion retorted by claiming that any boycott would be of Ulster Catholics by Protestants, but then threateningly argued that if the army could not compel Protestants to accept Home Rule, neither could it compel Home Rulers to accept Protestants. Nationalists would fight 'their ill gained and ill used supremacy'. 58

A recurring theme of press coverage was that the unionist campaign was seen as political, not military. designed from the outset to sway parliamentary and English opinion. Though clearly there were Ulster unionist 'enemies', as the Ulster campaign got under way their

52 Sligo Times, 4th March 1911.
53 Sligo Champion, 17th June 1911.
54 Westmeath Examiner, 22nd July 1911.
55 Fitzgibbon speaking at Williamstown, Galway. Roscommon Journal, 18th November 1911.
56 Scanlan speaking at Glasgow. Sligo Champion, 14th October 1911.
57 Sligo Times, 2nd September 1911.
58 Sligo Champion, 9th September 1911.
chosen battlefield was in England and their weapons were those of speeches, propaganda, ‘lies’ and ‘bluff’. In December, the *Westmeath Independent* noted that there was ‘no appearance of a Northern rebellion’\(^{59}\) and the *Sligo Champion* reported on the ‘utter failure’ of the unionist campaign to shift English opinion. The English cared nothing for Irish unionists now.\(^{60}\) The *Roscommon Journal* dismissively summed up the campaign as ‘a purely artificial adjunct to party politics’.\(^{61}\) However, while in the past two years the local press had responded only sporadically to individual Ulster news stories, there was now an awareness of a continuing campaign against Home Rule. In late 1911, local coverage of that campaign had expanded materially and this coincided with renewed interest in the forthcoming Home Rule bill.

**The Advent of the Home Rule Bill**

Once Redmond had disowned his New York interview and made it clear that Irish Home Rule had to precede any more general federalism, there was, with one exception, minimal debate of the ‘contents’ of Home Rule during 1911; from the beginning of that year, as Redmond indicated in January, the bill disappeared into a drafting limbo. The exception was, however, important: finance. At the heart of this discussion was the degree to which Ireland would have the power to raise and collect taxes, a key yardstick of just how independent she would be. Nationally, books published in 1911 by Tom Kettle, Erskine Childers and J.J. Horgan all stressed the importance of the finance issue.\(^{62}\) Locally, debate was triggered in April by the disclosure of the composition of the ‘Primrose Committee’ set up by the government to investigate Home Rule finances. In Roscommon, Jasper Tully was quickly on the attack, considering it a scandal that the veteran financial expert Thomas Sexton was not on the committee. Two key party-supporting papers, the *Westmeath Independent* and *Sligo Champion*, also criticised the committee’s composition and demanded the maximum financial powers for Ireland. However, both papers then conceded that if the committee had the benediction of the party leadership they would trust it.\(^{63}\) The issue died away rapidly.

\(^{59}\) *Westmeath Independent*, 9\(^{th}\) December 1911.

\(^{60}\) *Sligo Champion*, 30\(^{th}\) December 1911.

\(^{61}\) *Roscommon Journal*, 30\(^{th}\) December 1911.


\(^{63}\) *Roscommon Herald, Westmeath Independent* 15\(^{th}\) April; *Sligo Champion*, 29\(^{th}\) April and 6\(^{th}\) May 1911.
The broader financial issue resurfaced in the autumn, coinciding with the launch of the Ulster unionist campaign. The Dublin Irish Independent called for ‘full’ taxation powers for Ireland and a series of leaks appeared in the London press that the bill would, after all, cede control of customs and excise to the Irish parliament. The Roscommon Journal, Longford Leader and Westmeath Independent all carried this story in October, while the Sligo Champion repeated it in December. John O’Dowd also gave it currency in September, when he assured the South Sligo UIL executive that Ireland would have the same financial powers as Australia and Canada. Despite Dillon pouring cold water on the idea in October and Redmond playing it down as ‘pure speculation’ in November, the story did not die. Jasper Tully fulminated on the subject and Hayden’s Roscommon Messenger was moved to criticise the ‘pitiable spectacle’ of the issue being used by factionists to undermine the bill. However, the story was promoted most by the non-factionist Westmeath Independent, which reiterated that full financial powers were necessary: ‘We do not want to have a gas and water Bill’.

Discussion of the finance issue persisted as the Home Rule bill’s publication became imminent at the beginning of 1912. Certainly, debate persisted in Dublin and the Irish Independent continued to campaign. Dillon wrote to Redmond of his considerable unease about the financial clauses and the Independent’s attacks. Locally, the Longford Leader, saying that bill would stand or fall on the strength of English public opinion, denounced in tortured prose those who continued to demand financial ‘impossibilities’ in order to make the ‘possibilities’ of the bill impossible. However, the Westmeath Independent recanted its previous views early in 1912, saying that a lack of control of customs and excise did not mean that the bill would be a bad one. Discussion of the subject in the local press dropped away after February.

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64 Westmeath Independent, Roscommon Journal, 7th October; Longford Leader, 28th October; Sligo Champion, 30th December 1911.
65 Roscommon Herald, 23rd September 1911.
66 Westmeath Independent, 14th October and 4th November 1911.
67 Roscommon Messenger, 28th October 1911.
68 Westmeath Independent, 9th December 1911.
69 Dillon to Redmond, 14th January 1912. Redmond Mss., National Library of Ireland, Ms. 15182.
70 Longford Leader, 17th February 1912.
71 Westmeath Independent, 13th January 1912.
The impression that Denis Gwynn later described, of a ‘feeling of hopefulness and excitement pervading the country’ in early 1912, is hard to substantiate. The mood reported in the papers had more in common with that described by the historian Charles Townshend, in which Irish opinion was relatively inert and unconcerned. On 6th January, the *Westmeath Independent* asked whether it was because Home Rule was at hand that unionists cited Irish quietness as apathy and a week later its column ‘In Gaeldom’ called on the young to cast off their apathy. On 20th January the paper wrote of ‘a very culpable apathy and indifference’, continuing:

We know the hearts of the people ring as true to the national cause as they ever did, but being filled with confidence in the nearness of a great victory they are apt to take things political easy.

These were not the musings of just one paper. In February, the *Sligo Champion* accused nationalists of taking things too easy, as if Home Rule were a matter of concern for the Orangemen alone.

The great Dublin demonstration of 31st March, for all its size, showed as many signs of a quiet popular mood outside Dublin as of the ‘enthusiasm’ claimed by its organisers. Certainly the event was massive, with the only confusion about numbers being whether 100,000 or 200,000 attended. Sixty-four special trains were laid on and 150 or so bands played. It was covered extensively in almost all the local papers. However, the Roscommon county inspector wrote that very few Roscommon people went to the rally: ‘They care a great deal more about getting land than about government’. Local dignitaries from the five counties went up to Dublin, but only one was a platform speaker, Daniel O’Donnell of Sligo. Several papers carried the embarrassing revelation, derived from the *Irish Independent*’s tour of the Dublin railway termini, that the special trains laid on by the MGWR to carry 6,000 from the midlands and the west carried only 1,369. The *Westmeath Independent* pointed out that no more than 5,000 of the 20,000 around each platform could hear a word being said and, as

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74 *Sligo Champion*, 17th February 1912.
75 Monthly report of the Roscommon county inspector, March 1912 (PRO CO 904/86).
77 *Westmeath Independent*, 6th April 1912.
already noted on page 136, the *Midland Reporter* gleefully reported on the event’s ‘Boetian dullness’.

The demonstration was followed, almost immediately, by the publication of the Home Rule bill. The full gamut of nationalist responses to this bill has been described by historians, ranging from wild enthusiasm to deep disappointment. John Hutchinson has written: ‘As the Third Home Rule was introduced a feverish excitement gripped even the revivalists’; R.F. Foster in his biography of Yeats that ‘mainstream nationalist opinion was wildly enthusiastic’. In stark contrast, J.J. Lee concluded: ‘The measure was so limited that it required all the persuasive powers of the Home Rule leader, John Redmond, to allay the chagrin of his followers’. Alvin Jackson described the bill as the foretaste of a succession of later humiliations, and wrote of a sense of disappointment already having set in. Overall, however, the response nationally seems to have been significantly more positive than negative. The previously nervous Dillon could write to C.P. Scott that there was an overwhelming feeling of

enthusiastic acceptance of the Bill and of whole-hearted desire to make peace with England without any reserves. I confess that I have myself been quite taken by surprise by the universality of this feeling.

Both extremes of response, for and against, could be seen in the local press of the five counties. Hayden’s *Westmeath Examiner* was particularly enthusiastic, hailing ‘A Nation’s Triumph’, financial provisions well in advance of Gladstone’s and Ireland being placed on a par with Australia and Canada. The *Western Nationalist* said that all ‘honest’ Home Rulers would favour the bill, which was an enormous advance on previous ones. It was these two papers, in Mullingar and Boyle, that faced head-on the vehement denunciations coming from Jasper and George W. Tully. ‘This is not liberty’, wrote the *Roscommon Herald*. Nations that had freedom ‘conferred’ on them never thrived - it had to be fought for. The *Midland*

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78 Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism*, p. 185.
82 Cited by Lyons in *John Dillon*, p. 328. (Dillon to C.P. Scott, 19th April 1912. Dillon papers, TCD, f 6843/15).
83 *Westmeath Examiner*, 13th April 1912.
84 *Western Nationalist*, 13th April 1912.
85 *Roscommon Herald*, 13th April 1912.
Reported wrote that ‘this sham Home Rule’ would disgust the country ‘beyond all bounds’. ‘T.P.’ was ‘really selling the people like bullocks in Smithfield to the Saxon.’\(^{86}\) Specifically, they focused on three defects - the finance clauses, the nominated Senate and the lack of powers to redistribute land - and unreservedly condemned the bill as grossly inadequate.\(^{87}\)

In the rest of the local press, the response was far more measured and attempts to categorise the broad popular response as either wild enthusiasm or disappointed chagrin both appear wide of the mark. Thus, Hayden’s second paper, the *Roscommon Messenger*, was relatively terse in calling the bill ‘good’, said that many details would require careful attention and was confident Ireland’s representatives would protect her interests. A ‘very genuine attempt’ had been made to satisfy the national demand.\(^{88}\) The *Longford Leader* was positive and said that everyone in Longford had been ‘well pleased’, but the emphasis of its leading article was to urge over-vehement critics in Ireland not to reject it and to trust the party. The paper’s owner, Farrell, later emphasised that while the finance clauses were still unsatisfactory, there remained enormous scope both to practise financial economy and to develop Ireland’s resources.\(^{89}\) The *Roscommon Journal* was relatively low key and factual in its report, noting Redmond’s support, but a week later thought that an amendment to include powers over the land issue was desirable.\(^{90}\) The *Westmeath Independent*, that earlier opponent of a ‘gas and water’ measure, summed it up as ‘adequate and generous’.\(^{91}\) One Westmeath party supporter, J.P. Dowdall, chairman of Westmeath county council, broke ranks publicly to criticise the finance clauses, but Dowdall appears to have spoken on the subject locally only once and stayed loyal to the party.\(^{92}\) The *Sligo Champion* wrote that the bill, as Mr. Redmond had said, was not a perfect one but not as imperfect as at first sight. The only issues of controversy were the nomination of the Irish Senate and the financial clauses. Ireland would trust the parliamentary party to handle any amendments as it saw fit.\(^{93}\) It was the *Champion* which

\(^{86}\) *Midland Reporter*, 11\(^{th}\) and 18\(^{th}\) April 1912.

\(^{87}\) *Roscommon Herald*, 20\(^{th}\) April 1912.

\(^{88}\) *Roscommon Messenger*, 13\(^{th}\) April 1912.

\(^{89}\) *Longford Leader*, 13\(^{th}\) and 27\(^{th}\) April 1912.

\(^{90}\) *Roscommon Journal*, 13\(^{th}\) and 20\(^{th}\) April 1912.

\(^{91}\) *Westmeath Independent*, 13\(^{th}\) April 1912.

\(^{92}\) *Midland Reporter*, 18\(^{th}\) and 25\(^{th}\) April 1912. Dowdall presumably attended the General Council of County Councils meeting which later embarrassed Redmond by criticising the bill’s finance clauses.

\(^{93}\) *Sligo Champion*, 27\(^{th}\) April 1912.
epitomised the generally positive but pragmatic (rather than rapturous) response to the bill, seeing it as ‘far and away the best measure we have ever had a chance of obtaining’.  

Of the party’s opponents, the local unionist press was strongly critical and, as already seen, Jasper Tully’s two papers were categorical in their denunciations. However, Tully was quite alone in the five counties in voicing total nationalist opposition. As noted in Chapter 6, even his closest ally, Laurence Ginnell, was equivocal in his reception. Just after the bill was published, Ginnell met with his Independent UIL executive in Mullingar. Like Tully he attacked the provisions for finance, the Senate and land, and on the last of these said that a parliament without adequate powers would be a ‘hopeless object of contempt’. (He also said that a nation with no power to arm her sons was a nation in slavery.) But, he then went on, he would do all in his power with other Irish MPs to amend the bill and if that failed he would still vote for it. It was three days later that he pledged ‘cordial co-operation’ to get the bill passed into law and called for ‘no bickering and finding fault with Nationalists who are working for Home Rule’.

There was, therefore, considerable local interest in the publication of the bill, but the overall response was rather more prosaic than could be associated with any great sense of excitement, let alone crisis. In addition, with the exception of Ginnell’s reference to the right to carry arms, discussion of its contents had concentrated solely on the issues of finance, the Senate and land. None of its many other restrictions on Irish freedom of action received any public attention. By May, debate on the contents of the bill had almost vanished and coverage had shifted to the practicalities of its parliamentary progress. Interest subsided and at the beginning of May the Roscommon RIC county inspector was already writing: ‘The Irish Government is not much discussed by the people who seem to care little where Parliament is if only they could get the land’. A month later, the Inspector General wrote that ‘outside

94 Ibid, 13th April 1912.
95 Longford Independent, 20th April; Westmeath Examiners, 27th April 1912.
96 Midland Reporter, 25th April 1912.
97 See O’Day. Irish Home Rule. pp. 248-50. The Irish parliament would have no jurisdiction over matters of war and peace, the armed forces, the police (for six years), pensions, national insurance, Post Office savings or public loans, as well as having none over customs and excise or land legislation. A judicial committee of the Privy Council could vet all Irish-made laws and the Lord Lieutenant also retained a veto. A Joint Exchequer Board would have only two Irish representatives against five British.
98 Monthly report of the Roscommon county inspector, April 1912 (PRO CO 904/86).
Ulster the measure appears to be regarded with apathy’, citing in his support reports from Kerry, Kilkenny, Queen’s County, Mayo, North Tipperary and Roscommon.99

**Resistance to the Bill and the Ulster Campaign - 1912**

The local press, from the autumn of 1911, had begun to cover the prolonged Ulster unionist campaign against Home Rule and during 1912 its aggregate level of coverage was far higher than in preceding years. The key events of the Ulster campaign were all reported, but to hugely varying degrees. They included the upsurge in drilling over the winter of 1911-12, the Ulster Hall crisis of February, the great rallies at the Balmoral Show Grounds in April and Blenheim Palace in July (with Bonar Law’s distinctly unconstitutional language), the Castledawson riot in June, the Belfast riots and shipyard expulsions and finally the Ulster Covenant. Four events were covered in considerable detail, three of them in Ulster (the Ulster Hall, the Belfast riots and the Covenant) and the fourth in parliament (a ‘snap vote’ defeat of the Home Rule bill’s finance clauses in November). Others were barely mentioned in passing.

What is clear from the local press’s coverage of events in 1912 is that there was no sense of a mounting crisis in which each event cast a darker pall than the last. Nor was there a sense of an impending Ulster military juggernaut, getting larger all the time. Instead, if Ulster events were seen as part of a pattern, that pattern was one of a purely political campaign to sway, threaten, lie to and bluff ‘English’ opinion, so that the government’s cohesion and/or Home Rule’s parliamentary and electoral support would crack.100 As each event occurred, so its capacity to change English opinion was assessed and, as it was perceived not to have worked, dismissed. Only in July and August, with the crisis caused by direct, physical attacks on Ulster Catholics, did this pattern not apply.

**The Ulster Hall**

In January and February 1912, Winston Churchill was forced by Orange Order threats to back down from speaking, with Redmond, at a political rally on unionist territory in the Ulster

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100 Maume in *The Long Gestation* writes that the Irish party’s leaders saw the Ulster campaign as a bluff to unnerve English opinion, as the only issue that could unite Tories demoralised by defeat and divided by Tariff Reform, and as a defence of privilege. The campaign was in many respects ‘a triumph of well-organised publicity’. See pp. 131-2.
Hall, Belfast. This was the first great 'set-piece' of local press coverage, with almost every paper carrying the story. Tension first mounted as Orange threats to disrupt or prevent the rally were made and then subsided as Churchill changed his plans. The reported purpose of this 'thuggish' Orange stunt was to scare English opinion, and it was seen as backfiring by instead alienating support. In Reynolds's Newspaper Redmond dismissed 'Orange bellowings' as 'simply insolent bluff' and the Western Nationalist leader, 'The Orange Drum Burst’, was typical, with its emphasis on the loss of English support for Ulster. Even unionist and independent papers were sceptical. The Longford Independent asked whether the Orange dog had the courage to bite as well as bark - 'It is very doubtful' - while the Sligo Times believed that though the Orangemen were not merely bluffing, the threat was 'not the wisest possible' and gave ammunition to the English Liberals. The exception to all this was, predictably, Jasper Tully, who believed that the crisis had been provoked deliberately by Churchill, in order to pose as a hero defying Ulster bullies and thus disguise a climb-down on the financial clauses of the bill. Once Churchill moved the meeting away from the hall, Tully then had his cake and ate it by denouncing this 'shameful surrender'. The overall response was, though, summarised by the Westmeath Independent. In a leader, 'As Good As Won - Home Rule', it praised Churchill's speech and pronounced that 'the Orange opposition has broken its back'.

The Belfast Riots

That the next major burst of reporting on Ulster did not occur until July is itself significant. For over five months, events that received only perfunctory coverage in less than a handful of papers included the drilling upsurge, the Balmoral Show Grounds demonstration and the Castledawson fracas and arrests; nor was there any coverage of Ulster responses to the publication of the Home Rule bill. Only two papers covered the Balmoral rally, and for these two, the Sligo Champion and Sligo Independent, the news angle was not what was said but the attendance of the Sligo unionist, Colonel Wood-Martin, 100 or so Sligo men and the YMCA

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101 Roscommon Messenger, 27th January 1912.
102 Western Nationalist, 10th February 1912.
103 Longford Independent, Sligo Times, 27th January 1912.
104 Roscommon Herald, 27th January; Midland Reporter, 25th January, 1st February 1912.
105 Westmeath Independent, 10th February 1912.
106 At Castledawson near Londonderry, a Protestant Sunday school outing was caught up in a fight on 29th June with members of a Hibernian band. The fight escalated into a more general melee and the attack on children was denounced across the Ulster unionist press. Twenty-three Hibernians were later tried and convicted, while seven Protestants were tried and acquitted. See Bew. Ideology and the Irish Question, pp. 56-9.
brass band. The *Champion*'s lurid headline was ‘Sligo Orangemen on the Rampage’.\(^{107}\)

There was virtually no mention of Castledawson, not just in the party-supporting press, but also in the unionist and ‘Tully’ papers. The Home Rule-related events most covered - i.e. in three to four papers for each - were the June parliamentary defeat of the Agar Robartes amendment to exclude Ulster from Home Rule (dismissed as a failed tactic to kill the bill), and a visit by Asquith to Dublin in July.

It took the Belfast riots and expulsions of Catholic workers significantly to re-ignite local press interest. This was comprehensive over several weeks, during which the papers wrote of attacks on Catholics and the sufferings of those expelled. This time, the newspapers reported not just the Ulster events, but actions being taken in nationalist Ireland in response to them. For the first time, Ulster events were not just a spectator sport. Local responses included raising relief funds, boycotting Ulster traders and, to a much lesser extent, threatening reprisals and calling for rifle clubs. Far and away the most common was the first. Newspapers reported a plethora of ad hoc relief funds and public bodies resolving to support the dispossessed. In addition, a widespread if imperfect boycott of Belfast goods took place, only petering out in February 1913.\(^{108}\) In the five counties, the boycott was widely reported and promoted by figures as diverse as Fitzgibbon in Castlerea,\(^ {109}\) Jinks in Sligo,\(^ {110}\) Farrell’s lieutenant Frank MacGuinness in Longford\(^ {111}\) and Father Michael O’Flanagan in Roscommon, who preached in the Sacred Heart church that: ‘The time for retaliation has come’.\(^ {112}\) The full impact of the boycott cannot be gauged. Police reports indicated that though the AOH nationally may have circulated a list of Belfast-owned firms, that list was later disowned and the boycott was not co-ordinated.\(^ {113}\)

Discussion of reprisals and rifle clubs was much less commonplace. The *Western Nationalist* threatened the former, in early July, pointing out that vacant jobs in the Belfast shipyards could be filled by southern unionists who could no longer live in the south under Home

\(^{107}\) *Sligo Independent*, 13\(^{th}\) April: *Sligo Champion*, 20\(^{th}\) April 1912.

\(^{108}\) Monthly report of the Inspector General, February 1913 (PRO CO 904/89).

\(^{109}\) *Roscommon Messenger*, 17\(^{th}\) August 1912.

\(^{110}\) *Sligo Champion*, 13\(^{th}\) July 1912.

\(^{111}\) *Longford Leader*, 10\(^{th}\) August 1912.

\(^{112}\) *Roscommon Journal*, 24\(^{th}\) August 1912.

\(^{113}\) See Inspector General’s Monthly reports, September, October, November, December 1912 (PRO CO 904/88)
Rule. The Westmeath Independent called for the latter. Preparations were under way in the north, it said, for extensive armed resistance. ‘If aggression is threatened in one end of the country, the means to resist and suppress it must be at the command of the rest of the country.’ Such calls remained distinctly isolated, however, and neither press nor police carried reports of local politicians taking them up, nor of any reprisals actually happening.

Many papers blamed the inflammatory language of unionists for stimulating the riots and the syndicated ‘Home Rule Notes from the Campaign’ provided factual coverage of the Blenheim rally and Law’s notorious ‘No Lengths’ speech. However, only two local papers commented on Law’s speech at the time. The Midland Reporter saw it as part of a Tory game, with Law and Carson seeking to provoke civil war to gain their political ends; Catholics should not play this game and must avoid reprisals. The Longford Leader directly linked the ‘treason and disorder’ called for by Law to the Belfast ‘murder campaign’ now under way.

The Belfast riots, as a direct attack on Catholics and nationalists, generated more coverage than any other Ulster event in 1912, in addition to being the only event that provoked any positive action by southern nationalists. For the first time there was a sense of Ulster crisis. As Ulster’s autumn campaign loomed the Westmeath Examiner, a month after Blenheim, picked up on the ‘No Lengths’ speech of Law and feared ‘an epidemic of lawlessness’. The Western Nationalist predicted the seizure of post offices in Ulster in order to force the government to make arrests. The Sligo Champion gloomily wrote a leader on ‘The Holy War’, citing the many rumours of ‘decisive’ actions in Ulster and the whipped-up sectarian mood there. The climax, it believed, would come with the proposed ‘Ulster Day’.

The Covenant

Ulster Day and the Covenant formed the third major episode of local press coverage of Ulster events in 1912. However, quite unlike the Belfast riots, the Covenant was not seen as creating a crisis but as defusing one, as a climb-down by unionists, even a subject of mockery.

114 Western Nationalist, 6th July 1912.
115 Westmeath Independent, 24th August 1912.
116 Midland Reporter, 8th August 1912.
117 Longford Leader, 3rd August 1912.
118 Westmeath Examiner, 24th August 1912.
119 Western Nationalist, 17th August 1912.
120 Sligo Champion, 24th August 1912.
It may well be, as Paul Bew has written, that ‘a logic of confrontation flowed from Ulster Day’, but not in the perception of the local press. To the *Westmeath Independent* the Covenant was instead ‘The Carson Squib’.

From the end of August, Carson made it clear that the unionists’ autumn campaign would climax with the Covenant. This was immediately hailed by the *Roscommon Messenger*, which wrote that instead of armed resistance Ulstermen were now to have a ‘Covenant’. Their actions would be passive resistance and a refusal to pay taxes. The pot had boiled down and the previous threats had been all a bluff. They had let the rowdies loose, but backed down when they saw the consequences; they were after all only lawyers and merchants who had to protect their own interests. This tone was sustained across the press over the next month, right up to and beyond Ulster Day. The *Leitrim Observer* emphasised the sense of ‘anti-climax’, while the *Sligo Champion* discussed the Covenant’s ‘safe and non-committal’ language. After all the warlike talk, it was a ‘milk and water affair’. The *Midland Reporter*’s ‘Gaelic Notes’ described the ‘bellowers’ as ‘servile, crawling things’. The *Roscommon Herald* noted that Carson’s ‘mad campaign’ had passed without violence, claiming that the whole purpose of the campaign had been to whip up British anti-Catholic prejudices.

It seems unlikely that this was just the press whistling to keep up their readers’ spirits, or taking a pre-set Irish party propaganda line. The universality of the view taken, even by the Tullys, suggests that the Covenant was genuinely seen as the end of the crisis of violence which had begun in July. By mid-October, the *Longford Leader* wrote that Home Rule was again safe and that ‘in a sign of returning good sense’, the Ulstermen appeared to have changed their tactics. Nor had the local unionist press played up a sense of crisis. The two Sligo unionist papers confined themselves to factual if detailed news coverage of Ulster Day and the run-up to it, but made no comment, while in November the *Longford Journal* wrote

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122 *Westmeath Independent*, 28th September 1912.
123 *Roscommon Messenger*, 31st August 1912.
124 *Leitrim Observer*, 19th October 1912.
125 *Sligo Champion*, 28th September 1912.
126 *Midland Reporter*, 10th October 1912.
127 *Roscommon Herald*, 5th October 1912.
128 *Longford Leader*, 19th October 1912.
that ‘moderate counsels’ among the unionist leaders had prevailed, though this ‘restraint’ was
now being tested by renewed Liberal mockery of Ulster’s bluff. The perceived moderation
of the Covenant was reaffirmed by the Sligo Champion in May 1913:

Nothing could be more vague, harmless and capable of any interpretation its authors wish
to put on it than the so-called “Ulster Covenant”.

The Snap Vote
As the Ulster campaign was generally seen as a device to bluff English opinion, symptoms of
English ‘wobbling’ were watched closely. In early October, the Midland Reporter’s leader
was ‘Sold Again!’, after pieces in the Liberal Daily News and London Star (including a
signed piece by the leading Liberal journalist Hugh Massingham), called for a general
election before Home Rule could become law. A week later, the Sligo Champion cited
these articles, and a speech from Winston Churchill calling for United Kingdom devolution,
as the reason for there being ‘for some weeks a vague feeling in the public mind that all is not
right with Home Rule’. In this case, a robust speech from Asquith stating that the government
would not seek an election and would secure the passage of the bill ended the upset. However, a surprise parliamentary defeat in November, the result of a tactical ambush by
unionists and a mini-revolt by some Liberal MPs, led to the final 1912 set-piece of coverage
by the local press.

The ‘snap vote’ on November 11th was against the bill’s financial clauses. The whole weekly
nationalist press reported the vote, though by the time it came to print the government’s
ability to reverse the vote was also known. This did not prevent initial excitement; the
Longford Leader reported that newsagents in Edgeworthstown had been besieged, with daily
papers sold out in a few minutes. By the time the local weeklies reported, the vote was
seen as a nuisance rather than a disaster, and coverage focused on scenes of parliamentary
disorder and an inquest into which Irish MPs had missed the vote. Locally there were three
offenders - Smyth, Nugent and Fitzgibbon - and all came under criticism and had to justify
themselves. Smyth made it clear that he had returned to Westminster, had been delayed and

129 Longford Journal, 2nd November 1912.
130 Sligo Champion, 24th May 1913.
131 Midland Reporter, 3rd October 1912.
132 Sligo Champion, 12th October 1912.
133 Longford Leader, 23rd November 1912.
had only just missed the vote. Nugent argued that he had been in Dublin on party business with Redmond’s knowledge. Fitzgibbon was on weaker ground and came under attack in both Mayo and Roscommon. He claimed that he had been in Castlerea on CDB business, but ‘a Castlerea man’ in the *Roscommon Herald* could not resist pointing out that Fitzgibbon had been seen working in his drapery shop for most of the 11th.

Jasper Tully, who alone locally had unreservedly attacked the bill, was now the sternest critic of those MPs who by missing the vote had endangered it. He also drew attention to the loss of the Irish parliament’s powers to vary local taxation by 10% when the defeated clauses were ‘restored’, calling this move ‘most disheartening to Irish reformers’. (Ginnell also attacked the new financial clauses in the *Irish Independent*.) However, the local party press took this change quietly. Most did not even cover it. Whether this was from lack of interest (the ending of nomination to the Senate also went almost unreported) or because of the party’s habit of self-censoring unpleasant topics (see Redmond’s 1910 Daily Express interview) cannot be said. The *Roscommon Messenger* insisted that Ireland would still retain the produce of taxation, while the *Westmeath Independent* was relaxed, accepting that the finance clauses’ cloth had been ‘cut very fine’ in the first place and that reversal was an acceptable price to secure the bill’s progress.

By the end of 1912, there was no sense of crisis in the local press. The real unease of July and August had dissipated by October, and the threat in November that the government’s majority could crack had proved to be a short squall. English opinion had not, apparently, been shaken. In December the *Westmeath Independent* wrote that twelve months ago ‘the Ulster bogey’ had been the stock in trade, but now that weapon had been dropped as useless. Many papers now portrayed the unionists as demoralised by the utter failure of their tactics and again split over tariff reform. Carson’s year-end Ulster ‘exclusion amendment’ in

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134 Leitrim Observer, 16th November 1912.
135 Midland Reporter, 21st November 1912. Nugent’s explanation did not stop ‘67’ writing to the paper denouncing a mob of ‘hired spouters, office seekers, subsidized newspapers and the ruck of rubbish who follow the track of Redmond’s party with a view to spoils’. The writer said the reasons given for Nugent’s absence were a ‘whitewash’.
136 Roscommon Herald, 23rd November 1912.
137 Ibid, 23rd November 1912.
138 Roscommon Messenger, 14th December 1912.
139 Westmeath Independent, 30th November 1912.
140 Ibid, 14th December 1912.
parliament was dismissed by the *Sligo Champion* as just another failed trick to waste time: ‘The new year for us is one of hope’. 141

The flip side of such confidence was that other unionist ‘bogey’, nationalist apathy. In November, the *Leitrim Observer* said there was a danger of being too contented and too conciliatory. Unionists were citing the rash of white gloves still being awarded to judges as a sign not of peacefulness but of apathy. 142 In December, the *Western Nationalist* wrote of ‘these quiet days of peace, with Home Rule so near’, in suggesting that ‘the smug man might ask what need is there for a [United Irish] League’. 143 At the beginning of December, the RIC inspector general observed that ‘in rural Ireland generally political enthusiasm is not very marked’. 144 His year-end report did note that Belfast traders were still complaining of a loss of trade, but excluding the Ulster counties there was ‘little manifestation of political feeling throughout the country’. 145

**Still No Crisis: January-August 1913**

Local press coverage of Ulster events in the first eight months of 1913 was at a significantly lower level than in 1912. For all the reality of the formation, drilling and arming of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), coverage of this was minimal. No local paper in the five counties, nationalist or unionist, reported the formation of the UVF in January 1913, though there were during the year derisory references to ‘mock drills’ and dummy rifles. The *Roscommon Messenger* in February reported that all the ‘make believe’ activity in Ulster of six months ago had now stopped. 146 In March the *Westmeath Independent* said that it did not even hear the cry that ‘Ulster will fight’. 147 Unionist papers carried more reports of drilling than nationalist ones, but the *Longford Journal* in May had to ask its readers not to imagine that Ulster opposition had slackened, even ‘if Ulster has not largely figured in the public press of late’. 148

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141 *Sligo Champion*, 4th January 1913.
142 *Leitrim Observer*, 9th November 1912.
143 *Western Nationalist*, 14th December 1912.
145 Ibid. December 1912 (PRO CO 904/88).
146 *Roscommon Messenger*, 15th February 1913.
147 *Westmeath Independent*, 29th March 1913.
148 *Longford Journal*, 10th May 1913.
Only three Ulster events received any detailed coverage across the local nationalist press. The first was a nationalist victory in the Londonderry by-election at the end of January. The election of an elderly Protestant was said to demonstrate Catholic tolerance, Protestant support for Home Rule and, according to the *Westmeath Independent*, that ‘the Ulster difficulty is as dead as Julius Caesar’.\(^{149}\) Secondly, after the official seizure in June of some 500 rifles destined for the UVF, the rifles were portrayed as ‘Italian’ and obsolete; their discovery was said to be a publicity stunt by unionists who had tipped off both press and police.\(^{150}\) Thirdly, rioting recurred in Ulster in August, this time in Londonderry. Again, as in 1912, attacks on Catholics were significant news. The *Westmeath Independent* asked if they were a foretaste of Orange actions after the passage of Home Rule.\(^{151}\)

That Ulster was not a pressing news story for much of 1913 was most obvious in the papers of the Tully brothers. Ever ready to spot a conspiracy, attack the Irish party and cover news from around the world, Jasper Tully gave almost no space to ‘Ulster’ through to June. Instead he wrote repeatedly on the power and ambition of Germany, the decadence of England, the Balkan wars, the suffragettes, French conscription and above all the Marconi scandal and what he perceived as Jewish and ‘money-ring’ corruption at the heart of government. (He also believed that Carson acting for Lloyd George in his Marconi libel action would result in Carson’s disgrace in the eyes of ‘out and out Tories’.)\(^{152}\) In June, when Tully finally editorialised on Ulster, he wrote that if Carson were serious in wanting to finish the government, he would never have acted for Lloyd George. The one thing that could be safely predicted, said Tully, was that there would be no rebellion in Ulster.\(^{153}\)

In the rest of the press, it took until June for any paper to carry a remotely worried piece on the subject of Ulster. Then, in a leader ‘The Siege of Belfast’, the *Sligo Champion* argued that Tory leaders were allowing themselves to be taken over by ‘Carson’s project’. It could not know how civil war would break out, or whether it would be confined to Ulster. However, the siege of Belfast (i.e. a boycott of Ulster trade) could be started any day in Sligo.

\(^{149}\) *Westmeath Independent*, 11\(^{th}\) January 1913.

\(^{150}\) *Leitrim Observer*, 7\(^{th}\), 28\(^{th}\) June 1913.

\(^{151}\) *Westmeath Independent*, 23\(^{rd}\) August 1913.

\(^{152}\) *Roscommon Herald*, 12\(^{th}\) April 1913.

\(^{153}\) Ibid, 14\(^{th}\) June 1913.
or any Irish town; it might be all the better if it were to start at once.\textsuperscript{154} The \textit{Champion} did not return to the subject and no Ulster boycott resumed, even after the Londonderry riots in August. However, later military gestures by the UVF did finally arouse the ire of one local journalist. When in July the UVF ‘raided’ outside Ulster and planted flags across the River Boyne, Jasper Tully was prompted to call for volunteers. If Ulster could arm and prepare, what was the rest of Ireland doing? ‘It is time something should be done to give them an effective reception when they do come.’\textsuperscript{155}

One other paper, the \textit{Westmeath Independent}, was increasingly agitated, as in August 1912, by violence in Ulster. On 5\textsuperscript{th} July, it wrote of ‘Orange bullies’ and of men who had attempted to roast innocent Catholic girls alive in factory yards! It stated that imported arms would be used against Catholics and predicted trouble over the forthcoming month.\textsuperscript{156} The paper’s coverage of the Londonderry riots emphasised both the involvement of Orange rifle clubs and the retaliation of Ulster Catholics.\textsuperscript{157} However, it was not consistent. Only two weeks after its 5\textsuperscript{th} July piece, and following a quiet 12\textsuperscript{th} July, it had again dismissed threats of an Ulster provisional government as impossible, a bluff.\textsuperscript{158}

Concerning the contents of the Home Rule bill there was still only minimal discussion. In May, two papers appeared to catch a sniff of ‘compromise’. Both the \textit{Longford Leader} and \textit{Westmeath Independent} denounced this, the former saying that any compromise would make the bill no better than the Irish Council bill of 1907; the latter that as it was already the minimum acceptable there could be no compromise.\textsuperscript{159} Nothing came of these rumours and the matter dropped, but in the same week the \textit{Roscommon Journal} launched an isolated attack on the bill’s financial clauses, claiming that they were fair to neither England nor Ireland and directly criticising Redmond, asking why he would not take the Irish people into his

\textsuperscript{154} \textit{Sligo Champion}, 14\textsuperscript{th} June 1913.
\textsuperscript{155} \textit{Roscommon Herald}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} August 1913. This was only the third local press call for nationalists to volunteer over the whole period 1910-13. The first had been from the \textit{Westmeath Independent} - for nationalist rifle clubs - after the Belfast riots in August 1912. Secondly, in April 1913, the \textit{Western Nationalist} only half-mocking called for Irish volunteers to defend an effete England from European invasion, after Lord Lansdowne had expressed his fears on the subject. It also praised the moral benefits to be derived from military service (19\textsuperscript{th} April 1913).
\textsuperscript{156} \textit{Westmeath Independent}, 5\textsuperscript{th} July 1913.
\textsuperscript{157} Ibid, 23\textsuperscript{rd} August 1913.
\textsuperscript{158} Ibid, 19\textsuperscript{th} July 1913.
\textsuperscript{159} \textit{Longford Leader}, 10\textsuperscript{th} May; \textit{Westmeath Independent}, 3\textsuperscript{rd} May 1913.
The paper’s unusual, direct attack on Redmond was not followed up and it quickly returned to the fold. By the end of the month, it was calling for strict adherence to the agitation which had brought so many benefits to Ireland and in June wrote that it was plain that the people would stand behind Redmond and the party. Other than this, the contents of the Home Rule bill were given no serious mention, though there was debate as to its timing. In particular, though it was believed that the bill would become law, there remained doubt as to whether it would come into operation before the next general election. T.P. O’Connor and the party’s constitutional expert, J.G. Swift MacNeill, both wrote reassuring pieces in the British press, reproduced locally, predicting an Irish parliament sitting by early 1915 (O’Connor) or even the autumn of 1914 (MacNeill).

If there was a threat to Home Rule, it was still seen to come from the impact of unionist campaigning on England. In early 1913, the political ‘battle’ was being fought at Westminster and at a succession of mass meetings in Great Britain. The local MPs were virtually absent from their constituencies for much of 1913, either ‘whipped in’ at Westminster (there could be no repetition of the snap vote defeat) or on British speaking tours. The party’s Home Rule fund was explicitly designed to support this British campaign. When Hayden returned to Ireland to speak at his first local meeting of the year in September, he announced: ‘I have come straight from where the battle is being fought and where the battle is being won’. In November, at his second Irish rally, he announced that he had just addressed a dozen British meetings in a fortnight, and asked his audience not to press too much for MPs to address meetings in Ireland. Where they were needed now was Great Britain.

This emphasis on British campaigning was reinforced by the press, whose focus was on the parliamentary tactics of passing the bill, on speeches made in Britain by local MPs and on Carson’s British speaking tour - matched city for city by Redmond. With the exception of actual violence against Catholics, events in Ulster were still assessed as part of unionist

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160 Roscommon Journal, 3rd May 1913.
161 Ibid. 31st May and 14th June 1913.
162 Western Nationalist, 26th July 1913.
163 Leitrim Advertiser, 14th August 1913.
164 Hayden speaking at Strokestown, Roscommon Messenger, 20th September 1913.
165 Hayden speaking at Cloonfad, Roscommon Messenger, 15th November 1913.
propaganda, the ‘bluff’ of ‘English opinion’. For all its alarm at Ulster violence, even the
*Westmeath Independent* could in August emphasise that the next great Home Rule campaign
would be in England. This was where the ‘real theatre of war’ would be; the task of the party
was to stop the English democracy being duped by lies.  

Any threat to the stability of the government was still monitored closely. It had to stay in
office for Home Rule to pass and Irish MPs had to keep voting for it. A succession of
government by-election defeats was explained away by the unpopularity of national insurance
or by Labour splitting the anti-Tory vote. The Marconi scandal was seen as part of the more
general, unionist assault on the government. In June, writing on Marconi, the *Longford
Leader* said that Ulster gun-running and by-election defeats were ‘of no moment besides the
defeat of the present mean and unscrupulous Tory campaign’. Two weeks later it could assert
of the Tories: ‘They are a dead duck in the political pit and they know it’.  

Again and again
the message was reiterated: the unionist campaign was not working, the government was
united, its parliamentary majority secure and English opinion solid. This confidence was real,
even if it had to be reasserted after each ‘failed’ unionist stunt. The *Roscommon Messenger* in
June wrote of Carson: ‘In truth, he is a beaten man. He has failed in the House of Commons;
he has failed in the country’.  

It was thus that in August the *Roscommon Journal* could ‘rest somewhat contented’.

A study of the local press, both nationalist and unionist, indicates that there was no ‘Home
Rule crisis’ in the five counties from the 1910 elections up to the autumn of 1913. Only the
outbreak of mob violence - in Belfast in the summer of 1912 and to a lesser extent
Londonderry in August 1913 - triggered perceptible unease. For the rest of the time, the
publication and passage of the Home Rule bill generated a considerable volume of press
coverage, but few great passions either for or against. ‘Ulster’s’ campaign against the bill,
which only became apparent in the autumn of 1911, was not seen as a looming and ever-
growing physical threat, but as a political and propaganda campaign, ‘a bluff’ to undermine
British support for the bill before it could pass. For a long time, nationalists’ confidence in

166 *Westmeath Independent*, 16th and 30th August 1913.

167 *Longford Leader*, 14th and 28th June 1913.

168 *Roscommon Messenger*, 28th June 1913.
their ability to defeat this political challenge remained intact and there was no sense of imminent defeat. Confidence, complacency, quietude and even apathy were more typical characteristics of local debate than wild enthusiasm, chagrin, disappointment or alarm. That complacent mood did not change until the autumn of 1913. It was then that Ulster’s ‘bluff’ of England seemed suddenly to be working, undermining the resolve of Liberal politicians and making Ulster exclusion a serious prospect. Only then did the Home Rule crisis, in provincial, nationalist Ireland, become a reality.
Chapter 9: Crisis and Volunteering

When, finally, the Home Rule crisis broke it transformed local politics. ‘Parish pump’ rivalries and considerations were subsumed into the pervasive, national issue of whether the Home Rule bill would fail. Large numbers of people formerly quiescent were mobilised into political and paramilitary activity through their participation in the Irish Volunteers. In the words of Tom Kettle:

From time to time a great wave of emotion and action sweeps through the life of a people, stirring it all, shallows and depth. Such is volunteering."

The response of the Irish party to this new movement was wholly ambiguous. On the one hand, its national leadership was hostile to mass paramilitary activity and attempted to hold it back; party discipline remained sufficiently firm to slow the formation of new Volunteer corps until policy changed in April 1914. On the other, local party support remained essential and was forthcoming, right from the start, for those corps that were formed. In the five counties, even in the ‘slow’ period of Volunteer formation up to the end of April 1914, seventeen corps were formed. The change of official party policy at the end of April, to public encouragement and participation, triggered a rush of new companies, but not the commonly-supposed ‘vampirisation’ of the new movement by the party’s leadership. The Irish Volunteers in mid-1914 were not just the Irish party dressed up in slouch hats and bandoliers. As a public manifestation of a significantly more intense political activity, they represented a rather large tiger which the Irish party leadership held, barely, by the tail.

The Crisis Breaks: September-November 1913

The change of mood from confidence to crisis, and from political analysis to calls for military mobilisation, was rapid. From the beginning of November onwards, when Professor Eoin MacNeill in Dublin published his article ‘The North Began’ in the Gaelic League journal An Claidheamh Soluis, the local press either commended MacNeill’s article, advocated Volunteering, reported the Dublin formation meeting of the Volunteers, covered the formation.

1 Kettle speaking at Ardee, 24th May 1914, quoted in Lyons, The Enigma of Tom Kettle, p. 246.
(sometimes phantom formation) of local companies, or all four. The new mood of alarm and bellicosity was summed up by a late-November leading article in the Sligo Champion, still firmly loyal to the Irish party and the mouth-piece of Sligo’s bourgeois, Catholic establishment. It called, as it had over several weeks, for a Volunteer corps to form. The time was ripe for the Volunteers, to protect the people’s rights and enforce their will. Ireland was supposed to live under the protection of the British constitution, but an English party had now substituted force for the ballot box. The demands of four Ulster counties were being heeded because they had taken up arms. Ireland had to show that she was prepared to defend her rights by weapons which were the only methods her opponents said they would respect. ‘Our rights as men are threatened, our national interests disregarded, our votes are to be of no avail.’

It was not, however, the development of ‘Carson’s army’ in Ulster which triggered this change of mood. Indeed, in this period only one Ulster event attracted significant coverage in the local press, the formation of the ‘Provisional Government’ in Belfast at the end of September. This had been announced by its organisers well in advance in July and, though it was certainly well-covered in September by both unionist and nationalist papers, was anything but a surprise. Like so many other unionist initiatives of the previous two years, it was treated by nationalists as a publicity stunt. The Sligo Champion noted the increased tempo of Carson’s martial press publicity in recent weeks which, it said, only embarrassed his fellow unionists and was one of the greatest forces behind the success of Home Rule. For the Sligo Nationalist, ‘vicarious revolution of this kind is going to frighten no one’, while for the Western Nationalist all this resistance was still ‘rot’. Even Jasper Tully, who had called on nationalists to match the UVF in July (see Chapter 8), still opined in the Roscommon Herald that Carson was ‘making civil war with his tongue’ and that as a lawyer he was always keen

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2 See Sligo Champion, 1st, 22nd and 29th November; Roscommon Herald, 8th, 22nd, 29th November; Midland Reporter, 20th November; Western Nationalist, 22nd November and 13th December; Leitrim Observer, 29th November, 20th December, Longford Leader, 29th November; Westmeath Independent, 29th November, 6th and 13th December; Roscommon Messenger, 6th December; Longford Independent, 6th December 1913.

3 Sligo Champion, 29th November 1913.

4 The formation process was announced in July at a Craigavon, Co Armagh rally. See Mac Giolla Choille (ed.), Intelligence Notes 1913-16, p. 24.

5 Sligo Champion, 27th September 1913.

6 Sligo Nationalist, 27th September; Western Nationalist, 27th September 1913.
to ‘keep on the windy side of the law’. 7 Thereafter there was virtually no other coverage of events in Ulster before December, in any local paper. 8

There was another news story which increased tension among provincial nationalists at this time, but it originated not in Ulster but in Dublin. The ‘great lockout’, with its succession of ‘Larkinite’ strikes, ‘deportations’ of Catholic children and street violence was covered, with Larkin nearly always denounced, right across the local press. ‘English’ interference in the strikes was commented on by a range of papers (see Chapter 4), which also lamented the damage done to Irish trade and industry. Parallels were drawn to Ulster events and several papers, notably the Longford Leader and Westmeath Independent, compared events in Dublin (the violent police treatment of demonstrators) to those in Belfast (the free rein given to Carson’s followers). 9 As the strikes continued, some began to see more sinister plots against Home Rule. Hayden’s Roscommon Messenger condemned the Dublin workers as ‘innocent pawns’ of men allied to Tories. Ireland’s religion was now reviled and its nationality mocked. The Irish strikers were in effect acting to ‘strike the cup of victory [i.e. self-government] from our lips.’ 10 Jasper and George W. Tully seized the opportunity to denounce a conspiracy to destroy Ireland’s capacity for self-government. Larkin, the ‘Englishman’, was working hand in glove with ‘the English’ and Dublin Castle to undermine Home Rule. 11 In the Midland Reporter leader, ‘English Over All’, the Dublin strike leaders were tied to ‘the lowest forms of English socialism’, tainted by English ideas and no doubt by English money as well. The Harmsworth yellow press, in backing the strikers, knew that if Larkin won Home Rule would be impossible. Both Larkin and Carson could be installed as ‘dictators’ in Dublin and Belfast and in the meantime Irish industry was being killed. 12

However, the events that most triggered nationalist alarm occurred in Britain where, for the first time, Home Rule appeared to be seriously endangered. Starting in September, a

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7 Roscommon Herald, 27th September 1913.
8 The Sligo Champion did carry a Press Association story on 15th November about arms shipments to Ulster from Birmingham, but was alone in doing so.
9 Longford Leader, 23rd August; Westmeath Independent, 30th August 1913.
10 Roscommon Messenger, 15th November 1913.
11 Midland Reporter, 28th August; 4th, 11th September; Roscommon Herald, 30th August; 6th, 13th and 20th September; 4th and 11th October; 15th and 22nd November 1913. The relentless coverage and tirades of the Tullys were at least enlivened by their denunciation of George Russell (‘AE’. a supporter of the strikers) as ‘this dipthong of an editor’ in the Roscommon Herald of 11th October.
12 Midland Reporter, 11th September 1913.
succession of speeches and initiatives by Liberal politicians indicated a failure of government resolve and a risk of the bill being at best mutilated and at worst lost. The first such ‘wobble’, indicating that the Ulster bluff really was working, was a letter to the London Times from the former Liberal Lord Chancellor, Lord Loreburn, published on 11th September. Loreburn called for an all-party conference and compromise with the unionists. Locally, the danger posed by Loreburn's letter was immediately identified by John Hayden, who at a Strokestown rally - his first in Roscommon that year - noted that for all the talk of compromises, concessions and conferences it was inconceivable that either Asquith or the government could ‘destroy’ their work of the last several years. Hayden’s newspapers noted that Ulster’s bluff had now worked, albeit in only one case, but that there could be ‘no surrender’. Coverage across the local press was comprehensive, with every nationalist commentator bar one opposing Loreburn who, it was argued, did not speak for the government. They also took comfort from Carson’s immediately rejection of Loreburn’s initiative. His lone local defender was, unsurprisingly, Sir Walter Nugent, who argued that a well-meaning Loreburn had held out an olive branch to an embittered minority, only to see it rejected. 

For all the assurances that Loreburn's proposals had been spurned, press speculation persisted right to the end of the year that his key call, for a conference, would be taken up by the English parties. Sometimes almost daily, the Dublin papers carried such stories and the local press was also peppered with rumours of ‘conversations’. The next major development, moreover, was the initiative not of an ex-minister but of a serving one, Winston Churchill, who in a speech in Dundee on 8th October stated that there would have to be a general election before the Home Rule Act, after its parliamentary passage, could come into operation. In addition Churchill supported special treatment for North-East Ulster. This was a major news story locally and aroused strong and polarised opinions. Some, like the Western Nationalist, described Churchill’s speech as a ploy to wrong-foot unreasonable, rejectionist unionists. Several papers were far more uneasy, lamenting Churchill’s ‘ambiguity’ and ‘hazy attitudes’ without attacking a serving minister outright. The Sligo Champion flip-flopped between the

14 Nugent speaking at Tang, Longford Leader, 4th October 1913.
15 See Sligo Independent, 20th September and 27th December; Westmeath Independent, 27th September; Sligo Champion, 4th October; Leitrim Advertiser, 30th October; Longford Journal, 1st November; Midland Reporter, 20th November; Roscommon Herald, 22nd November 1913.
16 Western Nationalist, 11th October 1913.
two stances in the course of a week, first praising Churchill’s ‘able and conciliatory’ speech, but then, in a leading article ‘No Partition of Ireland’, calling it ‘strange and ambiguous at the time’. There was no ambiguity for Tully. Churchill’s speech was ‘A Stab in the Back’ and part of a deep intrigue against Ireland. Such hostility was not confined to the party’s opponents. For J.P. Farrell, Churchill was now a ‘shuffler’ and any minister who betrayed Ireland would have on his tombstone the undying hatred of the Irish race. Nor was the significance of the speech lost on unionist papers, who saw it as an undoubted climb-down by the government and a signal of forthcoming Ulster exclusion. The political mood had clearly changed, and for the Roscommon Messenger, worried by Churchill’s ‘ambiguity’ and by ‘timid’ Liberal talk of compromise and conference, Home Rule was now ‘the chief and almost only topic of discussion’ in Ireland and Great Britain.

The mood was intensified by a succession of speeches, reported locally, by British and Irish politicians. While still leaving the door open to any compromise consistent with ‘the principles’ of the bill, Redmond was moved to make explicit rebuttals of first Loreburn (at Cahirciveen, County Kerry on 29th September) and then Churchill (at Limerick on 12th October, where he famously declared that the ‘Two Nations’ theory of Ireland was ‘an abomination and a blasphemy’). These two speeches were reported in detail, almost right across the local nationalist press, and hailed at the time for their removal of ‘fear and doubt’. They formed, however, only part of a process of oratorical ping-pong in which new fears were created by Liberal and unionist speakers such as Grey, Birrell, Haldane, Law, Carson, Smith, Churchill and Asquith. Their public utterances, reported locally and in the Dublin dailies, provided a cocktail of firm statements of principle, appeals to compromise, new proposals, robustness, legal ambiguity and shiftiness. Grey became the leading public advocate of ‘Home Rule within Home Rule’ for Ulster. Churchill at Manchester on 18th October repeated his sins of Dundee and went further, saying that ‘the genuine needs and legitimate aspirations’ of Ulster had to be met. In a coded advocacy of temporary Ulster exclusion, he went on to say that there could be no solution ‘destructive of the permanent unity of Ireland’.

17 Sligo Champion, 11th and 18th October 1913.
18 Roscommon Herald, 11th October 1913.
19 Farrell speaking to the South Longford UIL executive on 26th October, Longford Leader, 1st November 1913.
20 Sligo Independent and Sligo Times, 11th October 1913.
21 Roscommon Messenger, 18th October 1913.
22 Roscommon Herald, 1st November; Westmeath Examiner, 8th November 1913.
Commenting on this, the *Sligo Champion* noted that ‘he has a way of saying things that are perplexing and ambiguous’. 23

The master of ambiguity cloaked in apparent precision was, however, Asquith, and his speech at Ladybank on 25th October was taken by some to be reassuring and by others as alarming. At one level, Asquith firmly rejected the notion of a ‘conference’, affirmed that the government would assert the authority of the law and proclaimed that there would be no betrayal. For the *Westmeath Independent* this meant that Home Rule was again, in the words of Redmond at Cahirciveen, ‘full steam ahead’. 24 This was the line taken by most of the party-supporting local press, taking its cue from the syndicated ‘Home Rule Notes from the Campaign’ and from the *Freeman’s Journal*. In the same mindset, the unionist *Sligo Independent* lamented that Asquith had missed the chance to be conciliatory. 25 However, Asquith’s speech also stressed that the government would look at any reasonable and honourable proposal for peace and used almost the same weasel words as Churchill at Manchester: that ‘nothing is to be done which will erect a permanent or insuperable bar in the way of Irish unity’. For Jasper Tully, this use of the word ‘permanent’ was clearly indicative of an intention to kill Home Rule by exclusion. 26 Farrell’s *Longford Leader*, having denounced Churchill and billed Asquith’s speech in advance as a specific refutation of Churchill, could only reproduce Asquith’s speech verbatim with no news reporting or leader comment whatsoever. 27 The *Western Nationalist*, a supporter of Asquith’s speech, nevertheless noted the volume of press comment in Ireland and London saying that provision would now have to be made for Ulster exclusion ‘for a time’. 28 The *Leitrim Advertiser*, *Longford Journal*, *Midland Reporter* and *Roscommon Herald* all went on to report new predictions of talks, a conference or ‘interchange of views’ between the British parties. 29

The result, in the language of the *Westmeath Independent*, was that the public mind was ‘disturbed’ and that ‘for some little time back we rather felt in a somewhat querulous

23 *Sligo Champion*, 25th October 1913.
24 *Westmeath Independent*, 1st November 1913.
25 *Sligo Independent*, 1st November 1913.
26 See the leader, ‘English Intrigues’ in the *Roscommon Herald*, 1st November 1913.
27 *Longford Leader*: *Roscommon Herald*, 1st November 1913.
28 *Western Nationalist*, 1st November 1913.
29 *Leitrim Advertiser*, 30th October; *Longford Journal* 1st November; *Midland Reporter* 20th November; *Roscommon Herald*, 22nd November 1913.
position’.

On the acid test applied to all the initiatives of the Ulster campaign since 1911 - how would they impact on English opinion? - the Home Rule bill was for the first time seen to be failing. On 16th October, Ginnell addressed his Westmeath Nationalist Executive and made the call to arms already outlined in Chapter 6, exhorting his listeners ‘to adopt and put into practice those rights of rebellion ... which Sir Edward Carson has been loudly been preaching in Ulster with impunity’.

The Volunteers Form

During November, it was events in Dublin which inspired local press coverage of the Irish Volunteer movement. The formation meeting of the Irish Volunteers at the Dublin Rotunda, at the end of November, was of major importance to local editors and writers. In Athlone, however, volunteering pre-dated events in Dublin. Indeed the formation of Athlone’s ‘Midland Volunteers’, in mid-October, seems to have acted as a spur to Dublin figures such as D.P. Moran, Sir Roger Casement and MacNeill, rather than the other way around.

Though by later standards a pathetically small number, who seem only to have drilled twice and then given up (according to the police, 54 men drilled on 22nd October; 24 on 29th October), the Midland Volunteers were nevertheless the first to drill publicly in nationalist Ireland and were hailed as such. That their example fired the imagination of some nationalists locally and in Dublin was not just because of the reality of their very limited activities, but rather the result of an almost ludicrous exaggeration of their numbers and capability by the editor of the Westmeath Independent, Michael MacDermott-Hayes. In his fantasy world, the Westmeath Independent reported that over 5,000 men were parading, with buglers, drums, cavalry and formed into twenty companies. It was this myth which was reproduced in the press locally as well as in Dublin.

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30 Westmeath Independent, 1st November 1913.
31 Martin, ‘MacNeill and the Foundation of the Irish Volunteers’ in Martin and Byrne (eds.), The Scholar Revolutionary, p. 123.
32 Ibid, p. 128.
33 Westmeath Independent, 25th October 1913.
34 Irish Independent, 25th October; Leitrim Advertiser, Roscommon Journal, Westmeath Examiner, 1st November 1913. Interestingly, Tully’s papers did not carry the story, for all his active promotion of Volunteering soon afterwards. It is not clear whether his non-coverage of Athlone events was due to the participation of party men such as MacDermott-Hayes (secretary of the South Westmeath UIL) or because he simply did not believe the Westmeath Independent reports.
One leading local figure who took Athlone events seriously - whether real or fantastic is not known - was J.P. Farrell, the only party MP then locally resident, having recently recovered from a serious illness. In a series of Longford speeches, Farrell cited Athlone as an example to be followed. On 26th October he addressed first the South Longford UIL executive and subsequently a public meeting. He was of course 'solid at the back of Redmond' and what he called Redmond's policy of 'no conciliation or compromise' with Orangemen, made clear at Cahirciveen and Limerick. 'We hear they began to drill over in Athlone last week, and you would find we could get a few drill masters around Longford too. I am not too sure it would not be a very good thing to learn the “goose step” on a bit of an evening and show these “patriots” or rather Loyalists in the North of Ireland that they are not going to have it their own way (cheers).'  

He did go on to add, 'but we are gaining it [Home Rule] without that, gentlemen', but the message was repeated at another Longford public meeting, to commemorate the Manchester Martyrs, on 24th November. Here he noted that the efforts of the English democracy were being undone by the ‘wooden guns’ of Ulster ‘patriots’, but was glad that a movement had grown up among younger men to counter this. ‘I think, boys, we may give it a turn in Longford too (cheers).’ He then carried the debate to a level not heard from any local Irish party figure in recent years. Should the threatened German invasion come and denude Ireland of English troops, ‘then we would know the benefit of drilling’.

The Government would not dare stop Irishmen if they emulated Carson and they (the government) were now conniving in a plan to carve out Ulster. ‘I hope that when we open a recruiting station you will all turn up and drill.’

Farrell’s calls for drilling were echoed locally. The political rationale was that the example of 'Carson’s army', backed by what Farrell and others still called 'wooden guns', had to be copied. The effect of Ulster’s volunteering on the government and ‘English’ opinion had to be emulated by nationalists. According to Jasper Tully, Carson had unwittingly taught nationalist Ireland that it was possible to arm and drill. The three other provinces of Ireland could surely raise treble the 80,000 men raised by the Ulster Volunteers. ‘A man with a rifle

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35 Roscommon Herald, 1st November 1913.
36 Ibid, 29th November 1913.
37 Though few others predicted a German invasion. This was referred to only by the anti-Prussian Jasper Tully and even he did not see such an invasion as an opportunity for Ireland, but rather called for Volunteers to prevent the Irish becoming ‘the slaves of the Germans’. See Roscommon Herald, 29th November 1913.
38 Ibid.
always commands respect from the rulers of a country' and an armed Orangeman, however stupid, was more formidable than a clever nationalist armed only with a resolution or a figure of speech. As the Western Nationalist put it, Orangemen now believed that their threats would work, and an Irish 'enlistment' would be a powerful antidote. Preparation for war was the greatest surety of peace (this theme of preserving peace by preparing for war was also taken up by the Westmeath Independent).

However, in addition to this political role of 'antidote' to the Orange bluff, the Volunteers were now seen to have an explicit military purpose. The Sligo Champion's advocacy of the use of weapons, 'the only methods our opponents say they will respect' has already been noted on page 253. For the Westmeath Independent the upsurge of volunteering was seen by many as evidence that nationalists were taking Ulster's threat of war seriously. The most constant refrain was that local nationalists had to be defended against an Orange/Carson/UVF attack on the south of Ireland, whether in the form of 'Carson's march south', an 'Ulster onslaught' or even a 'looting expedition'. Admittedly, this military role was seen as defensive; there was no reference to any offensive role away from home, whether in aid of Ulster's nationalists or to enforce Home Rule across all Ireland. The Sligo Champion could say that the role of the Volunteers was to 'take such steps as are necessary to enforce the rights of the people by law and equity', but it was also quite explicit that the Volunteers were not embodied as a force to suppress Carson, but as a 'protective and defensive force'.

Despite support from much of the press and the advocacy of drilling by a number of more junior politicians, Farrell was, apart from the independent Ginnell in October, the only local MP publicly to advocate volunteering in 1913. For most of October and November the Irish party leadership was, apart from Redmond's set-piece speeches, relatively silent both on

39 Midland Reporter, 20th November 1913.
40 Western Nationalist, 22nd November; Westmeath Independent, 29th November 1913.
41 Westmeath Independent, 29th November 1913.
42 See Midland Reporter, 20th November; Western Nationalist, 22nd November; Roscommon Herald, Westmeath Independent, 29th November 1913. The Roscommon Herald envisaged the need to defend against both Ulstermen and Germans.
43 Sligo Champion, 29th November 1913.
44 For example John Lynott at Manorhamilton UIL (Longford Leader, 25th October); John Keaveny at Carnaska UIL (Western Nationalist, 13th December 1913).
‘Ulster’ and the Dublin strikes, possibly to avoid increasing tensions. It is also known that the leadership were alarmed at the launch of the Volunteers in Dublin and enforced a policy of restraint on their followers. In December 1913, Dillon’s associate John Muldoon MP wrote to the Cork party man J.J. Horgan that ‘Redmond does not like this thing, neither does Devlin, but they are loath to move at present ... Dillon is much more against it.’ According to Stephen Gwynn MP, then head of the Irish Press Agency and responsible for distributing the syndicated ‘Home Rule Notes’ to the press, the Volunteers were ‘a development which Redmond on his part neither willed nor approved’. However, apart from a condemnation of the Volunteers on 17th December, by the MP Richard Hazleton in a letter to the *Freeman’s Journal*, public attacks were rare. Sir Roger Casement, recruiting for the Volunteers in Galway, summed up the party’s ambivalence in mid-December:

The official Home Rulers are against the movement locally but rather nonplussed by the fact that their leaders are silent. And it is clear if they condemned it they would speak out. Therefore there is a sense of tacit approval that is felt and naturally used by the promoters.

In the five counties there were no open attacks on volunteering from public figures, but the advocacy of drilling and the use of arms did abate. The net result was that the initial wave of support for Volunteering was not often translated into the formation of Volunteer companies. In Longford, Farrell ceased publicly to advocate Volunteering and no company was formed until late-May 1914. Even in Mullingar, where Ginnell’s followers, unlike Hayden’s were not bound by party loyalty, a corps was not started until April.

When they did publicly address the subjects of Ulster and Home Rule, party spokesmen provided a diet of constant reassurance: the government was firm, the inter-party conference would not happen, the whole bill would pass, Ulster resistance would fold. Bonar Law’s confirmation at Bristol on 15th January, that there had indeed been British inter-party talks and that they were over, was then presented as a victory. The message of Redmond, speaking at

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45 T.P. O’Connor was critical of this policy, feeling ‘strongly and violently’ that the Irish party’s silence had created ‘a situation of intense difficulty’. (T.P. O’Connor to Dillon, 17th October 1913, Dillon papers, TCD, f 6/740 208.)
46 Muldoon to Horgan 16th December 1913, quoted in Horgan, *From Parnell to Pearse*, p. 229.
47 Stephen Gwynn, *John Redmond’s Last Years*, p. 91.
48 Casement to Col Maurice Moore. 11th December 1913, Col Maurice Moore Papers, NLI. f 10561(3).
49 See *Western Nationalist*, 17th January 1914.
Waterford on 25th January, was that 'we have fought and we have won'.

Farrell told the Longford UIL that the government was secure and would go on until the end of 1915. The restraint of the party in Leitrim was particularly striking, given that there were Orange lodges in the county and a UVF parade in January, in which four corps and 300 men were inspected by the unionist Lord Farnham. Party discipline appears a more credible explanation for this than F.E. Meehan's formulaic assurances that there was no danger of civil war and that all Irish dissension would disappear with the passing of Home Rule. In Longford and Westmeath party activists focused their tactical energies on organising major AOH rallies, addressed by Joe Devlin, to be held in February. In Roscommon town, the opposite tactic was used; the town's UIL kept things quiet by preventing more independently-minded figures such as Canon Cummins from holding a grand public meeting (see Chapter 5). At the end of January 1914, the party nationally announced that the Home Rule Fund would close, except for late subscriptions due from 1913. As Fitzgibbon put it, 'we must be very confident the battle is over when we are not appealing for fresh ammunition'. However, despite all this restraint, four Irish Volunteer corps did form locally in early 1914, in the towns of Athlone, Granard, Boyle and Sligo.

**Athlone**

At the end of 1913, the Midland Volunteers met to reform and affiliate to the national movement. As discussed in Chapter 3, there was in Athlone a core of advanced nationalist support independent of the Irish party and dating back to before the formation of a Sinn Fein branch. Though that branch collapsed in 1910, advanced views in the town became centred on the Athlone Pipers' Club and, from 1911, the only Fianna company in the five counties. In November 1913, though the Midland Volunteers were no longer drilling, there was sufficient advanced nationalist support for there to be an anti-recruiting demonstration against the band of the Leinster regiment. As it paraded through the town, a crowd headed by the Pipers' Band and the Fianna followed singing national songs. Rival crowds cheered and booed each other.

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51 *Longford Leader*, 17th January 1914.
52 Monthly report of the Leitrim county Inspector, January 1914 (PRO CO 904/92).
54 *Roscommon Messenger* and *Roscommon Journal*, 10th January: 1914. It is not clear whether Cummins and others (see page 152) wanted such a meeting for its own sake, to launch the Volunteers, to merge the town's UIL and RAEC, or all three.
and the Pipers’ Band continued to play outside when the Leinsters returned to barracks.\textsuperscript{56} For all their hostility to recruiting, the town’s advanced nationalists had in October joined with a number of army reservists and Irish party activists (notably MacDermott-Hayes) to inspire the original Midland Volunteers.\textsuperscript{57} Advanced nationalists again formed the core of the town’s Irish Volunteers at the beginning of 1914. Their leaders were Sean O’Mullaney, who worked in the \textit{Westmeath Independent}’s print works, James Gough and Seamus MacSwiney, Gaelic Leaguer, Fianna instructor and bandmaster of the Pipers’ Band.\textsuperscript{58}

However, the support of Irish party figures, notably MacDermott-Hayes, dropped away. When at the end of January 1914 the Pipers’ Band refused to play at the grand AOH rally to be held at Moate, they were duly attacked by the \textit{Westmeath Independent}.\textsuperscript{59} Without party support the town’s Volunteers made little headway. According to a Cabinet paper prepared by Birrell in April 1914, there were only 40 Volunteers in Athlone.\textsuperscript{60} Even by June there were still only 75.\textsuperscript{61} Though the original plan was to drill twice a week with the Pipers’ Band,\textsuperscript{62} there were no police reports of drilling after March.

\textbf{Granard}

In Granard, the Volunteers were far more vigorous, even though the core of their leadership was also independent of, and indeed hostile to, the party. The leading lights were:

- John Cawley, creamery manager and the former Sinn Fein supporter of William Ganly when Ganly split from Farrell in 1907/08. According to the later IRA guerrilla Sean MacEoin, Cawley was the IRB ‘centre’ who recruited him and Sean Connolly to the IRB in 1914;\textsuperscript{63} and

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\item \textit{Stroketown Democrat}, 15\textsuperscript{th} November 1913: Crime Special Branch report, November 1913 (PRO CO 904/119).
\item Oliver Snoddy, ‘The Midland Volunteer Force 1913’, \textit{Journal of the Old Athlone Society}; Vol. 1 No. 1. 1969. p. 43. Indeed, six of the original committee of nine were army reservists who later served in the British army in the war.\textsuperscript{51}
\item Ibid.
\item \textit{Westmeath Independent}, 24\textsuperscript{th} January 1914.
\item \textit{Westmeath Independent}, 20\textsuperscript{th} June 1914.
\item Ibid, 31\textsuperscript{st} January and 28\textsuperscript{th} February 1914.
\item P. 33 of Sean MacEoin’s unpublished autobiography. quoted in Coleman, \textit{County Longford 1910-23}. p. 115.
\end{thebibliography}
• Paul Dawson Cusack, medical student, son of a Granard Sinn Fein-supporting draper and cousin of the Kitty Kiernan who was later to be the fiancée of Michael Collins. Kitty’s brother, L.D. Kiernan, was treasurer of the initial Volunteer committee.64

However, unlike in Athlone, the new corps retained the support and encouragement of Irish party figures throughout. Its activities were regularly reported in Farrell’s *Longford Leader* and its formation was first mooted in November 1913, when Farrell was still active publicly in promoting the Volunteer cause. Granard’s Urban District Council - well stocked with party figures - gave permission for the Town Hall to be used to form the first company.65 At the formal inaugural meeting in January the chairman was John Ledwith, a publican and former county councillor who, though he had been close to William Ganly before the 1907 split, had stayed loyal to the Irish party.66 The corps flourished from the start and the town, with a population of 1,531 in 1911 (in the UDC area), saw 100 men enrol at the inaugural meeting.67 By February the *Longford Leader* reported that some 200 men had enrolled and that they had paraded with pikes at the County Longford AOH rally addressed by Joe Devlin.68 Nevertheless, political friction between Cawley and the Irish party was always close to the surface. In April, Cawley publicly called for Volunteers to force England to buy Ireland’s friendship ‘for a far higher price than the present Bill’.69 From late-April he was in open dispute with the party (and was later taken to court) when supporters tried to engineer his co-option to Granard UDC against the wishes of the local UIL.70 Such tensions did not, however, stop 150 Volunteers parading through the town to celebrate the progress of the Home Rule bill in May.71 Locally they continued to be backed by a broad coalition of nationalist support, drilling actively throughout the early months of 1914.

**Boyle**

Moves to set up the Volunteers came later in Boyle, with the first meeting to agree their formation held at the beginning of February. Unlike the companies in Granard and Athlone,
the Boyle Volunteers were led from the start by Irish party stalwarts, notably the leading Boyle merchant and long-standing enemy of Jasper Tully, T.J. Devine. Indeed Devine's role was so prominent that Tully's *Roscommon Herald*, despite advocating Volunteering for months and reporting on Volunteer companies elsewhere, refused to publish any report of the Boyle corps until May. With the exception of Tully, there was a broad coalition of local support for the new corps. The inaugural meeting in February was led by Devine, attended by the local clergy, Gaelic Leaguers, Gaelic athletes and Hibernians and addressed by Devine's cousin Charles, a 'returned American' and local hotelier.72 The *Western Nationalist* claimed that 800 men enrolled at the first public meeting of the corps on 8th March. Hibernians, plus their bands, were prominent and T.J. Devine called for Hibernians across Ireland to be in the vanguard of the Volunteers.73 Later that month, the paper reported that the town companies were drilling three times a week.74 If the initial membership of 800 proclaimed by the *Western Nationalist* seems fanciful, the lower numbers reported by the police were still high for a town with a 1911 population of 2,691. Their estimate was that 700, of whom 400 enrolled, attended the initial corps meeting on 8th March, while about 300 were present at each of several parades in April.75

**Sligo**

As seen in Chapter 7, politics in Sligo town at the end of 1913 were dominated by an alliance of the Irish party and trades unionists. The key dividing lines in Sligo politics were still confession-based rather than class-based and nationalists were still united in challenging the Protestant 'commanding heights' of the town's economy. At the end of 1913 Sligo's politics, for the first time in this period, became focused explicitly on the issue of the Home Rule bill. At this time, tensions were running sufficiently high for local nationalists to organise a boycott of twenty-seven unionist town merchants who had signed a public address from the county to Bonar Law (see page 214). The boycott, to the dismay of the *Sligo Times* and *Sligo Independent*, was connived at by the *Sligo Champion* which published the names of all the signatories.76 Henry Monson called on all Hibernians to note the names of the signatories, 'to

72 *Western Nationalist*, 14th February 1914.
73 Ibid, 14th March 1914.
74 Ibid, 28th March 1914.
75 Monthly report of the Roscommon county inspector, March 1914 (PRO CO 904/92); RIC Crime Special Branch report, April 1914 (PRO CO 904/120).
76 See *Sligo Champion*, 29th November and 6th December; *Sligo Independent*, 6th December; *Sligo Times*, 6th December 1913.
whom Home Rulers' money must be as equally objectionable as Home Rule itself.' John Jinks denounced men who had pretended friendship with their Catholic customers. If Catholics confined trade to 'their own', the minority could not live for twenty-four hours in Sligo.\textsuperscript{77}

In January 1914, Jinks enhanced his leadership of the town's politics when the Corporation, on his initiative and that of his fellow alderman and ITGWU boss John Lynch, agreed to promote the Volunteers.\textsuperscript{78} As in Boyle, the leadership of the Sligo Volunteers came from party men, notably Jinks, Monson (the leading Hibernian) and Edward Foley (alderman and UIL man). Though a broad coalition supported the Volunteers, their early membership seems to have been derived from those Hibernians and ITGWU members who had, in political alliance, dominated elections to Sligo Corporation for over two years. This class bias was noted in the RIC county inspector's end-February report that there was 'great apprehension [about the Volunteers] among the better classes of both sides of politics'. A month later he noted that while the AOH were active in the Volunteers the UIL tended to stand aside.\textsuperscript{79} However, Jinks, Monson and Foley were all successful businessmen and Foley, who owned the town's brewery, was one of Sligo's richest men. All three were leading lights in the UIL and the spread of support for the Volunteers under Jinks was broad. It certainly embraced the \textit{Sligo Champion} and its rival the \textit{Sligo Nationalist} (whose owner, Bernard McTernan, was secretary of the North Sligo UIL). At the inaugural Volunteer meeting at the beginning of February it encompassed language enthusiasts, former IRB men, Gaelic athletes and the clergy. Over 460 men enrolled at that first public meeting\textsuperscript{80} and a collection for an equipment fund, with Jinks and Lynch among the collectors, was launched two weeks later.\textsuperscript{81} Birrell's Cabinet paper of April 1914 estimated that there were 530 members, drawn primarily from the AOH, the GAA and the Foresters.\textsuperscript{82} By late-February, the corps was organised into five companies, under eight ex-army drill instructors, with one company drilling each night of the week and the whole corps parading on Sundays.\textsuperscript{83} It was one of the largest and most active Irish Volunteer corps in the country.

\textsuperscript{77} \textit{Sligo Times}, 6\textsuperscript{th} December 1913.

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid, 7\textsuperscript{th} January 1914.

\textsuperscript{79} Monthly reports of the Sligo county inspector, February and March 1914 (PRO CO 904/92).

\textsuperscript{80} \textit{Sligo Champion}, 7\textsuperscript{th} February 1914.

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid. 21\textsuperscript{st} February 1914.

\textsuperscript{82} Cabinet paper April 1914. 'Irish Volunteers'. Birrell Mss., Bodleian Library Oxford, Dep 301.

\textsuperscript{83} \textit{Sligo Nationalist}, 21\textsuperscript{st} and 28\textsuperscript{th} February 1914.
The reasons for the formation of these four corps, when so many towns in the five counties did not yet drill, differed greatly. In Athlone and Granard, leadership came from advanced nationalists outside the Irish party’s control. The Granard corps was in addition backed by the town’s Irish party leadership and was formed at time when its local MP still publicly endorsed the movement. His mouthpiece, the *Longford Leader*, continued to give it publicity. Firmly under party leadership from the start, the Boyle corps may simply have stemmed from the enthusiasm of local Hibernians and party men. However, it also had the effect of boosting their status relative to their foe Jasper Tully. The formation of the Sligo corps, in a town whose politics had been more explicitly sectarian than elsewhere, enhanced both the local Lab/Nat alliance and the position of John Jinks as its leader.

The progress of the Volunteers in these four towns demonstrated that a corps could not flourish without the encouragement of ‘leading’ men and local Irish party figures. With the exception of Athlone, large numbers of men mobilised for regular drills, lessons, route marches and parades. Both the numbers of participants and the level of activity implied a new, heightened level of political mobilisation, but only where there was local party support. The contrast between the two largest towns in the five counties - between the movement’s stagnation in Athlone and its blossoming in Sligo - was stark. Proportionate to its population, the party-led corps in Boyle was even more successful than that in Sligo. Advanced nationalists, and even outright opponents of the Irish party, could flourish in the Volunteers in early 1914, but only in those places where local party leaders took their feet off the brakes.

**Restraints Removed - The Volunteers Take Off**

Though the first wave of volunteering was limited, the sense of political crisis remained pervasive in the local press and intensified during 1914. News reports and leading articles, speeches and a succession of public resolutions focused on the events - the climb-downs, the ‘betrayal’ of Ulster exclusion, parliamentary manoeuvres, army mutiny, gun-running, all-party conference and finally bloodshed - which weakened the case of those who argued that Home Rule could be won in parliament. Only the recurrence of foot and mouth disease, with its attendant economic disruption (and itself another source of alarm, gloom and paranoia against England), provided a news story of remotely comparable impact. Specifically the events, all of them setbacks, which triggered detailed coverage and intense speculation were:
Asquith's announcement on 9th February that an offer to Ulster's unionists would be forthcoming,

Asquith's announcement on 9th March of that offer, of 'temporary', county-by-county Ulster exclusion, and the Irish party leadership's reluctant agreement to it,

the Curragh mutiny of 18th-20th March, seen as risking the collapse of the government and making government coercion of 'Ulster' next to impossible,

the Larne gun-running of 24th/25th April, seen as a major accession of strength to the UVF and as, at best, colossal negligence by the government,

conciliatory moves by Churchill and Carson, with Churchill on 28th April saying that if Carson would put up his terms for a federal settlement the government would be bound to consider them and Carson replying that he would run risks for peace,

the government's announcement on 18th May that there would be an Amending bill re Ulster's exclusion (tabled subsequent to the Commons 'passage' of the Home Rule bill, which came a week later), followed by two months of rumour and speculation,

the Buckingham Palace all-party conference of 21st-24th July, the announcement of which, though it quickly failed, was greeted with alarm,

the Irish Volunteers' gun-running at Howth, County Dublin, on 26th July, and

the Bachelor's Walk killings on the same day, when three Dubliners were killed by men of the King's Own Scottish Borderers.

All of these were major news stories for the local press, but its editorial response was not uniform, and if anything became more polarised during 1914. At one extreme the Tully brothers continued to denounce what they saw as a succession of betrayals and plots by a corrupt government, while at the other John Hayden's two papers regularly voiced whatever rationale was being advanced by the Irish party leadership to justify its latest reverse. Meanwhile the Westmeath Independent oscillated wildly in its views, between a January prediction that anyone proposing the division of Ireland would be regarded as a traitor and a March paean of praise for Asquith ('The Occasion - The Man'), who was now proposing just such a division of Ireland, and whom the paper hailed as 'conspicuously the greatest statesman of the age'.

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84 Westmeath Independent, 3rd January and 14th March 1913.
The other nationalist papers, while all still professing loyalty to the party, gloomily charted the reverses. Sometimes they put a brave face on them: at least the county opt-out proposal had been killed in March after Carson rejected it; at least Asquith had got a grip on the government after the Curragh; or at least the parliamentary party could block acceptance of an Amending bill. Often, however, the papers gave expression to outbursts of alarm or rage. Thus, for the *Leitrim Observer*, the March county opt-out proposal was ‘gall and wormwood to the mind of every patriot … bitterly humiliating’ and it was bad ‘that we must parley with plunderers’. The *Western Nationalist* after the Curragh reported a belief that a government so lacking in backbone could only last a short time. If a ‘white paper’ were to propose the reinstatement of the mutinying officers, ‘nobody would be sorry for its [the government’s] departure’. Larne, for the *Strokestown Democrat*, confirmed ‘the majority of discerning Nationalists in their suspicions of the government’. The government had sought permanent Ulster exclusion and the Curragh bungle was ‘permitted or contrived’. Now it permitted the arming of Ulstermen. Irish Nationalists had to realise that ‘they are being sold’. By June, even Hayden’s papers adopted a tone of rising alarm. The *Westmeath Examiner* predicted that ‘the people are in earnest and will secure freedom at any cost’. In July, concerning the Buckingham Palace conference, it wrote that a last trick was being used by unionists to revive the veto of the King, who was himself using Tory language of the threat of civil war. This was the earthquake that could delay Home Rule. These outbursts were best exemplified by the despair of Farrell’s *Longford Leader* in March. It believed that Ireland, a Catholic and nationalist nation, was hated by the whole ascendency class of Great Britain. Its Catholic religion was the obstacle to its freedom and now Asquith’s government had succumbed to this feeling. Though the Irish party had with the deepest reluctance accepted the county opt-out proposal, ‘it is moments like these that try men’s souls’.

Against this background, with local opinion at the least ‘somewhat querulous’ and despite a national Irish party leadership which still hindered the movement, more Volunteer companies were formed across all of the five counties during March and April. At the end of April there were seventeen, most of which were satellites of three of the corps formed earlier in the year.

85 *Leitrim Observer*, 14th March 1914.
86 *Western Nationalist*, 28th March 1914.
87 *Strokestown Democrat*, 9th May 1914.
88 *Westmeath Examiner*, 27th June and 25th July 1914.
89 *Longford Leader*, 14th March 1914.
Jinks and Foley radiated out from Sligo to lead the establishment of three new companies in North Sligo and three in Leitrim. The Boyle corps was imitated in Cootehall in North Roscommon, with many of the Boyle Volunteers at the Cootehall formation meeting (but with the company inactive until ‘spring farming operations’ were over). Cawley and Cusack helped to clone the Granard corps at Columbkille in North Longford. The most significant event, though, was the formation of a corps in Mullingar in mid-April. As noted in Chapter 6, supporters of both Ginnell and Hayden participated in forming the corps. As in Sligo, Boyle and Granard, it drew upon the full range of nationalists in the town and by early May had around 400 enrolled members. Two other North Westmeath companies were set up in Finea and Castlepolland.

Given the pressure of events, the succession of threats and setbacks to Home Rule and the accrual of Volunteer members and companies, a change in the party leadership’s policy was only a matter of time. Writing about his friend John Dillon, Wilfrid Scawen Blunt stated that ‘it was the Curragh incident that convinced him that the National Volunteer movement should be openly supported’. An AOH memorandum in favour of the Volunteers was said to be circulating in Longford from mid-April. Elsewhere, however, the first sign of an overt change in party policy did not come until after Larne, at the end of the month. In Roscommon, AOH divisions from 27th April were receiving a circular from the national secretary, J.D. Nugent, calling on Hibernians to make themselves available for Volunteer drill. This latter timing fits with John Redmond’s own statement, in a public letter of 9th June, that it was ‘six weeks ago’ that the party told its ‘friends’ to support the Volunteers. On 11th May, William Redmond went public in a letter to the Westminster Gazette, lauding

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90 Monthly reports of the Sligo and Leitrim county inspectors, March and April 1914 (PRO CO 904/92 and 904/93).
91 Monthly reports of the Roscommon county inspector, March and April 1914 (PRO CO 904/92 and 904/93).
92 Longford Leader, 11th April 1914. Oddly, the paper on 4th April had reported ‘Brothers’ Cawley and Cusack forming an AOH division at Augnacliffe/Columbkille, but there is no other indication of either man having an AOH role.
93 Westmeath Examiner, 9th May 1914.
94 Monthly reports of the Westmeath county inspector, March and April 1914 (PRO CO 904/92 and 904/93).
95 Blunt, My Diaries, Part Two, 20th June 1914, p. 427.
96 Monthly report of the Longford county inspector, April 1914 (PRO CO 904/93).
97 Monthly report of the Roscommon county inspector, April 1914 (PRO CO 904/93).
98 Stephen Gwynn, John Redmond’s Last Years, p. 116.
the Volunteers and predicting results ‘quite as unfortunate as any-thing which might conceivably happen in Ulster’ should Home Rule fail. The party was now placing itself in the vanguard.

The net result was that in May and June the pace of what the police called ‘branch’ formation accelerated rapidly. By the end of June there were 26 ‘branches’ in Leitrim; 15 in Longford; 20 in Roscommon; 15 in Sligo and 20 in Westmeath, making 96 in all. The grand formation meeting in Longford town, led by Farrell, was on 27th May; Roscommon town’s with Hayden was on 1st June. Both mirrored the meetings that had taken place before in towns such as Boyle, Granard, Sligo or Mullingar. The full gamut of nationalist society was present - in Roscommon town leading figures of the UIL, town tenants, RAEC, Gaelic Club, the clergy and the town commissioners all played their part. Those long-standing enemies George Geraghty (the former Sinn Fein supporter) and Charles O’Keeffe (the town’s UIL ‘fixer’) jointly moved Canon Cummins to the chair. Hayden’s fellow speakers were Cummins and his curate, Gaelic Leaguer and former member of the Sinn Fein national executive Michael O’Flanagan. The monster crowd also watched a Roscommon-Athlone football match and were played to by the Athlone Pipers’ Band. George Geraghty, soon leading the Roscommon corps, later reported that 250 men had attended its first parade.

Vampirisation?
Volunteering undoubtedly became a mass movement in the five counties during the summer of 1914. In July and August, the total of police-recorded ‘branches’ ballooned from 96 to 208, with an estimated membership of approximately 20,000. To put the scale of this mobilisation in context, the total male population of all five counties in the 1911 census was just under 176,000. Substantially fewer than half of these would have been of an appropriate age to ‘volunteer’; for example, just under 30% of the Irish male population in 1911 was of the ‘military’ age of between 19 and 38, the recruiting age limits for the regular army. It is

99 Westmeath Examiner, 16th May 1914.
100 Collated from monthly county inspectors’ reports for the five counties for June 1914 (PRO CO 904/93).
102 Collated from monthly reports for the RIC county inspectors for August 1914. The county numbers were: Leitrim 48 Volunteer ‘branches’ and approx 4,000 members; Longford 23 branches; Roscommon 56 branches and 5,583 members; Sligo 38 branches and 4,536 members and Westmeath 43 branches and 4,152 members. To reach the approximation of 20,000 Volunteer members for the five counties, it was necessary to add the first Longford figure for membership cited by the county inspector. of 1,917 members in January 1915 (August 1914, CO 904/94, January 1915, CO 904/96).
clear that the Volunteers mobilised anything between 25% and 35% of local young and middle-aged men. Moreover, unlike the local membership of the UIL, which was also still, nominally, recorded by the police at over 20,000, the Volunteers were active. Most Volunteers not only enrolled but drilled and paraded week after week. There is no doubt that the change of the Irish party’s policy towards the Volunteers spurred this mushroom growth, but it remains unclear just how far the party, using David Fitzpatrick’s imagery, successfully acted as a ‘vampire’ towards the movement.

Fitzpatrick himself considered that ‘the party vampire’ was at ‘its most incisive’ when it took control of the Volunteers in mid-1914.103 Already at the end of April, the Dublin IRB man Thomas Ashe could lament to John Devoy of the American Clan na Gael: ‘I am informed by men whose integrity I can vouch for that the Volunteers are practically ruled to-day by the AOH Board of Erin’.104 Tom Kettle in mid-April had written to Stephen Gwynn about party supporters that ‘they have already come into the movement so heavily that there is a danger of their swamping the ship.’105 According to Fitzpatrick, when Redmond publicly forced the Dublin-based provisional committee of the Volunteers to accept twenty-five Irish party nominees, this reflected a fait accompli in the countryside.106 In the five counties, party stalwarts were nearly always prominent in the wave of new companies and Redmond’s national take-over of the Volunteers’ provisional committee in June generated barely a local murmur. Out of nearly a hundred local corps at the time of Redmond’s takeover, resistance to his demands was mooted in only three. In Coolarty, County Longford, Mr. Keohane (a creamery manager) was removed from the chair of the corps because of his anti-Redmond stance and the neighbouring Columbkille company promptly elected him president.107 In Roscommon town, George Geraghty and Michael Finlay (both ‘Sinn Fein’ opponents of Hayden in 1907) used a meeting of only five out of twenty-eight committee men to pass a resolution attacking Redmond’s move. This was rapidly rescinded, and did not even find support from Father O’Flanagan, who called the move ‘untimely’.108 The nationalist press universally backed Redmond, with even Jasper Tully calling Redmond’s support for the

105 Kettle to Gwynn, 15th April, quoted in Lyons, The Enigma of Tom Kettle, p. 243.
107 Longford Leader. 27th June and 4th July 1914.
108 Roscommon Journal. 12th June; Roscommon Messenger. 20th June 1914.
Volunteers ‘the one redeeming feature of the present situation’. ‘With Redmond on their side, the rest is easy, now that he has thrown his weight on the side of the Volunteers.’ The *Leitrim Observer* hailed: ‘Redmond, the Leader, the real general’.109

In Athlone, the process of party take-over was plain to all. At the end of May, O.J. Dolan (grocer, publican, auctioneer, town councillor and Chief Ranger of the Foresters) put his name to a circular calling for the town’s corps to be put ‘on a sound footing’ at a public meeting. When held in June, it was attended by over 700 with, according to the *Westmeath Independent*, fifty to sixty of the ‘Sinn Fein element’ interspersed. A motion to adjourn this ‘political’ meeting received only 11 votes, and the meeting was then run by Dolan, a succession of party men (including MacDermott-Hayes) and half a dozen priests. Conn O’Frighil, the current president of the town corps, stated that though he opposed Redmond’s takeover of the Dublin ‘provisional committee’ he was prepared to hand local leadership to ‘more influential people’.110

However, with the possible exception of the departure of Keohane from the Coolarty Volunteers, there was no purge and Athlone was the only other instance locally in which there was an actual change of leadership. The Sligo corps continued to be a very broad church of all nationalists, and the Granard corps remained firmly with Cawley and Cusack. In County Roscommon, Tully had already pitched in as an active reporter and supporter of Devine’s Boyle corps.111 In new corps such as Roscommon town, the leadership was just as broadly-based. Indeed, George Geraghty, despite his abortive anti-Redmond coup, rose to greater prominence as the town’s representative on the first Volunteer district committee.112 In Manorhamilton, James Dolan, brother of the defeated Sinn Fein candidate in the 1908 by-election, joined the newly-formed Volunteer committee with F.E. Meehan MP,113 who had changed his tune to believe that if Home Rule had to be won by physical force there were 600,000 Irishmen who were fighting men.114 Alex McCabe, one of less than a handful of IRB

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110 *Westmeath Independent*, 23rd May and 20th June 1914.
111 So much so that there was even a temporary reconciliation between Tully and T.J. Devine. In June, Tully went so far as to support Devine’s co-option to the county council (*Roscommon Messenger*, 20th June 1914).
112 *Roscommon Journal*, 25th July 1914. This was in the same week that Father O’Flanagan departed for Cliffoney in Sligo.
113 *Sligo Champion*, 30th May 1914.
114 *Leitrim Observer*, 2nd May 1914.
men in County Sligo (see Chapter 3), became a leading Volunteer organiser across the county as company after company was formed.

Not only did Sinn Fein supporters and other advanced nationalists remain, or become, prominent, but a significant number of men emerged, some party men and some not, who had played no local political role in the past. These included:

Michael O’Mullane, Sligo-born, a Hibernian from Dublin and now, on his ‘holidays’, one of the most passionate orators at Sligo and Leitrim Volunteer parades,

C.H. Devine, T.J. Devine’s cousin and the ‘returned American’, who fulfilled a similar role across North Roscommon and South Leitrim,

P.J. Neilan, solicitor, active across the South Roscommon companies,

James McGurrin, another returned-American, an ‘orator’ who spoke at inordinate length at North Leitrim rallies and parades,

Michael O’Connor Maguire, the best singer in Mullingar, a Gaelic Leaguer who became secretary of the town’s corps, and

Arthur Leyland, joint secretary of the Boyle corps, who spoke for the first time ever on a public platform in May.116

According to Stephen Gwynn, the Volunteers enabled ‘a new section of the community’ to come into power before the war. ‘Men began to count in Irish life who had counted for nothing before.’117 The sheer numbers parading, drilling, being lectured and raising funds were on a scale not seen in recent years. In terms of organised commitment, week after week, they exceeded any popular mobilisation since the height of the Land War at the beginning of the 1880s.

Reports of drills, training, lectures, fund-raising, committee meetings and parades proliferated in the pages of the local nationalist press, which often devoted up to a page to to ‘Volunteer News’. Particularly comprehensive coverage of companies in Leitrim, Roscommon and Sligo was provided by the Roscommon Herald and Sligo Champion. As these two papers also reproduced copious reports of UIL and AOH meetings in 1914 (in the case of the Herald primarily AOH meetings) the names of participants in Irish party meetings in 1914 can be

115 Sligo Nationalist, 18th July 1914.
116 Western Nationalist, 16th May 1914.
117 Stephen Gwynn, The Irish Situation, p. 29.
compared with those of leading Volunteers in the same year. This analysis is described in Appendix A.

From the reports in the *Sligo Champion*, the names of 643 Irish party and 478 Volunteer activists have been compiled (mostly from County Sligo and North Leitrim); from the *Roscommon Herald* 634 party activists and 649 Volunteers (mostly from County Roscommon and South Leitrim). In compiling these names, the number of Volunteer activists has if anything been understated relative to the number of those in the party. First, party names were compiled from reports published over the whole of 1914, whereas Volunteer names were effectively published on a large scale only from May to November. Secondly, to compare like with like, only activists’ names have been collated: primarily officers, speakers, those attending committee meetings, those on platform committees at rallies and proposers and seconders of resolutions. In the case of the Irish party, these named individuals could reliably be said to cover the vast majority of political ‘activists’, but in the case of the Volunteers the names of many who were ‘activists’, simply by virtue of their enrolling, parading and drilling, were rarely reported in the press. Nevertheless, a comparison of named Irish party activists and named Volunteer leaders showed that:

1. of 643 party activists in the *Champion* an estimated 26.8% had an equivalent Volunteer role,
2. of 634 party activists in the *Herald* 23.8% had an equivalent Volunteer role,
3. of 478 Volunteer leaders in the *Champion* 36.8% had an equivalent party role,
4. of 649 Volunteer leaders in the *Herald* 23.2% had an equivalent party role.

The ‘outlier’ of these results is the third - the percentage of *Champion* Volunteer leaders who were also party activists - but the results are clear. Of party activists in three of the five counties, some 25% took on a similar role in the Volunteers. Of reported Volunteer leaders, between 63% and 77% did not come from the party. The Volunteers’ leaders were not just Irish party men with wooden rifles.

There are also some indications that ‘vampirisation’ worked in reverse - it was the Irish party rather than the Volunteers which was losing blood. This was particularly apparent in the UIL where, as already noted in Chapter 2, the stimulus to activity from land disputes and agitation
had largely receded. The party’s termination of the Home Rule fund early in 1914 removed another major prop - fund-raising - to branch activity. RIC ‘Crime Special Branch’ reports of UIL fund-raising indicated that the effect was dramatic, as shown below:

Table 11 : Funds raised by the UIL by county, 1913-14 (£s)$^{118}$

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Leitrim</th>
<th>Longford</th>
<th>Roscommon</th>
<th>Sligo</th>
<th>Westmeath</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1 1913</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 1913</td>
<td>£229</td>
<td>£304</td>
<td>£523</td>
<td>£553</td>
<td>£235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1 1914</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>10</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 1914</td>
<td>£125</td>
<td>£90</td>
<td>£196</td>
<td>£181</td>
<td>£153</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Though the series was erratic from quarter to quarter, the change of trend was consistent across all five counties. The decisive downturn in fund-raising came in the second quarter of 1914, after the closure of the Home Rule fund and during the ‘lift-off’ of local volunteering. There are no equivalent police records of Volunteer funds raised, but it seems almost certain that some funds not raised by the UIL went instead to the Volunteers.

The UIL’s future role after Home Rule, in contrast to the explicitly confessional AOH, had in any case been in doubt. Several political figures made it clear that the UIL would soon become obsolete. Annual branch ‘reorganisation’ meetings (i.e. AGMs) were punctuated by comments that they would be the last held. When the South Westmeath executive reorganised in January 1914, ‘many realised that they were meeting for the last time for reorganisation’. T.F. Smyth had told the Mohill UIL in May 1913 that this should be their last annual meeting and Farrell expressed the same sentiments to the North Longford executive in January.

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$^{118}$ RIC Crime Special Branch Quarterly reports, 1913 and 1914 (PRO CO 904/20).
1914. Fitzgibbon at the end of 1913 made his prediction (see page 109) that the UIL would soon have done its work and that its place would be taken by the Gaelic League.

As the future of the Home Rule bill became progressively less secure, the message was instead put out that the UIL would have to keep up the struggle. As Farrell expressed it in May 1914, the party had saved the bacon of the government time and again over four years and would keep them in office for the necessary time. The UIL would keep going until there was a parliament on College Green. However, Farrell went on to tell his audience that they now also had the chance of an Irish army, which they must take. They should be doubly armed, 'first by the vote and then by our guns'. A key weapon in the hands of nationalists to gain Home Rule and then to protect it was now seen to be the Volunteers. As Farrell put it at another meeting on the same day, it was the Volunteers who would ensure that 'what we have got we shall keep'.

Physically, the sheer proliferation of Volunteer drills and meetings pushed the more humdrum work of the UIL out of the limelight, clashing with the routine of branch committees and resolution-passing. With little land agitation, minimal fund-raising and the completion of the county council elections at the beginning of June 1914, there was very little for UIL branches to do. In her work on County Longford, Marie Coleman noted the sharp fall in the number of UIL branch meetings reported in the second half of 1914122 and this pattern was also seen in other counties. As was done for earlier years in Chapter 3, reports of UIL and AOH meetings in the Roscommon Messenger, Roscommon Herald, Sligo Champion and Western Nationalist have been counted for the years 1913-1914. To these have been added reports published in the Longford Leader, the preserved series of which, unlike that for 1910-11, is complete. The frequency of UIL and AOH reports in counties Leitrim, Longford, Roscommon and Sligo can thus be analysed.

\(^{119}\) Westmeath Independent, 10\textsuperscript{th} January 1914; Leitrim Observer, 15\textsuperscript{th} May 1913; Longford Leader, 7\textsuperscript{th} February 1914.

\(^{120}\) Farrell speaking to Clonguish UIL on 30\textsuperscript{th} May, Longford Leader, 6\textsuperscript{th} June 1914.

\(^{121}\) Ibid, Farrell speaking to Longford UIL on 30\textsuperscript{th} May.

\(^{122}\) Coleman, County Longford 1910-23, p. 62.

\(^{123}\) As with the analysis for 1910-13 in Chapter 3, trends in party activity in Westmeath in 1914 cannot be analysed from UIL/AOH reports, given the scarcity of party reports in the county's newspapers. The UIL was already seriously damaged in North Westmeath, while the Westmeath Independent was not at this time a 'paper of record' for the UIL/AOH in the south of the county. Moreover, the number of AOH divisions in the whole county in the years 1913-14 was barely a handful.
Table 12: UIL and AOH reports in local newspapers, 1913-1914

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<th></th>
<th>Q1 1913</th>
<th>Q2 1913</th>
<th>Q3 1913</th>
<th>Q4 1913</th>
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<th>Q4 1914</th>
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<tr>
<td>Longford Leader</td>
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<tr>
<td>UIL</td>
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<td>35</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>33</td>
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<td>44</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>37</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roscommon Herald</td>
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<td>33</td>
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<td>20</td>
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<tr>
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<td>20</td>
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<tr>
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<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

A clear shift to lower levels of party activity occurred in the third quarter of 1914, the period of maximum Volunteer activity. The brunt of the fall was borne by the UIL; the AOH saw a much smaller dip. It was not seasonal and, barring the smaller samples of the Roscommon Messenger and Western Nationalist, there was no comparable downturn in 1913. Nor was this shift triggered by the outbreak of war in August. UIL activity for the middle months of 1914 is shown below:

Table 13: UIL reports in local newspapers, April-September 1914

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1914</th>
<th>April</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>June</th>
<th>July</th>
<th>Aug</th>
<th>Sept</th>
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<tr>
<td>Longford Leader</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>Roscommon Herald</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roscommon Messenger</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sligo Champion</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23</td>
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<td>Western Nationalist</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This analysis shows that the fall in branch activity preceded the war, though the smaller series for the Roscommon Messenger and Western Nationalist do not show a clear trend. A sharp fall of activity came in June in the case of the Longford Leader and Sligo Champion: in July
at the latest for the *Roscommon Herald*. These two months witnessed the climax of the Home Rule crisis and the most rapid rate of Volunteer company formation.\(^{124}\) Reporting of the Volunteers in the press also dwarfed that of the UIL. For example, the *Longford Leader* carried 55 Volunteer company reports against 16 UIL reports in June and July; the *Herald* 92 against 17 and the *Champion*, less dramatically, 57 against 46. In the third quarter there were 85, 170 and 133 Volunteer reports in these three papers respectively, against 19, 17 and 64 UIL reports.

In February 1915, the UIL National Directory reported, and had to justify, a nationwide collapse in the number of branches sending in subscription fees over the previous year. (For the five counties only 65 branches were paid-up against 121 in the year before.) The Directory’s rationalisation was that:

> In order to give an opportunity to the better organising of the National Volunteers, the work of organisation in connection with the United Irish League was not pressed during the year....\(^{125}\)

The hypothesis that the Irish party ‘vampirised’ the Volunteers at the local level in the spring and summer of 1914 is not, therefore, supported by the evidence, whether nationally or in the five counties.\(^{126}\) Though the party’s change of policy towards the Volunteers greatly accelerated the Volunteers’ formation, and though party men took a prominent role in nearly all companies, the movement mobilised many activists, and enrolled thousands of members, who had not recently been politically active. Its leadership was anything but just party hacks playing soldiers and continued to be drawn from all local societies and organisations. If any one movement weakened from loss of ‘blood’ it was the party (in particular the UIL), not the Volunteers.

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\(^{124}\) This is not to say that the war had no impact. Table 12 shows that UIL activity fell further after the outbreak of war, though AOH activity, if anything, recovered (see also Chapter 10).


\(^{126}\) At the national level, Redmond’s takeover was also ineffective. Bulmer Hobson considered it to be ‘completely illusory’ and control of both central staff and funds was kept entirely away from Redmond’s nominees (Hobson, *Ireland, Yesterday and Tomorrow*, p. 51). The restructured Provisional Committee of the Volunteers, with Redmond’s representatives, did not even meet until 14th July (*Western Nationalist*, 25th July 1914).
"Playing With Fire"

John Dillon, though he now called himself 'strongly in favour', described the Volunteer movement as 'playing with fire' in a letter to his friend Wilfrid Scawen Blunt at the end of May, continuing: 'And unless it is kept under reliable control - it might at any moment utterly ruin the National movement - and repeat the disasters of 1798'.\(^{127}\) According to a series of reports, 'The State of Ireland', prepared for Dublin Castle by district magistrates in the summer of 1914, the 'reliable control' desired by Dillon was lacking. Though the magistrates considered their localities relatively crime-free and relations between the public, police and magistrates to be good, the ballooning Volunteer companies had, according to Captain Owen in Roscommon, 'no responsible leaders' and if armed were 'a menace to the public peace'. There might also be retaliation against local Protestants if Ulster Catholics were attacked.\(^{128}\) Elsewhere, the Volunteers were consistently seen as dangerous:

The National Volunteer force may in time become a source of danger to the public peace. In its ranks are many undesirables. (Castlerea),

The Volunteer movement is popular with young men, but it is doubtful if it will last. As there are no responsible leaders there is a danger that the men might easily get out of hand. (Mullingar),

National Volunteers disloyal, and if they become roused, would get out of hand and become a dangerous rabble. (Sligo).\(^{129}\)

In Roscommon the RIC county inspector, after 'moving quietly about' during June, believed that the UIL and AOH were the chief organisers of the county's Volunteers, but went on:

The corps have no proper leaders and are under no proper control... These bands of young men coming together are beginning to feel their strength and when they get arms their existence looks like being a serious menace to the peace of the county and to the liberty and security of the minority who hold different political views.\(^{130}\)

The rhetoric fed to the 'bands of young men' had moved on from the political role, and even the locally-defensive military role, advocated for the Volunteers in the autumn of 1913. Again and again the justification was now for 'Ireland's army', the purpose of which was

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\(^{127}\) Dillon to Blunt 21st May 1914, Blunt Mss., West Sussex Record Office. Chichester, Box 16 Vol. 6.


\(^{129}\) Reports of Mr. Rice, Castlerea; Mr. Moore. Mullingar; Captain Fitzpatrick, Sligo ('The State of Ireland'. CO 904/227).

\(^{130}\) Monthly report of the Roscommon county inspector, June 1914 (PRO CO 904/93).
either to ensure the arrival of Home Rule or to enforce it after it had been passed. To call this rhetoric 'radicalised' would, however, be misleading. References to more separatist goals than 'Home Rule', such as the one made by John Cawley in April (see page 264), remained infrequent. However, the language used was now significantly more violent and bellicose. Rather than just matching Ulster's bluff, the objective was to resort to arms. For Patrick McKenna, speaking at the formation of the Streamstown, Westmeath company, the carrion crows had declared for the 'arbitrament of the sword', and the only choice for those who 'believed in constitutional government' was to meet force by force. Orange fanatics sought for the blood and murder of Roman Catholics, and not so much as a sod of soil could be taken from the Irish government. For C.H. Devine in Boyle, the Home Rule bill had been too dearly bought to be trifled with and if it came to guarding it by force, 'they had the men, and they would get the guns to shoot down every man who opposed them (renewed cheers)'. That most diligent of Irish party organisers, the co-regional director of the AOH John Keaveny, could only 'hope' that the soon-to-be Lady Carson would not be left a widow, her husband shot by 'Nationalist troops'. It was at a Highwood, County Sligo, Volunteer rally that Henry Monson, Keaveny's fellow AOH director, made his speech about the 'mighty pent up volume of water restrained by but a flimsy dam' of constitutional agitation (see page 127). Monson also declared that the AOH had fought and were fighting for Ireland, 'aye and with the rifle too (loud applause)'. Alderman Foley at the same rally hoped that the 'army' would wipe out the stain of the battle of the Boyne. On the same day, Michael O'Mullane pronounced that if Ireland did not get Home Rule: 'You will give English rule in Ireland a hotter time than it ever had since the cursed foot of the Saxon first trod our soil (loud cheers)'.

At greater length, John Hayden's Westmeath associate Michael Ronan wrote for the Westmeath Examiner on 'The Irish National Volunteers - Why Are They Formed?'

According to Ronan, the military had shown that they could not be relied upon to defend the

111 Farrell, interestingly, again went further than his colleagues and looked to goals beyond Home Rule, when he said of Home Rule that 'we had to begin, we had to get our step on the ladder'. He was speaking to the Longford UIL on 31st May 1914 (Roscommon Herald, 6th June 1914).
112 Westmeath Independent, 23rd May 1914.
113 Western Nationalist, 30th May 1914.
114 Keaveny speaking at Fuerty, Roscommon Messenger, 30th May 1914.
115 Sligo Nationalist, 18th July 1914.
116 Ibid, (O'Mullane speaking at Geevagh, County Sligo).
Constitution and property. The police in Westmeath were also ‘a military force’. Orangemen were now organised and had arms - who were they to fight? It had to be the ‘papists and nationalists’. The British democracy could not be expected to turn aside from their business to defend Ireland. Only the Volunteers, the rising generation, a new force to support the parliamentary organisation, could do so. All freemen had a ‘born right’ to defend their freedom. Another writer of extended articles at this time was Jasper Tully. Tully became convinced of the reality rather than the bluff of ‘Carson’s Armed Menace’, which would fight rather than come under the rule of Catholics, after he and his brother had motored across Ulster in April. His leading articles were thereafter consistently belligerent. The Volunteers must be armed. The Tories had not counted on ‘the uprising of Nationalist Ireland’. With the Volunteers ‘in action’, no general election or Amending bill could deny ‘Ireland a Nation’. Arms and the ability to use them were the supreme test of a nation. ‘The uprise of the Volunteer movement has amazed both friend and foe.’

The bellicosity of nationalist rhetoric climaxed at the end of July in response to the killings at Bachelor’s Walk in Dublin. There were, of course, still some instances of relative restraint, notably Hayden’s two papers and the Westmeath Independent, which blamed the killings on Dublin Castle officials (albeit acting in a conspiracy) and called for an enquiry. Though focusing on the same target, the Longford Leader’s tone was different. Dublin Castle and the ‘ascendancy gang’ were ‘the enemy at every turn of Irish race and sentiment’. The blood shed would ‘cry to heaven for vengeance on the heads of our national enemies, and will not cry in vain’. In almost every local town the Volunteers led marches to rallies to hear denunciations of the killings. In Roscommon town they heard George Geraghty denounce ‘the dirty hacks of the English government’, cowards and murderers. After ‘the English’ (i.e. the King’s Own Scottish Borderers) were beaten all they could do was shoot women and children. An English visitor to the town was threatened by a Volunteer. Elphin in Roscommon was said to be ‘panic stricken’ and Strokestown showed ‘a grim determination of

137 Westmeath Examiner, 25th July 1914.
138 Roscommon Herald, 16th April 1914. This article prompted a letter from Tom Clarke to the paper a week later. Clarke wrote that he handled over 50 weekly provincial papers and that ‘Carson’s Nation’ was the best piece he had read in any provincial paper.
139 Ibid, 30th May and 6th June 1914.
140 Roscommon Messenger, Westmeath Examiner, Westmeath Independent, 1st August 1914.
141 Longford Leader, 1st August 1914.
142 Roscommon Journal, Roscommon Messenger, 1st August 1914.
At the Sligo meeting, organised by Jinks and led by 300 Volunteers and the Hibernian band, O'Mullane denounced the blood shed by the 'cursed dogs of England' (and the 'cursed Scottish hounds') and said that if the government did not act then Ireland must take it into her hands to punish them. Ireland must have Home Rule, and 'if any English party tries to stop us then the rifle must speak at last (cheers)'. For Henry Monson, the blood of the victims cried for vengeance and the killings showed that Ireland could depend only on her right arm - the Volunteers. If there was to be a war, said Jinks, the men and women of Sligo would be at the front. Jinks, that pillar of Irish party influence, machine politics and respectability and one of Redmond's twenty-five nominees to the Volunteers' provisional committee, later declaimed to the Sligo Guardians:

Ireland has been governed by the heel and the boot, but I will say here publicly, in the presence of the press, that Ireland is out for blood and murder - if murder is required. We will not stand any nonsense in the future...if a shot is fired at our people in the North we are prepared to meet them.

The eve of the World War saw provincial opinion almost totally absorbed in the Home Rule crisis, experiencing a mass political mobilisation, militarism and a bellicosity of language unseen in recent times. For the Sligo Champion it was 'the healthiest and most significant manifestation of the National spirit that has been seen in Ireland in the lifetime of most of us'. The Irish party, erratically and inconsistently, had on balance gone along with Tom Kettle's 'great wave of emotion and action'. However, though the goal of the Volunteer movement was still Home Rule, the Irish party did not create that movement, was partly marginalised by it and could not be said to control it. Faced with the 'great wave', the Irish party was, not surprisingly, swept along if not yet, as after Easter 1916, swept away.

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143 Western Nationalist, 1st August 1914.
144 Sligo Independent, 1st August 1914.
145 Roscommon Messenger, 4th July 1914.
146 Western Nationalist, 8th August 1914.
147 Sligo Champion, 6th June 1914.
Chapter 10: War, Takeover and Dissent

With just one exception, the local press at the end of July 1914 seemed oblivious to the imminence of European war. Leading articles over the weekend of 1st-2nd August focused almost exclusively on Irish affairs. Specifically, the Howth arms landings, Bachelor’s Walk killings and the local anger the latter inspired were by a long way the major story. The exception, as so often, was provided by Jasper Tully’s Roscommon Herald, whose leader was instead ‘The War Drums!’. For Tully, millions were now marching in Europe and England was on the edge of a precipice that might mean ‘the end of the Empire as we know it’. The plotting of ‘Servia’, ‘one of the most contemptible nations on earth’, had triggered the crisis, but ‘for Ireland, all this is profoundly interesting’. In this Tully saw an opportunity, however imprecise, for Irish nationalists and concluded: ‘if we are men, and are prepared to act up to the call of destiny, Ireland may yet rise triumphant out of the ashes of her own past’. ¹

‘Bravo England!’

Within two weeks, the impact of war had indeed changed the political mood in Ireland, though in anything but the direction anticipated by Tully. By the end of August, local police reports were unequivocal that popular opinion had taken England’s side in the war. In Leitrim, the county was ‘to a man’ for Great Britain in the war. In Roscommon: ‘The war is the absorbing topic of interest now. Nothing else is discussed and there is a fine spirit of Loyalty in evidence. Germany is hated and France loved.’ Public sympathy in Sligo was said to be entirely pro-British, while in Westmeath: ‘The sole topic of interest among all classes is the War in Europe.’ Here there was a ‘marked consensus’ that ‘England is right to join the war’. ² As Augustine Birrell was to write in ‘The State of Ireland’, a November 1914 Cabinet paper:

The Irish have changed, and their attitude today, north, south, east and west towards England in her tremendous struggle with Germany and Austria is, speaking of Ireland as a whole, one of great friendliness.

¹ Roscommon Herald, 1st August 1914.
² Monthly reports of the Leitrim, Roscommon, Sligo and Westmeath county inspectors, August 1914 (PRO CO 904/94).
There was still a 'disloyal minority', but the 'old Fenian strain' was worn 'very thin indeed in Ireland'. This change of Irish opinion was 'unprecedented and calls for notice'. A member of what Birrell called the 'disloyal minority', Desmond Fitzgerald, recalled in his memoirs that his immediate reaction to the outbreak of war, one of rejoicing at England's difficulty, soon gave way to despair as Germany rather than England became the popular enemy and Ireland's martial spirit was 'canalised' for the defence of England. 'Our castle of dreams toppled about us with a crash.'

From its outset, the impact of war dwarfed everything else in importance and the local press, of whatever political hue, immediately responded to the needs of its readers for news, not just about battles and campaigns but about how the war directly affected them. The key local stories of the first weeks related to panic buying, price rises, the call-up of reservists, arrests of 'spies', booming cattle exports and the workings of numerous war relief committees. The Western Nationalist wrote of the 'shivering' of bank accounts and of 'food traitors' increasing their prices. The Leitrim Advertiser noted that all local banks shut from 3rd-7th August. The Westmeath Independent inveighed against 'food harpies' and, with undimmed anti-Semitism, against the 'Jew harpies' who had profiteered in the South African war and were now doing so again. There was undoubtedly a sense of excitement and, as army reservists left the region, it was reported that they were seen off by local bands and cheering crowds. A 'general dread of a German invasion' triggered arrests of suspicious foreigners. Two 'Russian Jew peddlars' were arrested in Boyle, whether for spying or profiteering is not clear. Two foreigners arrested in Tarmonbarry, County Longford - again Russian - were said to be studying the village's bridge over the Shannon. In Sligo town, a spy scare led to the movements of all visitors to the town being watched.

Some news stories were undoubtedly short-lived; panic buying and knee-jerk price rises had subsided by the third week of the war, the reservists had all gone by mid-August and the

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5 Western Nationalist, 8th August; Leitrim Advertiser, 6th August; Westmeath Independent, 8th August 1914.
6 Monthly report of the Sligo county inspector. August 1914 (PRO CO 904/94); Longford Leader; Roscommon Messenger; Sligo Champion; Westmeath Independent, 8th August 1914.
8 Western Nationalist, 15th August; Leitrim Observer, 29th August; Sligo Independent, 29th August 1914.
9 Leitrim Advertiser, 13th August; Westmeath Independent, 15th August; Westmeath Examiner, 22nd August 1914.
chances of invasion, as the *Midland Reporter* noted on 10th September, were now remote. Other stories were much more persistent. Week after week the meetings of war relief committees (primarily to support soldiers' dependants) were written up and regular reports of labour shortages began to appear. The *Roscommon Herald* wrote of the latter, in Longford, as early as mid-August and in mid-October the *Westmeath Independent*, reporting no lack of employment locally, predicted significant labour shortages in the coming spring. The economies of garrison towns such as Athlone and Mullingar benefited from the arrival of thousands of troops in training. Horses were bought up by the army and cattle exports boomed. The Mullingar *Westmeath Guardian* revived itself to inveigh against the folly of farmers exporting breeding cattle too early. The overall increase of food prices was large even though the initial panic buying had subsided. The Board of Trade estimated that in the UK they had risen by between 15-17% up to 1st December. The *Roscommon county inspector* reported at the year-end that 'farmers are well pleased with themselves'.

Other war news was less 'good'. Duties on tea and beer went up in the first wartime budget in November. (The *Western Nationalist* attacked the burden being placed upon Ireland's teetotallers.) Government finance for local public works - Board of Works loans under the 1881 Land Act, housing loans from the Treasury, Local Government Board support for the proposed Athlone water works - was cut off. Belgian refugees appeared in Mullingar and Sligo from mid-November and shipping in and out of Sligo was disrupted from the end of October by German mine-laying, with one steamer sunk and fourteen men drowned. By November, the publication of letters home from local men serving in the army was supplemented by notices of war deaths.

As for the newspapers themselves, they commonly carried one to two pages of war news from outside Ireland, but they were constrained by what the *Sligo Champion* called the 'famine

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10 *Midland Reporter*, 10th September 1914.
12 *Westmeath Guardian*, 14th August and 16th October 1914.
13 *Leitrim Advertiser*, 31st December 1914.
14 Monthly report of the Roscommon county inspector, December 1914 (PRO CO 904/95).
15 *Western Nationalist*, 21st November 1914.
16 *Westmeath Independent*, 21st November; 5th and 19th December 1914.
17 *Sligo Independent*, 31st October 1914.
levels' of newsprint prices. Several papers shrunk in size as a result. Concerning the tone of their war coverage, the historian Patrick Maume has written of 'the propagation of British war hysteria' in the Irish press and of rising agricultural prices heightening 'war euphoria' in this period, but in the five counties, after the initial two to three weeks, the press showed few signs of either hysteria or euphoria. From the outset the horror of the war and the damage it would cause were stressed. For the Roscommon Messenger on 8th August, the war would be the most appalling in history. If it was short, it would be so only because 'its own awful weight must break it own.' The Messenger's sister paper the Westmeath Examiner a month later emphasised the barbarities, horror and sorrows resulting from the war, while for the Leitrim Advertiser it was 'the Armageddon'. The grim public statement of Lord Kitchener at the end of August, after thousands of casualties had already been incurred, was widely commented upon. Kitchener predicted the need for at least thirty army divisions and that the war would last two to three years. The Longford Leader now predicted 'a long war', while the Sligo Champion warned that England would need many more than the number of recruits currently being organised, possibly as many as 600,000.

In addition to the inevitable popular focus on the impact of the war, there was a genuine sympathy for 'the Allies' and in particular hostility to Germany. Anti-German views were expressed by almost all the press. Jasper Tully voiced his aversion to Prussian militarism (see Chapter 5). Farrell's Longford Leader made it clear that Ireland could not exchange English for German rule, 'the most autocratic, bureaucratic and tyrannical in the world'. First the German 'war tide' had to be rolled back; then the Irish race would pursue its destiny of Home Rule. For the Roscommon Journal, responding to Kitchener's gloomy prognostications at the end of August, Ireland would have to bear every sacrifice rather than bow down to the 'Moloch of German iniquity'. The Journal feared not only Germany's militarism but its Protestantism, for it went on to stress that if Ireland did not resist, she would not only be dominated but 'Lutheranised'. A week later, the Westmeath Independent, with splendid

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18 Sligo Champion, 22nd August 1914. The paper noted that pulp prices had already doubled since the outbreak of war and that normal stock levels of ten weeks' usage had fallen to six.
19 Maume. The Long Gestation, pp. 150-151.
20 Roscommon Messenger, 8th August 1914.
21 Westmeath Examiner, 5th September; Leitrim Advertiser, 3rd September.
22 Longford Leader: Sligo Champion, 29th August 1914.
23 Longford Leader, 8th August 1914.
24 Roscommon Journal, 5th September 1914.
inaccuracy, appeared to return to the theme of religion when it wrote of: ‘fighting for the supremacy of our common civilisation against the hordes of Nuns now bearing down on the comity of nations’.25

That the Home Rule crisis was temporarily defused was, however, due not just to the overriding needs of war, nor to the general belief, as the Sligo Champion rather tamely put it, that ‘appearances are against Germany’ concerning the rights and wrongs of the fight.26 There was also the political initiative taken by John Redmond: his parliamentary offer, right at the outbreak of war, that the Irish Volunteers would serve alongside the Ulster Volunteer Force in Ireland’s defence, freeing army units to serve overseas. This statement has been exhaustively analysed, and was far from just the simple, from-the-heart affair later described by the journalist Harold Spender (‘... for once he let himself go. He trusted England.’).27 In particular, the historian George Dangerfield has emphasised the degree of political calculation involved, with Redmond keen to outflank Carson (who had already offered ‘a large body’ of the UVF for home defence) and pressing immediately for the quid pro quo of royal assent for the Home Rule bill.28 Locally, the response of John Hayden’s Roscommon Messenger (Hayden was one of the handful of MPs consulted by Redmond before his offer),29 was consistent with this analysis of Redmond’s calculation. Though the Messenger believed the outcome could be good for Ireland and the empire, its key point was that Redmond had ‘entirely outmanoeuvred Sir Edward Carson’. The government would in return make concessions to the Volunteers on arms and training.30

In another commentary on Redmond’s statement, Oliver MacDonagh has argued that to Irish ears Redmond sought to rekindle the spirit and role of the Volunteers of 1778, while to British ears he was simply offering support for the war effort. This produced, according to MacDonagh, ‘a gross, almost comic, divergence of interpretation’.31 However, such a divergence was not apparent in the local, Irish, nationalist press. Here, Redmond’s assertion of the rights of Ireland and of the Volunteers was more than matched by his offer of

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25 Westmeath Independent, 12th September 1914.
26 Sligo Champion, 8th August 1914.
29 Stephen Gwynn. John Redmond’s Last Years, p. 131.
30 Roscommon Messenger, 8th August 1914.
31 MacDonagh, States of Mind, pp. 11-12.
‘friendship’ to England. The Sligo Champion noted the profound impression created by Redmond’s speech among unionists. Though it believed that from Ireland’s perspective the war could result in ‘much good’, its conclusion was that it welcomed ‘the comradeship of a defensive alliance’ with England. The Longford Leader, normally more bellicose and anglophobe than other ‘party’ papers, was in this case even more welcoming. All Irish opinion backed Redmond, who had offered the hand of friendship to England in her greatest difficulty. It was the Westmeath Independent (often the most ‘Redmondite’ of the local papers if also the most erratic), which was the most effusive. The loss of the war was too horrible to contemplate, while Redmond’s ‘great and gracious’ offer ended an antagonism that had lasted for centuries. The paper’s headline was simple: ‘Bravo England!’

Redmond’s statement had an immediate effect in reducing local tensions. As elsewhere in Ireland, unionists became conspicuous in joining the Volunteers: en masse at a public meeting in Athlone; forming a ‘unionist’ company of some 70 Irish Volunteers in County Sligo. Several ex-army officers now offered their services. Redmond’s offer was also endorsed by a deluge of nationalist resolutions passed by public boards, party executives and Volunteer companies. Sligo Corporation was typical. Under the mayor, John Jinks, who only four days before had told the Sligo Guardians that ‘Ireland is out for blood and murder’ (see Chapter 9), the AOH/Labour-led Corporation on 5th August unanimously backed Redmond’s offer. Jinks was happy that Redmond had held out the hand of friendship, offering an ‘olive leaf’ to the English government. He was also happy to take part in ‘preserving the entirety and the power of the British Empire’. A Volunteer muster in Mullingar in 15th August exemplified the new mood. Some 2,600 Volunteers from 27 companies (including 450 from Mullingar and 200 from Athlone) paraded to be reviewed by their national commanding officer, Colonel Maurice Moore, watched by over 2,000 spectators. On the platform were eight priests, the Liberal grandee Lord Greville, members of the unionist Boyd-Rochford,
Tottenham and Featherstonehaugh families, the town’s leading politicians (both Ginnellite and Haydenite). Sir Walter Nugent and no less than Laurence Ginnell.36

Unease and Dissension

Public expressions of sympathy for Britain remained the norm for many months, but the newfound mood of Irish unity which had come into being so rapidly and mercurially was already dissolving by the end of August, with mounting grumbling, unease and political dissension. Central to this gloomier mood was a persistent belief that the government was spurning Redmond’s offer; that the Volunteers were receiving no official support, that unionists were still manoeuvring to frustrate Home Rule and that royal assent for the bill was being deferred. At the end of August the RIC inspector general noted that ‘a feeling of mistrust set in pending the disposal of the Home Rule Bill’.37 Repeated parliamentary adjournments coincided with the first war casualties and Kitchener’s predictions of a long war. On 29th August, the Longford Leader described Ireland as ‘almost bereft of patience’.38 In the first week of September, Redmond gave a public, but vague, warning of ‘infinite mischief’ and resentment should Home Rule be denied.39 The Roscommon Messenger and Westmeath Examiner both exhorted their readers not to panic and to trust Redmond,40 while the Longford Leader became more menacing. Surely something, declared Farrell’s paper, should be given in return for Redmond’s open and unasked avowal of sympathy with Britain. The Tories were still quite hostile to granting any ‘relief’ for Ireland, and the government had shown ‘an extraordinary want of decision and firmness’. Ireland wanted peace ardently, but ‘there will be a heavy reckoning sooner or later to be paid for by those who now simply despise us’.41

The tone of John Jinks’s language, which had already moved from predicting ‘blood and murder’ to ‘preserving the entirety and the power of the British Empire’, duly shifted again. Nationalists would now go no further than defending their own shores until the English parliament had conceded the national demand. Men should join only the Volunteers, and only


37 Monthly report of the Inspector General, August 1914 (PRO CO 904/94).

38 Longford Leader, 29th August 1914.

39 Leitrim Observer, 5th September 1914.

40 Roscommon Messenger; Westmeath Examiner, 5th September 1914.

41 Longford Leader, 5th September 1914.
for a defensive role. That most orthodox of party newspapers, the Sligo Champion, week after week gave voice to the sourer mood. On 22nd August, it derided the ‘soft talk’ of the previous two weeks: ‘to pretend that we are profoundly interested in the fortunes of the Empire is manifestly absurd’. A week later, its conclusion, post-Kitchener, was that ‘if England wants more Irish blood and sinew in the line, as she certainly will, she must deal squarely with Ireland’. On 12th September, the paper declared that England had ‘failed to rise to the occasion’ of Redmond’s offer. Ireland had already contributed more than her fair share to the carnage of the past month. ‘We hold emphatically that this is not the time for recruiting propaganda to receive any countenance from Nationalist quarters’.

This sense of dissatisfaction was expressed by a broad range of the party’s press and followers, but more distinct opposition was also being voiced by some who openly attacked the whole policy of support for the Allies. A person’s attitude to the war (and particularly support for ‘England’) quickly became the issue defining political allegiances, and divisions, among Irish nationalists. Admittedly, there were still only isolated instances of outright local dissent. On the Delvin (Westmeath) district council, when the obligatory resolution was proposed supporting Redmond’s August offer, one councillor, Tom Kelly, asked what Ireland had ever got from England: ‘we have no enemy only England’. Even he, however, then acquiesced in a ‘unanimous’ vote for the offer. In Roscommon the Gaelic athlete Michael Brennan tried to circulate ‘seditious’ leaflets in mid August, though he was, according to the police, ‘condemned by everyone’. The most vocal ‘opposition’ came from the Boyle and Mullingar newspapers of the Tully brothers.

The Tullys wrote no early leaders attacking Redmond’s offer outright, but it was clear, as the RIC inspector general’s September report noted, that the Roscommon Herald at least was seen as an ‘extreme’ paper. Both the Boyle and Mullingar papers carried American newspaper extracts critical of the war, and the ‘Herald’s first leader, of 22nd August on the death of the Pope, lamented the number of Catholics opposing the Allies and dreaded the

42 Jinks speaking to the Easkey Volunteers, 6th September (Sligo Champion 12th September 1914).
43 Sligo Champion, 22nd and 29th August, 12th September 1914. (These leading articles have also been discussed in Farry, Sligo 1914-1921, p. 39 and Thomas Hennessey. Dividing Ireland : World War I and Partition (London and New York 1998). p. 50).
44 Westmeath Guardian, 14th August 1914.
45 Monthly report of the Roscommon county inspector, August 1914 (PRO CO 904/94).
46 Monthly report of the Inspector General, September 1914 (PRO CO 904/94).
prospect of an Eastern Orthodox - i.e. Russian - victory over Catholic Austria. The ‘Gaelic Notes’ of 5th September reproduced the poem ‘Who is Ireland’s Enemy?’ (no prizes for guessing) from the IRB’s journal Irish Freedom, while Tully lamented that Ireland was to become a ‘recruiting ground’ for its Volunteers to be blown to pieces while lordly Englishmen stayed at home. The closest both papers came to attacking Redmond’s offer was at the end of August, when they ran an expose ‘The Mask Off The Volunteers’, combining Kitchener’s bearish predictions for the war with the rather incautious statement by Sir Walter Nugent’s old friend, the ex-unionist Gerald Dease (now a Volunteer officer), that the Volunteers would be supplied with English uniforms. Now, claimed both papers, it was clear why the Volunteers had been offered in parliament: ‘to wear red coats, and come under Kitchener’. The Midland Reporter contrasted Ireland’s sacrifices in the war with the ‘400,000’ playing golf in England and the ‘200,000’ watching football in Glasgow alone!47

However, the Tullys were no longer alone. From the end of August the Carrick Leitrim Observer, which had always hitherto been a party paper if hardly Redmondite, adopted much the same tone as its Boyle rival. On 29th August, a report reproduced from the American Advocate stated that Irish-American sentiment was more pro-German than pro-English; the Observer’s headline was ‘Where Our Sentiments Should Be’. Another story, ‘Why England Went to War’, reproduced a statement issued by Herr von Haimhausen of the German Washington embassy. A piece published on 12th September renewed the old nationalist attack on English ‘penny dirties’, this time because of their publication of ‘German atrocity’ stories. Why not come over to Ireland and see worse ruins? How many Louvains had been destroyed in Ireland? The paper was not yet absolute in its opposition - its 12th September piece stated that though it hated English hypocrisy it wanted, ‘of course’, to see England victorious - but an editorial line had undoubtedly been crossed.48

In late-August/early-September, fissures were opening among the Volunteers. One Volunteer company, Ballycarnagh in Westmeath, was publicly urged by a local publican, James Drew, not to accept the King’s arms and uniforms. He added that he did not dislike Germany and his remarks were cheered.49 The Sligo journalist, Seamus McGowan, wrote to the Sligo

47 Roscommon Herald, 22nd and 29th August, 5th September 1914; Midland Reporter, 27th August 1914.
48 Leitrim Observer, 29th August, 12th September 1914.
49 Monthly report of the Westmeath county inspector, August 1914 (PRO CO 904/94).
Champion attacking the Volunteers’ ‘betrayal’ of disavowing the now anti-war Irish Volunteer newspaper. Increasingly, such outright opponents of the war were labelled as ‘Sinn Feiners’. The inspector general wrote at the end of August of ‘Sinn Feiners and other extremists’ opposing the war. On 29th August the Longford Leader accused ‘the Sinn Fein element’ of playing Carson’s game and undermining Home Rule, while on the same day the Roscommon Herald could note that ‘Sinn Feiners’ in the Volunteers were ‘fluttering the dovecots’. Some party papers counter-attacked. The Roscommon Messenger criticised those Volunteers who still attempted to run the movement independently of the Irish party. There could be no toleration of tactics that disrupted the national movement. Major Gerald Dease, the butt of the ‘Red Coats’ scare, wrote to the Freeman’s Journal denouncing Sinn Fein ‘blatherskites’.

The mood in early September was summed up by Dillon in a letter to T.P. O’Connor. For Dillon the situation in Ireland was ‘bad’, caused by government shilly-shallying. ‘Now the country is seething with suspicion and disappointment...You can see how the Sinn Feiners are prospering on the ground. Our friends are disheartened and bewildered.’ It was against this background that the Irish party finally ‘won’ Home Rule.

Home Rule and Takeover

Home Rule, in the form of the Government of Ireland Act, finally received the royal assent on 18th September. It was accompanied by a Suspensory Act, effectively delaying Home Rule’s implementation indefinitely during the war, and by the promise of amending legislation concerning Ulster’s exclusion. This package of measures, giving what Stephen Gwynn later called ‘a post dated cheque for a limited freedom’, did not come as a complete surprise. Tully on 12th September had predicted that ‘sham’ Home Rule would be passed only for it to be ‘hung up’ for the duration of the war. On the same day, the Longford Leader denounced the prospect of a Suspensory Act as another concession to the Orange party: the government was more afraid of Carson than of the Kaiser, but the paper could see no alternative. Five

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50 Sligo Champion, 12th September 1914.
51 Monthly report of the Inspector General, August 1914 (PRO CO 904/94).
52 Longford Leader; Roscommon Herald ‘Gaelic Notes’. 29th August 1914.
53 Roscommon Messenger, 22nd August; Westmeath Examiner, 29th August 1914.
54 Dillon to O’Connor, 5th September 1914. Dillon papers TCD, f 6740 225.
55 Stephen Gwynn, The Irish Situation, p. 34.
days later the *Leitrim Advertiser* remarked that no one in Ireland wanted an Amending bill and hoped that it would not prove necessary.\(^{56}\)

Unsurprisingly, therefore, such a qualified passage of Home Rule generated only patchy manifestations of spontaneous popular support. The Westmeath county inspector did note a demonstration in Moate and the *Leitrim Advertiser* reported on illuminations and a torch-light procession in Mohill. J.P. Farrell addressed a crowd of 600 in Longford town. However, the Leitrim county inspector reported that the passage of the Act caused 'very little excitement' in his county, while his Sligo counterpart noted that there was 'very little demonstration'. The *Westmeath Independent* wrote that compared with the town’s celebrations of May (when the bill passed its third reading in the Commons) there were no large demonstrations in Athlone.\(^{57}\)

The passage of Home Rule was, nevertheless, a major news story and the press response to it was polarised. Some party papers were enthusiastic, notably John Hayden's two newspapers.\(^ {58}\) The unionist *Sligo Independent* corroborated such nationalist praise for the Act by attacking its passage as a betrayal of unionist sacrifices.\(^ {59}\) At the other extreme, the Act was denounced as 'A Scrap of Flypaper' by the Tully brothers, who linked the Act’s passage to the imminence of calls for recruitment to the British army. This linkage was also explicit in the *Leitrim Observer*, which saw Home Rule as 'a bill for the promotion of recruiting for the English army in Ireland'.\(^ {60}\) Moreover, yet another local nationalist newspaper now joined the opposition, making four in total. For the *Roscommon Journal*, which only two weeks before had taken a stand against 'the Moloch of German iniquity', its 19th September leading article firmly linked Home Rule to recruiting with the headline 'Home Rule and Red Coats'. The legislative package was 'simply hanging Home Rule in a glass case until the war is over' and the Irish people had been treated with 'humbug and flapdoodle'. 'Perhaps' it wrote, 'we are too enraptured over this Bill. It might be like the past in the old wars when the Irish Catholics brought England in her battles out on top. After that there was little regard for them.'\(^ {61}\)

\(^{56}\) *Roscommon Herald; Longford Leader*, 12th September; *Leitrim Advertiser*, 17th September 1914.

\(^{57}\) Monthly reports of the Leitrim, Longford, Sligo and Westmeath county inspectors, September 1914 (PRO CO 904/94); *Leitrim Advertiser*, 24th September; *Westmeath Independent*, 26th September 1914.

\(^{58}\) See *Roscommon Messenger* and *Westmeath Examiner*, 19th September 1914.

\(^{59}\) *Sligo Independent*, 19th September 1914.

\(^{60}\) *Roscommon Herald*, 19th September; *Midland Reporter*, 8th October; *Leitrim Observer*, 19th September 1914.

Between the two extremes of joy and denunciation, the *Sligo Champion*, just as it had when the bill was first introduced 2 ½ years previously, adopted a measured, cautious tone: ‘This is probably as much as could be expected at the moment.’62 J. P. Farrell defended the legislative package in detail. If the government had been thrown out, he argued, Home Rule would have been lost for years. No reasonable man could object to the Suspensory Act, as Home Rule could not come into immediate operation anyway. As for the Amending bill, no more than two Ulster counties would vote to stay out.63 John Fitzgibbon, speaking at Fairymount, Roscommon on the same day, perhaps summed up the popular mood. He ‘believed that Ireland as a whole did not yet realise or recognise to the full what the present Home Rule Bill contained’.64

The passage of Home Rule was now joined hip and thigh to the issue of recruiting. The *Westmeath Independent*’s first leader on 19th September might have given only a measured welcome to the Act, but its second was ‘Recruiting in Ireland’ and a week later it wrote on ‘The Call to Arms’.65 For the Irish party this was not accidental. Its shift from supporting the defence of Ireland to exhorting men to fight ‘in the firing line’ was first announced publicly by Redmond in parliament on 15th September, confirmed in a ‘Manifesto’ published on 16th September66 and again by Redmond’s supposedly chance remarks to a Volunteer muster at Woodenbridge, County Wicklow on 20th September. The motivations behind this policy shift have been dissected by historians and, as with Redmond’s statement of 3rd August, reflected both a genuine, principled support for the war effort and an array of political calculations. The political case for recruitment was far more than an outburst of quixotic anglophilia or imperialism. As J. J. Lee has summarised, active endorsement of the war effort would secure the operation of Home Rule, woo British opinion ahead of a likely 1915 general election, unite nationalists and unionists in shared wartime comradeship and surely secure better arms and training for the Volunteers. By contrast, any move to ‘neutrality’ in the war would play into the hands of unionists, confirm Ireland’s partition and forfeit British support.68

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63 *Longford Leader*, 26th September 1914.
64 *Roscommon Messenger*, 26th September 1914.
65 *Westmeath Independent*, 19th and 26th September 1914.
66 See ‘Home Rule Notes’ in the *Western Nationalist*, 19th September 1914.
67 Hennessey, *Dividing Ireland*, p. 86.
may well have had a moral duty to participate in the war, but the alternative, of spitting in the face of English (and Ulster) opinion in the midst of a terrible war would also be politically disastrous for the post-war implementation of Home Rule. Redmond’s personal beliefs had for years been significantly more conciliatory and imperialist than those of his party. Several times he had been forced to curb his enthusiasm to retain party support. In 1904 he had been forced to pull back from support for Irish devolution; in 1907 for the Irish Council bill and in 1910 for federal ‘Home Rule All Round’. Now, again, his beliefs were clearly on display. Soon he would be singing ‘God Save The King’, drinking the loyal toast and flying the Union Jack alongside the Green Flag at his summer home Aughavanagh. However, in supporting recruitment his party appeared, this time, to be ‘right behind’ him.

Party justifications for the new policy were articulated in the local press in the ensuing weeks. The Westmeath Independent leader of 26th September (‘The Call to Arms’) stated that Ireland had been won to the empire by the restoration of her freedom. She was now bound by honour to support England, defend the rights of small nations and fight barbarism by raising an ‘Irish Brigade’. The best way for Irishmen to woo Ulster and defend Ireland’s rights after the war was to ‘play their part well’ now. For the Sligo Champion on the same day, recruiting was vital for the successful implementation of Home Rule. The war had created a ‘real opportunity’ to forget old quarrels (i.e. between north and south), while if Ireland did her duty, the government could hardly forget the work of nationalist soldiers, ‘whose bones are bleaching from Mons to Paris’. Of the local MPs, the most whole-hearted and conciliatory support for the war effort came John Fitzgibbon, who in November would make his ‘proudest boast’ that his youngest son was volunteering for the army to fight at ‘the front’.

By contrast, John Hayden showed some of the less conciliatory views underlying support for recruiting when he told a Volunteer review: ‘when the war is over then Sir Edward Carson will be in possession of trained, drilled and equipped soldiers ready to menace the freedom which we have gained for you.’ According to Hayden, Redmond’s wanted an Irish brigade in the British army trained and ready to meet this (post-war) menace. Admittedly, Hayden

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69 Stephen Gwynn, John Redmond's Last Years, p. 182.
70 Westmeath Independent; Sligo Champion, 26th September 1914.
71 Fitzgibbon speaking at Caramore. County Mayo, Western Nationalist, 14th November 1914. Two of Fitzgibbon's sons eventually joined up, one as an army chaplain, and both died in the war.
stated that with Home Rule Ireland would be a united and loyal part of the empire, but he went on to emphasise the conditionality of such loyalty:

We did hate England in the past and we hate today the things that England did to Ireland in the past. And if she were to do these things tomorrow we would hate and fight and struggle against her just as we did in the past (cheers).\(^\text{72}\)

Whether stemming from principle, political calculation, a desire to conciliate Ulster, the fear of an armed and trained post-war UVF, or any or all of these, the party’s advocacy of recruiting to fight for England was the immediate cause of the Volunteer split which now occurred. The passage of Home Rule effectively fired the starting gun for an open, political fight between the Irish party and its ‘factionist’ and ‘Sinn Feiner’ opponents, waged, as in previous nationalist splits, with gusto. Nationalists were compelled to take sides, with support for recruiting the touchstone of whether they were loyal to Redmond. Given the scale of the Volunteers’ popular mobilisation, the party’s less-than-perfect control of them and the number of dissidents active in them, the Volunteers were the obvious focus for the conflict. The degree of co-ordination and organisation now shown by the party suggests that the split was anticipated in advance and that the party was only too keen to force the issue. Virtually all of the party’s local leadership were organised to lead a succession of rallies, demonstrations, parades and committee meetings to pledge support for Redmond and his policies. Companies were made to declare themselves for or against; Dublin daily papers kept tallies of which companies took which side.\(^\text{73}\) Even loyal companies had their committees restructured and dissidents demoted. Above the hitherto largely independent companies, county committees were created and superimposed. As the RIC inspector general put it: ‘Mr John Redmond assumed leadership of the Irish Volunteers. He with Mr J. Devlin MP and others are now advocating a reorganisation, with the result that Sinn Feiners are being turned out of the force.’\(^\text{74}\) This time the Irish party vampire really was out for blood.

In taking control of the Volunteers, the party was engaged in a straight, political fight and its propaganda combined high principle with all the traditional invective of fights, factions,

\(^{72}\) Hayden speaking at a Lanesborough, County Roscommon Volunteer review. *Roscommon Messenger*, 17\(^{th}\) October 1914.

\(^{73}\) See *Irish Independent*, 1\(^{st}\), 2\(^{nd}\), 3\(^{rd}\), 6\(^{th}\), 7\(^{th}\), 8\(^{th}\), 10\(^{th}\), 13\(^{th}\), 14\(^{th}\) and 20\(^{th}\) October 1914.

\(^{74}\) Monthly report of the Inspector General, September 1914 (PRO CO 904/94).
wreckers and unity. For the Westmeath Independent a ‘great campaign’ had been fought, the country had been tested and found to back Redmond. The ‘revolters’, barring a few in Dublin, had been left utterly isolated. The Longford Leader saw Redmond as having had to fight ‘one of the most desperate fights of modern times’ (to win Home Rule) while still some carped. It would be insane to hurl defiance at England now. Ireland was now threatened with a Sinn Fein split, engineered by a ‘small and mostly unknown knot of men’. For the Roscommon Messenger an attempt to wreck the Volunteer movement’ by a ‘tiny knot of worthy, unknown politicians’ had been thwarted. The clique of factionists and malcontents had been seen off by the ‘National movement...under the leadership of the chosen general of Irishmen the world over’. 

In the five counties, the party’s takeover was most complete in Roscommon and Leitrim. Opponents formed only small minorities at company meetings and their leaders either resigned from or were voted off Volunteer committees. The size of the vote might be contested - at Castlerea, Fitzgibbon reckoned that no more than six voted against him, while the Roscommon Herald reported fifteen - but the result was almost always the same. The closest contest was at Gortletteragh, Leitrim, where 45 backed Redmond, 24 were against and 30 neutral. No companies defected to support MacNeill’s Provisional Committee and only one non-defecting company, Upper Arigna, showed signs of collective sympathy for it; the company briefly stuck to a neutral stance before coming out for Redmond. The main nucleus of opposition seems to have been in Roscommon town; at the takeover meeting there the party loyalist Michael Heverin referred to ‘certain parties’ briefly getting control and of ‘Sinn Feiners who have crept in again’. In November, a group of forty such dissidents met in a private house to commemorate the Manchester Martyrs, led by the GAA man Michael Brennan and by George Geraghty, who was still chairman of the Roscommon town commissioners. Nevertheless, they were a small minority. In his October report the

75 Westmeath Independent, 10th and 17th October 1914.
76 Longford Leader, 3rd October 1914.
77 Roscommon Messenger, 3rd October 1914.
78 Fitzgibbon to Dillon, 12th October 1914. Dillon papers TCD, f 6754/480; Roscommon Herald, 17th October 1914.
80 Roscommon Herald, 17th and 31st October 1914.
81 Heverin speaking at a meeting to organise a district battalion as part of the new county corps. Roscommon Journal 3rd October 1914.
Roscommon county inspector wrote of ‘fifty extremists and fifty Sinn Feiners enrolled in the Volunteers’ across the whole county, though he added that ‘the latter are increasing in number’. By the end of November he had cut his estimate of ‘Sinn Feiners and extremists and pro-German’ dissidents’ to ‘around 1 ½%’ of the Volunteers (i.e. approximately 75-80), ‘but they are afraid to say much openly’. In the same month, the Leitrim county inspector reported no open ‘pro-German’ feeling in his county.

In Westmeath, though all the main Volunteer companies came under party control, the split was more pronounced. In mid-October, the Westmeath Examiner could still fulminate against some dissidents ‘skulking or even actively promoting dissension’. ‘Malcontents’ were said to be at work in the Killucan area, even reviving ‘the methods of secret conspiracy’ there. Two small Westmeath companies, Drumraney and Ballykeeran, declared their allegiance to the Provisional Committee. The Tang company, led by the president of the Tang UIL and Gaelic Leaguer Father O'Reilly, stayed obstinately neutral and refused to back Redmond. In Mullingar, the president of the town’s AOH, T. F. O’Shea, was excluded from the town’s reconstructed committee. In Athlone a rowdy meeting, which each side claimed was packed by the other, declared for Redmond by a two-to-one vote on 18th October. The dissidents then set up their own, though small, rival company. Overall, the police estimated that some 150 of the county’s 3,350 Volunteers (probably not including those from Tang) actively opposed Redmond.

The primary focus for opposition in Westmeath was the MP for North Westmeath, Ginnell, who effectively became the sole parliamentary mouthpiece for the Sinn Feiners. In Dublin, speaking at a rally organised by the Provisional Committee of the Volunteers, Ginnell denounced his fellow 102 Irish MPs as the IRB, the ‘Irish Recruiting Brigade’. The enemies of Ireland were not Germans, but alien rulers, place hunters, West Britons and land agents. The so-called ‘bond that we must honour’ to England was a forgery, amounting to ‘treachery’

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83 Ibid, October and November 1914 (PRO CO 904/95).
84 Monthly report of the Leitrim county inspector, November 1914 (PRO CO 904/95).
85 Westmeath Examiner, 17th October 1914.
86 RIC Crime Special Branch precis. November 1914 (PRO CO 904/95); Irish Volunteer, 3rd October 1914.
87 Sinn Fein, 31st October 1914.
88 Westmeath Examiner, 26th September 1914.
89 Monthly reports of the Westmeath county inspector, October and November 1914 (PRO CO 904/95); Leitrim Advertiser, 22nd October; Westmeath Independent, 24th October 1914.
90 Monthly report of the Westmeath county inspector, November 1914 (PRO CO 904/95).
to Ireland. Alien rule was still sapping Ireland’s life blood and soon there would be no Irish manhood left to resist the Ulster conspirators. The maggots on the continent would be feeding on Irish corpses.\footnote{Ginnell speaking at a Dublin rally organised by the Provisional Committee on 11\textsuperscript{th} October, \textit{Midland Reporter}, 15\textsuperscript{th} October; \textit{Roscommon Journal}, 24\textsuperscript{th} October 1914.} The \textit{Midland Reporter} gave the speech five columns of coverage.

The party faced a still harder fight to control the Volunteers in Longford, with the police estimating that six pro-Sinn Fein companies had to be restructured in favour of Redmond.\footnote{Monthly report of the Longford county inspector, October 1914 (PRO CO 904/95).} Most significantly, Farrell failed to win control of the Longford town company - his own home base - and had instead to form a rival, loyal company as well as a county command structure. Moreover, the fault line in Longford town lay not between the party and existing ‘factionists’, but right down the town’s party organisation. Farrell’s principal opponents were now:

- his chief strong-arm man in the 1909 fight against John Phillips, Joe Callaghan,
- the secretary of the town’s AOH division, Michael Cox and, above all,
- his political lieutenant for over twenty-five years, Frank MacGuinness.\footnote{\textit{Roscommon Herald}, 10\textsuperscript{th} October; 14\textsuperscript{th} November 1914. At the South Longford UIL executive meeting on 4\textsuperscript{th} October, Callaghan turned up with a rifle and heckled his old mentor Farrell. MacGuinness, still there as secretary, was challenged to speak by Farrell but declared that he was not on speaking form.} As Farrell reported to Dillon: ‘MacGuinness our secretary for years and staunch supporter of the Party in all weathers up to this has gone against us and is using all his influence here against the Party and policy of its leader in fact he is quite Sinn Feiner’.\footnote{Farrell to Dillon, 8\textsuperscript{th} October 1914. Dillon papers TCD f 6753/430. It was in this same letter that Farrell denounced his old enemy John Phillips MP as ‘pro-German mad’ and ‘fiercely denouncing Redmond in all directions’. As seen in Chapter 2 (footnote 116), there is no evidence to back up this claim. While Phillips took no part in the party’s autumn 1914 campaign, he continued to participate in the local UIL and supported recruiting later in the war.} Apart from Longford town, the party failed to establish effective control in Ballymahon or Granard. In Ballymahon, despite the \textit{Longford Leader} reporting loyalty, the \textit{Longford Independent} later noted an anti-Redmond force in ‘vigorous training’ there.\footnote{\textit{Longford Leader}, 10\textsuperscript{th} October; \textit{Longford Independent}, 24\textsuperscript{th} October 1914.} Concerning Granard, the \textit{Longford Leader} again claimed in early October that the corps was loyal, apart from a few ‘Sinn Fein cranks’, but in mid-November it also reported that only the Granard corps had not pledged loyalty to Redmond.\footnote{\textit{Longford Leader}, 10\textsuperscript{th} October; 14\textsuperscript{th} November 1914.}
The party’s organisation also fractured in Sligo town and (see Chapter 7) the Lab/Nat alliance that had controlled the Corporation split apart. O’Dowd and Scanlan, returning to speak in the town after the passage of the Act, were publicly heckled and the town’s Trades Council see-sawed between condemning and backing such opposition. After two contested meetings, the Trades Council came down, under the control of John Lynch and the ITGWU, against Redmond. The dissidents appeared briefly to control the town’s Volunteer corps and announced their pro-MacNeill allegiance in the Irish Volunteer. Long-standing dissidents such as Seamus McGowan and the GAA man Owen Healy were joined not only by many labour men but also by a number of teachers and Gaelic Leaguers who had not recently been active in party politics: notably the linguist Patrick O’Donnellan and the principal of the town’s Technical Schools D.A. Mulcahy. Jinks re-established party control at a public meeting on 30th September, but the town’s corps had later to be extensively restructured into three new companies representing the Hibernians, the Foresters and the temperance club.

Outside the town, Jinks addressed a succession of company meetings and then, pledging that ‘we are at the back of the Irish parliamentary party’, chaired the county-wide meeting on 29th September (see Chapter 1) attended by leading party men, clerics and both MPs. It was here that Henry Monson pledged that the Hibernians would be ‘right behind Mr. Redmond.’ As elsewhere, a large majority of companies was whipped into line. However, one company, Tobercurry, openly sided with the MacNeillite Provisional Committee while in Keash, where the AOH took control of the local corps, a new MacNeillite Volunteer company was formed. In a third location, Grange, the established company while not defecting was openly sympathetic to MacNeill. At the end of October, the police estimate was that there were 280 Sinn Feiners in the county, out of just under 5,000 Volunteers.

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97 See Farry, Sligo 1914-1921, p. 43; Bew, Ideology and the Irish Question, p. 121 and Sligo Champion, 26th September and 3rd October 1914. At the second Trades Council meeting the radical P.T. Daly, who came from Dublin to attend, asked for ‘politics’ to be kept out of Trades Council affairs!
98 This was not reported locally at the time, but in late November Rev. Butler reminded a Volunteer meeting of the daring attempt by factionists two months previously to command the town’s Volunteers (Sligo Champion, 5th December 1914). The Irish Volunteer editions of 3rd and 10th October had claimed that Sligo town was loyal to MacNeill.
99 Sligo Champion, 5th December 1914. Rev. Crehan having moved on to Cliffony, the temperance club was now run by the chaplain to the town’s Hibernians, Rev. Butler.
100 RIC Crime Special Branch report, October 1914 (PRO CO 904/120); ‘The Keash/Cluffoda Volunteer Movement’ in The Corran Herald, 1st July 1987; monthly report of the Sligo county inspector, October 1914 (PRO CO 904/95).
101 Monthly report of the Sligo county inspector, October 1914 (PRO CO 904/95).
By the end of October the battle to control the Volunteers was largely over with the Irish party victorious. The party still led the large majority of nationalists, popular opinion was on England’s ‘side’ in the war and Birrell’s November cabinet paper, emphasising the ‘great friendliness’ of Irish opinion to England, was substantially correct. However, when in late-October the *Westmeath Examiner* hailed the outcome of ‘Ireland’s Uprising Against Worthless Would-Be Wreckers’ as an ‘extraordinary manifestation’ of popular regard for Redmond, it still felt it necessary to attack those who ‘look after themselves and apply to themselves the words “Sinn Fein”’. The war, recruiting and the battle for control of the Volunteers had had the effect of crystallising a more numerous opposition, now identified by many as ‘Sinn Feiners’. These dissidents were not simply a reincarnation of the ‘cranks’, ‘disappointed men’ and isolated advanced nationalists who had so irritated the party locally in the immediate pre-war years. First, a number of those pre-war ‘factionists’ were not yet active opponents of recruiting. Several prominent Ginnellites (see Chapter 6) remained officials of the new, party-controlled National Volunteers and some Roscommon ‘ratepayers’ (see Chapter 5) openly supported the war and recruiting. Secondly, such losses to the ranks of ‘faction’ were more than offset by pre-war party supporters who now decided that they could not go so far as to back fighting for England. Former party-supporting newspapers (the *Roscommon Journal*), officers (MacGuinness, Callaghan and Cox in Longford, O’Shea in Mullingar), clerics (O’Reilly in Tang) and allies (labour in Sligo) broke with Redmond’s policy and party at this time. While the party could still proclaim its leadership of the ‘National Movement’, its claim to that leadership was challenged.

Just before the Home Rule Act passed, the Boyle party boss T.J. Devine, who had led the Boyle Volunteers from their inception, described the Volunteers as ‘the organisation behind the League’ and in the coming weeks the importance of the Volunteers was re-emphasised by party speakers. For Farrell, they would dominate the Irish political situation in the near term, while for Fitzgibbon they were ‘the guardians of Ireland - placed on the housetop to

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102 *Westmeath Examiner*, 24th October 1914.

103 The Tullys again provided an exception and did not see themselves as ‘Sinn Feiners’. By 24th October, the *Roscommon Herald’s* Gaelic Notes was already writing of what had been ‘wrongly styled...the Sinn Fein revolt’ in the Volunteers.

104 *Western Nationalist*, 19th September 1914. Devine also lamented that the difficult task of organising the UIL and AOH was made ‘herculean’ by the additional burden of the Volunteers.
guard the honour and liberty of our country'. In mid-October, the *Westmeath Independent* stressed that with a proper organisation in place, committees restructured and headquarters established, the Volunteers had a great chance to be a national force: ‘As Mr Redmond explained last Sunday the Volunteer organisation has now been reduced to a business proposition’. Just how far the Volunteers had been ‘reduced’, if not to a ‘business proposition’, would imminently be seen.

**Collapse**

The Irish party effectively took over the Irish Volunteers at their nominal peak; certainly in terms of membership, which hit its national high point of 191,000 in mid-September. Thereafter, Volunteer membership fell steadily and, though it was still nominally counted by the police at well over 100,000, the organisation was nearly moribund by the end of the year. In his December report the RIC inspector general could almost write it off: ‘There is at present no enthusiasm in this force, which has neither organisation, nor officers, is utterly untrained, and practically unarmed.’

Did the party’s takeover trigger the Volunteers’ decay? Some indications of Volunteer decline were already evident in August, before the takeover and before the membership peaked. While police reports for that month showed Sligo’s companies still growing in number and the Westmeath companies busy drilling, the inspector general was noting nationally that ‘this force makes no headway in organisation’. His inspector’s report from Leitrim indicated a ‘recent’ fall of drilling while that from Longford noted a distinct fall since the outbreak of war. Reports written at the end of September were more consistent and damning. The inspector general stated that ‘the Irish Volunteers displayed little or no activity’, while the county inspectors saw significant falls in both drilling and attendance at parades in Longford, Roscommon, Sligo and Westmeath. The Crime Special Branch report completed the set by remarking on a similar pattern in Leitrim. It is perfectly conceivable

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105 Farrell speaking at Lanesboro, Roscommon, Roscommon Journal, 17th October 1914; Fitzgibbon speaking at Knockcroghery, Roscommon, Roscommon Messenger, 7th November 1914.

106 *Westmeath Independent*, 17th October 1914.

107 Fitzpatrick, ‘Militarism in Ireland’ in Bartlett and Jeffery (eds.), *A Military History of Ireland*, p. 386.


that the party’s takeover, by increasing dissension and driving out some of the earliest activists, weakened the Volunteers in late September/early October, but for the sudden downturn recorded for September as a whole to be caused by the takeover, its negative effects would have had to be both devastating and instantaneous. Moreover, the takeover’s mechanics, relying on a succession of meetings and parades, if anything temporarily boosted Volunteer ‘activity’.

Taking the same newspapers used to analyse the frequency of UIL and AOH reports in previous periods (see Chapters 3 and 9), the volume of Volunteer reports in the local press - of parades, company meetings and committee meetings - is another indication of the timing and scale of the Volunteers’ decline:

Table 14. Volunteer reports in the local Press, July-December 1914

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>July</th>
<th>Aug</th>
<th>Sept</th>
<th>Oct</th>
<th>Nov</th>
<th>Dec</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Longford Leader</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roscommon Herald</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roscommon Messenger</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sligo Champion</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Nationalist</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>152</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The pattern of reports is clear - activity peaked in counties Leitrim, Longford, Roscommon and Sligo in August and slumped in September. Having recovered marginally in October (perhaps bolstered by the number of political, takeover meetings still going on), it collapsed again in November and once more, to derisory levels, in December. Again, the suddenness and scale of the fall in September indicates that it was already under way before the middle of that month. The takeover was not the trigger for the Volunteers’ decline; the ‘great wave’ was already receding in the weeks of uncertainty and growing dissension that preceded the passage of Home Rule.

111 *Longford Leader, Roscommon Herald, Roscommon Messenger, Sligo Champion, Western Nationalist*, July-December 1914. The number of Volunteer reports published in the *Western Nationalist* was small (the *Roscommon Herald* appeared to have had a near monopoly of such reports around Boyle) and the paper did not report Volunteer meetings after October. However, the paper has been included here to provide a source of data consistent with the analyses of UIL and AOH reports in Chapters 3 and 9.
Several explanations have been advanced, then and later, for this decay: the lack of arms, boredom, inadequate drilling facilities, shorter evenings, internal dissension and the lack of a raison d'etre after the passing of Home Rule. One of the most common, however, was that local companies were decapitated by the removal of the many army reservists who had provided military skills and, specifically, competence in drill instruction. Nationally, 7,331 reservists, or 41% of reservists called up, came from the Irish Volunteers. This must have had some impact and was commented upon locally by sources such as the Leitrim RIC and the Westmeath Independent. However, virtually all these reservists departed during the first week of the war while Volunteer activity peaked some weeks later. If there was an effect, it was delayed.

A more powerful reason for the Volunteers' decline was advanced consistently by observers: a distinct aversion to being called up by the army and a persistent fear that publicly taking part in Volunteering, particularly in drilling, would increase the chances of that happening. Such fears were evidenced early in the war. In mid-August, the Roscommon Messenger noted that although Redmond's initial 'defensive' offer was supported, the general body of men were said to have 'strong objections' to fighting with regular or reservist army troops. At the end of August, the Longford county inspector noted: 'the fear of many [Volunteer] members who are not anxious to take part in the field that they may be commandeered to do so by the Government'. Thereafter, virtually every police observer cited the fear of being called up for foreign service as the primary cause of falling Volunteer activity. This is hardly surprising, given that the issue of Volunteers being trained and armed, under the authority of the War Office, was openly debated by both the Dublin and local press in the first two months of the war. The gloomy public prognostications of Kitchener at the end of August also triggered discussion of conscription. Farrell then told the Longford Leader that he had been 'privately informed' that on any serious reverse in the war conscription would be introduced. The Sligo Nationalist predicted that there would now be a 'hysterical howl for the dragooning

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112 See monthly report of the Inspector General, October 1914 (PRO CO 904/95), and McEvoy. *A Study of the United Irish League in King's County*, p. 110.
114 Crime Special Branch report (Leitrim), September 1914 (PRO CO 904/94); Westmeath Independent, 24th October 1914.
115 Roscommon Messenger, 15th August 1914.
116 Monthly report of the Longford county inspector, August 1914 (PRO CO 904/94).
of a peace-loving country’ (i.e. Ireland) and only voluntary enlistment in the army would see off the conscription threat.\footnote{Longford Leader: Sligo Nationalist, 29\textsuperscript{th} August 1914.}

Redmond’s recruiting campaign, from mid-September onwards, produced the paradox that while most local Volunteers endorsed support for England in the war, their fears of having to fight in it were also reinforced. Therefore, the defining issue of the party’s autumn campaign, its advocacy of recruiting, must have acted to accelerate the decline of Volunteer activity and may well have inflicted the coup de grace to the already-fading movement. Some, at the end of September, saw the danger. Colonel Maurice Moore, notionally the Volunteers’ commanding officer, wrote to Joe Devlin asking for the subject of recruiting not to be raised at Volunteer meetings:

\ldots it is essential that there should be no reference to recruiting or any such contentious subjects; the Country will break away from us if we do.’ Redmond ‘ought not to make a speech about recruiting at a Volunteer inspection; it should be at a political meeting after the Volunteer parade is dismissed; & he ought not to tell Volunteers to enlist more than any other Irishmen… The anti recruiting feeling runs very high & the fear that Volunteers will be taken to fight whether they wish it or not. Absurd as it may seem it is believed by many & the idea is fostered by Sinn Feiners.\footnote{Moore to Devlin, 28\textsuperscript{th} September 1914 (Col Maurice Moore Mss., NLI, file 10651/ 8).}

Such caution was sometimes shared locally. Playing down recruiting, several MPs and party speakers addressing Volunteer meetings placed a greater emphasis on unity, discipline, affirming loyalty to Redmond and support for the Volunteers. Speakers would emphasise that Redmond was not saying that every man should go to the front; a recurring phrase was also that they and/or Redmond were ‘not recruiting sergeants’.\footnote{See for example Smyth speaking at Dromahair, Leitrim Observer, 31\textsuperscript{st} October; Farrell speaking to the North Longford UIL executive. Longford Leader, 26\textsuperscript{th} September; McKenna speaking at Mullingar, Westmeath Examiner: 17\textsuperscript{th} October; O’Dowd speaking at Sligo, Sligo Champion 3\textsuperscript{rd} October 1914; and Jinks speaking at Sligo, Sligo Champion, 21\textsuperscript{st} November1914.} F.E. Meehan MP went so far at one Leitrim rally as to cancel the award of prizes for the drill competition, ‘so as not to give the impression that we were encouraging young men to join the army wholesale, and that the meeting was not to fill up the ranks of the British army with Volunteers’.\footnote{Meehan speaking at Dromahair, Leitrim Observer, 31\textsuperscript{st} October 1914.}

In mid-October,
the *Longford Leader* concluded a leading article on the war (which had emphasised Ireland’s role in the United Kingdom’s ‘just war against German barbarism’):

We do not write this for the purpose of urging any man who does not wish to do so to give up his occupation and go to the front. But we do most urgently and most strongly urge all our young men to at once join the Volunteers.\(^{121}\)

The evidence is that such urgings were almost entirely ineffective. In Roscommon in September, members of no fewer than twenty-two companies refused to sign Volunteer enrolment forms, fearing that to do so would make them liable for foreign service.\(^ {122}\) By the end of October, a full-scale slump of activity was manifest. The Leitrim county inspector reported two companies collapsing completely, while the Longford inspector wrote of the organisation having crumbled away. In Roscommon and Westmeath drilling had ‘practically ceased’ and in Sligo companies were ‘totally inactive’. The inspector general concluded that nationally there was ‘no drill worth mentioning and general apathy appears to have set in’.\(^ {123}\) There was no revival before the end of the year.

As for the Irish party itself, UIL activity also slumped in the autumn of 1914, accelerating the decline which had set in June and July during the initial, pre-war Volunteer boom (see Chapter 9). Measured by reports submitted to the local press, the decline was acute:

Table 15: UIL reports in the local press 1913-14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Q4 1913</th>
<th>Q1</th>
<th>Q2</th>
<th>Q3</th>
<th>Q4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Longford Leader</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roscommon Herald</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roscommon Messenger</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sligo Champion</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Nationalist</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>233</strong></td>
<td><strong>261</strong></td>
<td><strong>215</strong></td>
<td><strong>118</strong></td>
<td><strong>66</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{121}\) *Longford Leader*, 17\(^{th}\) October 1914.

\(^{122}\) Monthly report of the Roscommon county inspector, September 1914 (PRO CO 904/94).

\(^{123}\) Monthly reports of the Inspector General and of the Leitrim, Longford, Roscommon, Sligo and Westmeath county inspectors, October 1914 (PRO CO 904/95).
By the final quarter of 1914, UIL meetings were running at only 25% of their first quarter rate and 28% of the comparable 1913 level. In late September and early October, local party leaders were almost entirely focused on attending, and controlling, Volunteer meetings and rallies. A monthly breakdown of press reports shows that UIL activity, like that of the Volunteers, fell in September, but that unlike the Volunteers did not recover in October. Both organisations were inactive by December:

Table 16: UIL reports in the local press, July-December 1914.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>July</th>
<th>Aug</th>
<th>Sept</th>
<th>Oct</th>
<th>Nov</th>
<th>Dec</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Longford Leader</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roscommon Herald</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roscommon Messenger</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sligo Champion</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Nationalist</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>45</strong></td>
<td><strong>42</strong></td>
<td><strong>31</strong></td>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
<td><strong>23</strong></td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Both the party vampire and its Volunteer victim were now haemorrhaging, but the party showed few signs of awareness of this, even dismissing some of its national organisers:

'It is stated that since the passing of Home Rule some United Irish League organisers have received notice that their services will not be further required, and that they may look out for other employment.' 124 Fund raising was minimal. According to police returns, all UIL branches in the five counties (including Ginnell’s followers) raised the princely sums of £91 in the third quarter of 1914 and £25 in the fourth (the comparable 1913 numbers were £445 and £688). 125 In December, Farrell observed with regret that Longford’s branches had been falling away for some time, with only three or four now maintaining any semblance of activity. He urged branches at least to hold their annual reorganisation meetings and send in their £3 affiliation fees - ‘and the thing is done’. 126 Some Longford branches seem to have followed his advice, but even this simple task seemed beyond the means of many:

125 RIC Crime Special Branch quarterly reports, 1914 (PRO CO 90220).
126 Farrell speaking to the Longford town UIL, Longford Leader, 19th December 1914.
Table 17: UIL Branch subscriptions paid to the National Directory (years ending approx. end-January)\textsuperscript{127}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1913-14</th>
<th>1914-15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leitrim</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longford</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roscommon</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sligo</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westmeath</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the five counties, the number of paid up branches nearly halved during 1914 and the fall - dramatic in Sligo, alarming in Leitrim and Westmeath - would have been even greater without the ability of many Roscommon branches just to pay their £3.

It would be wrong, however, to focus only on Irish party decline. Local, day-to-day, political activity seems to have shrivelled more generally and the cessation of activity was also felt by the party’s ‘Sinn Feiner’ opponents. The new MacNeillite Volunteers, like the National Volunteers, struggled to maintain membership, let alone drills and parades. At Ballinamuck, County Longford after the split ‘there was nothing doing again until 1917’.\textsuperscript{128} The Granard Volunteers languished, ostensibly for the lack of drill instructors,\textsuperscript{129} while in Longford town the dissident leaders were ‘standing aside’ to see how the new company (formed by Farrell) got along.\textsuperscript{130} In Athlone, sixty-eight Sinn Feiners may have marched through the town to commemorate the Manchester Martyrs, but the Volunteer company soon shrank and only 8-10 men were drilling at the Pipers’ Club.\textsuperscript{131} Dissident political organisations also found the going hard. Announcing a forthcoming meeting of Ginnell’s Westmeath Nationalist Executive, the Midland Reporter at the year-end noted that for some time past, and especially with Home Rule on the statute book, there had been an impression that there was little need for organisation.\textsuperscript{132}

\textsuperscript{127} Minute Book of the UIL National Directory (National Library of Ireland, Ms. 708).
\textsuperscript{128} Interview with Francis Davis, Ernie O’Malley Notebooks (UCD Archives, P 17b/121 p. 1).
\textsuperscript{129} Longford Leader, 24\textsuperscript{th} October 1914.
\textsuperscript{130} Roscommon Herald, 14\textsuperscript{th} November 1914.
\textsuperscript{131} Crime Special Branch precis, December 1914 (PRO CO 904/95); Sean O’Mullane, ‘Athlone Started the Volunteer Movement’. Athlone Annual, 1963 (in Athlone public library).
\textsuperscript{132} Midland Reporter, 31\textsuperscript{st} December 1914.
If the autumnal slump of activity was not confined to the Irish party, neither was it uniform across the party’s affiliated organisations. Just as the Hibernians had proved significantly more vigorous than the pre-war UIL, so now they appeared relatively immune to UIL’s wartime malaise:

Table 18: AOH reports in the local press, July-December 1914.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>July</th>
<th>Aug</th>
<th>Sept</th>
<th>Oct</th>
<th>Nov</th>
<th>Dec</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Longford Leader</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roscommon Herald</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roscommon Messenger</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sligo Champion</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Nationalist</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This sustained level of local Hibernian activity appears flatly to contradict the end-November observation of the RIC inspector general: ‘It is reported that the United Irish League and the Ancient Order of Hibernians (Board of Erin) have had merely a nominal existence’. However, it is possible that the Order, quiet in party political terms, was bolstered by its social functions, halls, sports, music and national insurance role, still meeting locally and sending reports of its meetings to the press.

Given the comparative resilience of the Hibernians, the ‘Irish party’ overall was, therefore, more alive than the Volunteer movement it had worked so hard to capture. However, if after the takeover the party locally was meant to have three main affiliates - the UIL, AOH and the National Volunteers - two of these were looking decidedly rickety. The inescapable conclusion has to be that before the first Christmas of the war the aggregated Irish party was experiencing a rapid local decline.

Fight or Flight

That there was no general surge of recruiting to the British army, either before or after the passage of Home Rule, was acknowledged in the local press. The Leitrim Observer carried a news piece ‘Ireland and the New Army’ on 12th September, noting the poor response to recruiting calls in Ireland and that the 10th Division was only half filled. A week later the Westmeath Independent cited the dissatisfaction with Irish recruiting of no less an authority than Kitchener. In October, the Sligo Nationalist’s authority on the failure of Ireland to recruit was the London Daily Mail. Police perceptions tallied with those of the press, with the inspector general noting at the end of October that the response to appeals so far had been ‘very poor’. Local police reports substantiated this view from September onwards. In Longford, there was little or no disloyalty, but ‘there appears little inclination on their part to come forward in response to Lord Kitchener’s appeal for men’. In Sligo recruiting was ‘very slack’. In Roscommon, ‘Mr Redmond’s appeal has not had the slightest effect upon recruiting; the farming class of the Volunteers are selfish and they have no idea of fighting for anyone’.

Pauline Codd, in her study of recruiting in Wexford, described the pattern of recruiting there as ‘traditional and sporadic’ with the strongest enlistment stemming from family, class and geographic ties. The same seems to have applied in the five counties. Urban labourers, from families with traditional army ties, in garrison towns such as Mullingar or Athlone, were more inclined to join up. Sometimes, financial inducements produced temporary bursts. In Longford in early September, enlistment was accelerated by a bounty paid by Lord Granard to the first forty men to join his regiment. In Sligo in November recruitment was brisk, with so many dock workers joining up that ‘the port is practically closed’. Here, ex-soldiers were enticed by the promise that if they re-enlisted, the whole of their former army service would count towards their pension. By contrast, as the inspector general put it, ‘young farmers, shop assistants, clerks, school teachers and others of that class...in this country rarely ever...

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134 Leitrim Observer, 12th September; Westmeath Independent, 19th September; Sligo Nationalist, 10th October 1914.  
135 Monthly report of the Inspector General, October 1914 (PRO CO 904/95).  
136 Monthly Crime Special Branch reports, Longford, Roscommon and Sligo, September 1914 (PRO CO 904/95).  
138 Longford Leader, 12th September 1914.  
139 Western Nationalist, 7th November: Sligo Independent, 21st November 1914.
join the army’. In November, the Westmeath county inspector discussed the apathy of farmers’ sons. The Roscommon inspector noted some months later that since the start of the war the towns of Boyle and Roscommon had done ‘fairly well’, but ‘the country districts have not yielded a man’.140

By far the highest proportionate recruitment seems to have come from Roscommon town. In mid-November, the Roscommon Messenger claimed that 140 men had left the town and that this was a higher percentage of the population (1911 census pop. 1,858) than any other town in Ireland.141 However, such claims look odd when the town’s experience is compared to that of Castlerea (1911 census pop. 1,244). By the end of November - it was by then claimed that 160 men had left Roscommon town - only eight had left Castlerea.142 The difficulty was that figures for recruitment from individual towns were hugely unreliable. Sometimes ‘recruits’ meant just that; sometimes they included reservists already called up and sometimes even regulars as well. In addition, the men quoted as joining up from a particular ‘town’ sometimes incorporated the neighbouring district, sometimes not. Moreover, official statistics for a ‘town’ or ‘county’ could include men travelling to that district to enlist;143 those enlisting in ‘Boyle’ included men from Sligo, Leitrim, and Mayo.144 In Roscommon town, however, a handful of families with traditional army connections were the main contributors to recruiting. William Daire, from the front, wrote to the Messenger claiming that nine first cousins were serving with him.145 M. Hoare, in the Connaught Rangers, had five sons and six cousins in the same regiment. Patrick Ward’s four sons were all at the front, together with three brothers, two brothers-in-law, three cousins and a nephew.146 On balance, therefore, the town’s recruiting probably was abnormally high. When the county councillor John Galvin claimed in early November that 120 ‘men from the ‘town’ were ‘fighting’, he was possibly including men from surrounding districts and almost certainly both regulars and reservists.

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141 Roscommon Messenger, 14th November 1914.
142 Leitrim Advertiser, 10th December 1914.
143 See the Cabinet paper, ‘Recruiting in Proportion to Population’, dated 12th November 1914 (PRO CAB 37/122 Document 164). ‘If a Scotsman, residing in London, goes to Reading and enlists in the Black Watch, he is recorded as a recruit taken in Berkshire.’
144 Roscommon Herald, 19th September 1914.
145 Roscommon Messenger, 14th November 1914.
146 Roscommon Herald, 26th September 1914.
However, when he went on to claim that these included twenty-seven men from one street, he was probably not exaggerating.147

There were other pockets of ‘traditional and sporadic’ recruiting across the five counties, but the overall out-turn was still, from the government’s perspective, dismal. It was summed up in statistics provided in a Cabinet paper, ‘Recruiting in Proportion to Population’, in mid-November. The paper showed those who had enlisted as army recruits from 4th August to 8th November, and as Territorials from 1st July to 4th November, as percentages of eligible males (defined as men aged 19-38 from the 1911 census). By country the figures were:

- England and Wales 13.8%, (10.0% excluding Territorials);
- Scotland 16.7% (11.9% excluding Territorials); and
- Ireland 5.7% (no Territorials).

Some historians have argued that the pattern of Irish recruiting was not, despite such data, fundamentally different from the rest of the UK, at least until 1916. Rural counties outside Ireland were also said to have experienced low recruitment levels, while the UK as a whole saw a falling trend of recruitment over the first eighteen months of the war. As Keith Jeffery put it,

recent research (by Patrick Callan, David Fitzpatrick and others) has shown that Ireland was not so dramatically out of kilter with other parts of Britain and the empire as has sometimes been assumed.148

However, the November 1914 Cabinet paper provided returns on rural recruiting in England, Scotland and Wales that were dramatically at variance with those from Ireland. English counties such as Cornwall, Devon, ‘Hampshire & the Isle of Wight’ and ‘Cumberland & Westmorland’ showed returns of 7.7%, 12.7%, 8.6% and 9.2% respectively.149 In Scotland the figures for Inverness and ‘Aberdeen, Banff & Kicardine’ were 10.4% and 10.0%. In Wales, the figure for six rural counties combined was 8.9%.150 The contrast of these rural

147 Galvin speaking to Knockcroghery Volunteers on 1st November, Roscommon Messenger, 7th November 1914.
149 Including new Territorial recruits.
150 Flint, Denbigh, Merioneth, Carnarvon, Anglesey and Montgomery.
percentages with those for the middle and west of Ireland was still startling, even remembering that Ireland had no Territorials:

- the Midlands (King's, Queen's, Meath, Longford and Westmeath combined), 1.9%;
- Connaught (Roscommon, Leitrim, Sligo, Mayo and Galway combined), 1.5%.

The trend of Irish recruiting over the coming months of the war may have had more in common with that of the rest of the UK, but it started from a totally different, and radically lower, base. For the ten Midlands and Connaught counties analysed in the Cabinet paper, the total number of army recruits to early November came to all of 2,014. 151

The local press generated a succession of rationalisations for the poor level of recruiting. It was alleged that recruiting generally, across the UK, was poor. 152 Specifically in Ireland, the lack of cooperation from the War Office, hindering Catholic recruitment and favouring the UVF, came under attack. By late-October, the Westmeath Independent would attack ‘an unwise [War Office] policy that is discouraging recruits’. John Hayden in early November could say that the Volunteers now had two enemies, Sinn Fein and the ‘reactionary’ War Office. 153 Alternatively, it was argued that the Irish could not furnish many recruits because emigration had left a disproportionate number of the old and infirm. 154 A variation on this theme was that a farming country could not afford to lose its young men, while a grazing country, denuded of population, had few to lose anyway. As the Roscommon Messenger wrote, only three weeks after lauding the level of recruiting in Roscommon town, Irish ‘flocks and herds do not produce soldiers’. 155 Recruiting was poor and people locally knew it.

In mid-October, enlistment numbers in the midlands and west were temporarily dwarfed by those of young, male emigrants who left Ireland for fear of conscription. Prior to then, there had been no great wartime surge in emigration, which in August and September had

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151 Cabinet Paper on Recruiting, 12th November 1914 (PRO CAB 37/122 Document 164). For other parts of Ireland the returns were: Dublin (incl. city), Wicklow, Kildare & Carlow 7.1%; Antrim & Down 16.4%; Donegal, Londonderry, Fermanagh & Tyrone 4.0%; Louth, Monaghan, Cavan & Armagh 2.8%; Tipperary, Waterford, Kilkenny & Wexford 2.9% and Clare, Limerick, Cork (incl. city) & Kerry 2.6%.

152 Leitrim Advertiser, 12th November 1914. The Advertiser was an enthusiastic supporter of recruiting.

153 Westmeath Independent, 24th October; Hayden speaking at Knockcroghery. Roscommon Messenger, 7th November 1914.

154 Leitrim Advertiser, 8th October 1914.

155 Roscommon Messenger, 5th December 1914.
continued the pattern of the earlier months of 1914: consistently about one-third down, month by month, on prior-year levels. However, during September, there was increasing speculation that the government would bring into operation the Militia Ballot Act. This Act, dating from 1882, had made service in the militia voluntary, but left in reserve a power to reintroduce compulsory ‘balloting’ for recruits which could be revived by an Order in Council. The scare story that this antiquated, obsolete power would be revived was promoted by Griffith’s Sinn Fein in Dublin and by other dissidents during September. In Sligo, the IRB man Alex McCabe wrote to the Sligo Champion of 12th September alerting its readers to the threat and triggering a short news piece in the paper. Next week the story was taken up by the Roscommon Herald.

The story was given impetus by confusion over remarks made by Redmond on the subject of conscription when speaking at Waterford on 11th October. Here, Redmond told his audience that if Germany won the war, conscription would be the ‘first inevitable result’ of ‘the defeat of the Allies’. However, his remarks were distorted by his opponents and misunderstood by his friends to indicate that a setback in the war - ‘defeat’ for the Allies - would suffice to trigger conscription. The Westmeath Examiner leader on Redmond’s speech declared that if the war were prolonged and the voluntary system broke down, there was not the slightest doubt that compulsion would be introduced. On 16th October, the Dublin Irish Independent weighed in with a news story claiming that reactivation of the Militia Ballot Act was imminent and that the government was putting in place the procedures, including printing work, to implement it. This story was carried in several local papers the next day.

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156 The cumulative emigration numbers, for most months of the year, were published in the Leitrim Advertiser (see 12th February, 12th March, 16th April, 18th June, 16th July, 13th August, 17th September, 12th November, 17th December 1914).
158 Sinn Fein, 5th and 19th September 1914.
159 Sligo Champion, 12th September (the letter was reprinted in the Roscommon Journal on 17th October); Roscommon Herald, 19th September 1914.
160 Irish Independent, 12th October 1914.
161 See Irish Volunteer, 24th October. This report of Redmond’s speech left out all mention of Germany winning the war, but retained the reference to Allied defeat leading to conscription.
162 Westmeath Examiner, 17th October 1914.
163 Irish Independent, 16th October; Westmeath Independent; Leitrim Observer; Roscommon Journal, 17th October 1914.
The *Irish Independent* story triggered a full-scale conscription scare and comprehensive press coverage. Over the next week young men from Leitrim, Longford, Roscommon, Sligo, Mayo and Galway left for America. The police estimate was that 600 Volunteers, aged between 18 and 30, sailed from the port of Queenstown on 21st-22nd October alone.\(^{164}\) The Roscommon county inspector believed that some 200 young men left his county, ‘with the intention of returning when the war is over’.\(^{165}\) Groups of between 10 and 40 men were reported to have left Frenchpark, Roscommon, Strokestown, Arigna, Boyle, Mohill, Dromod, Longford, Clonguish, Edgeworthstown, Granard, Tobercurry and Sligo.\(^{166}\) The scare was short-lived - ‘official’ denials from the government and Redmond were unequivocal - and some of the emigrants returned to Longford at least, having tried to embark at Londonderry.\(^{167}\) The response of the local press, whether party-loyalist, Sinn Feiner or unionist, was universal, even from those papers that had carried the story on 17th October or before. Those fleeing were fools and/or cowards, who brought shame to Ireland. True to form, the Tully brothers in the *Roscommon Herald* and *Midland Reporter* carried analyses of the plot behind the scare and of how Redmond’s Waterford speech was to blame.\(^{168}\) The *Leitrim Observer* remarked that it was a pity a couple of German cruisers could not be stationed in the Atlantic.\(^{169}\)

**The Year’s End**

Just how far was provincial nationalist Ireland ‘right behind Mr Redmond’ in his advocacy of Ireland’s participation in the war? The collapse of the Volunteers, lack of recruiting and Militia Ballot panic indicated that the somersault of nationalist public opinion brought about by the war - in which support for England overturned years of anglophobia (‘Bravo England!’) - did not extend to a whole-hearted commitment to participate in the war effort. Within weeks of the outbreak of war, undoubted popular support for England was qualified by suspicion and unease about the delay of Home Rule and reluctance to take on anything other than a defensive role in the war. The passage of the Act was greeted with no more than relief, and certainly not rapture. Redmond’s immediate call to Irishmen to enlist was based on

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164 Crime Special Branch monthly report, October 1914 (PRO CO 904/120).
165 Monthly report of the Roscommon county inspector. October 1914 (PRO CO 904/95).
166 *Leitrim Advertiser; Midland Reporter*, 22nd October; *Roscommon Messenger; Roscommon Journal; Roscommon Herald; Longford Leader; Sligo Independent*, 24th October 1914. Lady de Freyne did later write to the *Irish Times* denying the departures from Frenchpark (*Roscommon Herald*, 14th November 1914).
167 *Longford Leader*, 24th October 1914.
168 *Midland Reporter*, 22nd October; *Roscommon Herald*, 24th October 1914
169 *Leitrim Observer*, 24th October 1914.
sympathy for the Allies, moral obligation and instinctive (and compelling) political calculation. It triggered a brief and vigorous political fight for control of the Volunteers, during which well over 90% of the Volunteers supposedly pledged themselves to support Redmond’s policy. However, the response of most nationalists, whether Volunteers or not, was to maintain an intense interest in the war, express a general sympathy for the Allies, declare a general loyalty to Redmond and then keep their heads down. Recruitment was dismal, fear of conscription already endemic and withdrawal from public ‘political’ activity commonplace.

After the Volunteer takeover and the Militia Ballot scare, politics quietened significantly in the five counties at the end of 1914. Purely local stories again appeared more prominently in the press, though still alongside the regular columns of war news. Manorhamilton teachers objected to Gaelic classes (for them), a new Catholic Club was opened in Boyle and a land dispute broke out, with attendant cattle drives, in Easkey, County Sligo. The Roscommon Herald could devote 22 columns to reporting a bitter, personal libel case between the Carrick party boss Patrick Flynn and a local solicitor Michael McKeon, who won damages of a farthing. The quietness of the Irish party - with the slump of UIL branch activity and the death of the National Volunteers - was balanced by inactivity from its Sinn Feiner opponents. When the party lost a parliamentary by-election in neighbouring King’s County, though the result was hailed in the local ‘opposition’ press, Sinn Feiners appear to have played little or no part.

On 24th December, John Dillon wrote to T.P. O’Connor that ‘a very satisfactory change - has come upon the country during the last six weeks - And I think recruiting will go on much better now’. Dillon had some grounds for satisfaction; the crisis caused by Sinn Feiner influence in the Volunteers appeared over and the party to have won. Politically, things were much more tranquil. However, this relative quiet was less an indication of the Irish party’s success than of its failure. In the first five months of the war, the party’s primary local organisation, the UIL, shrivelled and its major acquisition, the Volunteers, disintegrated in its

170 Leitrim Observer, 21st November; Western Nationalist, 26th December 1914; monthly report of the Sligo county inspector, December 1914 (PRO CO 904/95).
171 Roscommon Herald, 19th December 1914.
173 Dillon to T.P. O’Connor, 24th December 1914. Dillon papers, TCD, f 6740 229.
hands. Its opponents, if also not very active, were both more numerous and more coherent than they had been before the war. In Griffith’s phrase of 1910, they could now provide ‘a national political centre to which men may turn’,¹⁷⁴ a focus of nationalist, anglophobe opposition to England and to the Irish party’s central wartime policies. Moreover, these were policies, of military alliance with England and support for recruiting, to which many Irish party supporters now paid little more than lip service. If a large majority of nationalists were ‘behind Mr Redmond’ as he led Irish opinion from the front, the distance between them and their leader was widening fast. The year-end reports of RIC county inspectors displayed a common pattern: interest in the war, ‘sympathy’ for the Allies, dormant Volunteers, no drilling, no public political meetings and little recruiting. At the end of December, the Roscommon county inspector summed up the strict limitations of nationalist support for the war and for Redmond’s wartime policy:

So far as the Volunteers in this county are concerned the recruiting for the army is nil. They hope that Germany will be defeated, but it rests there.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ Sinn Fein, 8th October 1910.
¹⁷⁵ Monthly reports of the Leitrim, Longford, Roscommon, Sligo and Westmeath county inspectors. December 1914 (PRO CO 904 95).
Chapter 11: Conclusions

The central questions asked in this study have related to the Irish party - that is the Irish parliamentary party in Westminster and its affiliated organisations and supporters in Ireland - and to the broader mass of provincial, nationalist public opinion. Just how pacified and 'constitutional' was local nationalist opinion in the last days of the Union? How far did it share the vision and tactics of the Irish party, and its leader Redmond, in their parliamentary pursuit of limited Home Rule? Was the party 'representative' of Irish society and opinion before the First World War or was it so 'rotten', decayed and out of touch with the dynamic forces of Irish nationalism that its wartime demise was both inevitable and easily explained. Returning to the imagery of F.S.L. Lyons, was the party 'swimming with the stream' of modern Irish nationalism or was it instead 'throwing a barrier across the course of the current'?¹

Judging the condition of the Irish party in the late summer of 1913, the answer to Lyons's question would have to be the former. Though its primary affiliate, the UIL, was in significant decline, it was still on balance far more representative than rotten. However, the party's position relative to other nationalist organisations was soon to be transformed, first by the Home Rule crisis and mass militarism and secondly by its wartime campaign to control the Volunteers and support recruiting for the British army. The party's condition just before its death should, therefore, be assessed not in a single snapshot, but during each of these three stages - up to the end of August 1913, July 1914 and December 1914.

August 1913

Before the Home Rule crisis broke across nationalist Ireland, the Irish party in 'middle Ireland' was still an umbrella nationalist movement. It represented a broad spectrum of beliefs (from conciliation to bellicosity), of tactics (from the mildest constitutionalism to theoretical advocacy of force) and of class and sectional interests (from Catholic gentry to landless labourers; urban grandees to trades unionists). All could unite in pursuit of what was still a loosely-defined goal, of 'independence' through Home Rule. The breadth of the party was such that it could give expression to just about any nationalist belief going; there

¹ Lyons. The Irish Parliamentary Party. p. 264.
was virtually no element of provincial Irish nationalism that could not be ‘represented’ by
some element of the Irish party. While it had numerous local opponents, the large majority of
the party’s nationalist enemies could be dismissed as isolated ‘factionalists’, distinguishable
not by ideology or class, but purely by personal, local feuding. More coherent nationalist
oppositions (O’Brienite, Sinn Féin) either never gained a foothold locally or were themselves
in sharp decline in the period. Moreover, the party continued to draw strength from an
intricate network of ‘connections’. Membership of the party’s affiliated political
organisations (principally the UIL and AOH) overlapped with participation in a prolific array
of religious, ‘benevolent’, special interest, cultural and recreational societies. ‘The party’
was still the near-monopoly leader of local nationalism and, in the words of the Liberal chief
whip the Master of Elibank, held the ‘copyright’ of the national movement as well as its
‘machine’. ²

Despite this, there was also a common contemporary perception that all was not well. Writers
and politicians commented on the lack of activity and the listlessness of nationalism.
Unionist writers cited this as evidence that nationalists did not care about Home Rule;
nationalists that quiet, orderly and law-abiding Catholics posed no threat to the Protestant
minority. The causes of such ‘apathy’ are not hard to find. Systematic land purchase and
rising farm incomes had taken the steam out of the land agitation that had driven so much of
the Irish party locally for over thirty years. The other wellspring of party activity, the goal of
Home Rule, was complacently seen to be grinding its way through parliament. The Home
Rule bill was judged to be more or less intact, unharmed by repeated, unsuccessful, unionist
efforts to bluff British opinion or unsettle the resolve of the Liberal government. ³ It really
was in ‘these quiet days of peace’, according to the Westmeath Independent, that ‘a smug man
may ask what need there is for a League’. ⁴

The Party Machine

Indeed, for proof of apathy and of a sickness within nationalism, observers had to look no
further than ‘the League’, the UIL. Here, while the police might record relatively stable

² Memorandum on the political situation in Ireland, 31³ March 1910 (Elibank papers, National Library of
Scotland, Ms. 8802 f 39).
³ Only mob violence against Ulster Catholics, as in July and August 1912, could alarm local opinion.
⁴ Westmeath Independent, 14³ December 1912.
branch and membership numbers month after month, the organisation had to a significant extent become what the police also called 'nominal'. Land agitations had faded away, parliamentary elections were virtually all uncontested, fund-raising had fallen and Home Rule was assured. Would the League even be in existence after Home Rule? In the five counties, those UIL branches achieving the bare minimum of activity to be in good order with the National Directory, holding annual 'reorganisations' and paying their £3 subscriptions, fell in number from 1910 to 1913 by over 20%. These fewer branches in turn became individually less active. In 1913 UIL activity, measured by local press reports of UIL rallies, branch and committee meetings, was between 30% and 50% down on the levels of 1910. The main, residual function of the League now appeared to relate, if not to outright corruption, then to 'a good-natured desire to help a neighbour's child'; effectively influence-peddling, nepotism and jobbery.

However, it can also be argued that the Irish party, as a near-monopolist of local politics, would inevitably bear the brunt of a more general decline of activity and of a period, outside Ulster, of political 'quiet'. In the years 1910-13, the waning of popular politics was particularly apparent among farmers and outside the towns. Land agitations did not stop entirely but, given the scale of land purchase now under way, took on the characteristics of 'mopping up' operations after a battle already won. Farmers were now likened by observers as diverse as John Dillon and the novelist Canon Sheehan to a penurious and narrow-minded 'French' peasantry. Political activity contracted to the market towns dotted across the region and this contraction reinforced the hold over the local Irish party of urban commercial traders, shopkeepers and professionals. Such men - there were virtually no women publicly active in local nationalist politics at this time - gave every appearance of being eminently respectable, conservative and unrevolutionary.

Their political horizons before 1914 were also almost uniformly local. In the five counties, the issues that propelled men to political activity related to jobs, newspaper and printing contracts, road-building, light railways, disputed land-ownership, the rates and, of course, feuds that could stretch back for decades - between villages, businesses, newspapers, families and individuals. Small towns may have been dominated by local elites, who attended

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committee meeting after committee meeting of an interconnected array of societies and clubs. but their opponents were also well-entrenched in local societies. Those who were 'in', nearly always controlling the local UIL, denounced their opponents as 'cranks' and self-serving factionists who undermined the national cause with their disunity. Those who were 'out', in the best traditions of oppositions everywhere, were vocal in their denunciations of the jobbery, 'wire-pulling', 'cliques' and 'bosses' which betrayed the national cause, and which they said characterised the UIL in particular.

Such underlying, incessant local rivalries gained prominence at times when there was little else happening politically. They were, therefore, only too apparent in the years 1910-13. Undoubtedly, the Irish party was enervated as a result; mutual co-operation and support receded along with the UIL's organisation and activity. In Leitrim and rural Sligo, politics may have appeared close to comatose in this period, but the party's surface control of local life was fissured with hairline cracks, the product of persistent squabbles. In Longford and County Roscommon, local feuding was endemic and slightly more focused. In Longford this was in reaction to the 'bossism' of J.P. Farrell; in Roscommon a consequence of the assertive, unceasingly-active personalities of Jasper Tully and Canon Cummins, who provided leadership for local factionists that was lacking elsewhere.

Opposition to local bosses and cliques did not mean, however, that factionists were always anti-party. Many local 'outs' were still party men active, if not in the UIL, in other party-affiliated organisations such as the Foresters, town tenants or Hibernians. Others, if not members of local party organisations, continued to pledge their national loyalty to John Redmond and Home Rule. Only a handful, of whom Jasper Tully was the most prominent, denounced both the local party and its national leadership (and even Tully retained loose ties to the Boyle AOH which he had set up in 1905, well after his expulsion from the UIL). The exception to this pattern was, however, North Westmeath, where followers of the outcast MP Laurence Ginnell had come to express their opposition to John Hayden and the UIL in a quite separate and rival organisation, initially the 'Independent UIL' and later the 'Westmeath Nationalist Executive'. Here again, the roots of division were almost exclusively local, with personal, family and clerical likes and dislikes counting for far more than either class or ideological differences. Politically, the followers of Hayden and Ginnell bore a closer resemblance to the Tweedledum and Tweedledee of North Westmeath than to any prototypes
for later, deeper divisions, but organisationally the split between the two sides was formal and consistent. The effect on the local UIL was little short of catastrophic. Ginnell and his followers were victorious in almost all of a succession of elections and the local UIL collapsed to a demoralised rump. If there was one part of the five counties where the Irish party could be described as terminally ill before its wartime death, it was North Westmeath.

'Politics', and particularly the UIL, may have been on the wane, but 'society' continued to flourish. Hibernian, village and church halls were built in profusion; social, sporting and cultural clubs, benefits societies, labour leagues, trades unions and town tenants' associations all grew in number, with the region's small but busy market towns again a focus for activity. It has been argued by some that the Irish party before 1914 was challenged by such bodies and responded to their challenge by 'vampirising' and controlling them. However, the evidence of the five counties does not support this view. While episodic disputes between UIL men and town tenants, labour men and Foresters did occur, co-operation and interchangeability of personnel between the various societies was far more the norm, without the party having to be overtly acquisitive. Moreover, a majority of Land and Labour Associations, town tenant branches and Foresters had for years been formally affiliated to the Irish party, supplying funds, supporting its candidates for office and participating in membership conventions. Of the party's various, formal affiliates by far the most vigorous was the AOH.

The AOH's growth stemmed from considerably more than its pole position, under the 1911 National Insurance Act, as an approved insurance society. It provided a wide range of leisure, sporting and social activities, linked these to the trappings of a not-very-secret society, gave voice to a more militant nationalism, was dedicated to the advance of 'Catholicity' and appealed to the young. While the UIL decayed the Hibernians blossomed, becoming a major prop for the Irish party in Longford and most of Roscommon and the dominant partner of the UIL in Leitrim and Sligo. Only in Westmeath was the impact of the AOH small. In counties Leitrim, Roscommon and Sligo at least, the increase of press reports of AOH activities almost exactly offset the slump of UIL reports. Not only was the younger, more militant and more overtly sectarian AOH by far the most vigorous component of the Irish party, but as a consequence the party (in aggregate and with the clear exception of North Westmeath) was far closer to holding its own locally than to ossification.
Events in Sligo town illustrated how the Irish party as a whole was still capable of self-renewal. Here, the party derived strength from its allies and affiliates (in this case labour and the Hibernians respectively) and succeeded despite continued, internecine faction-fighting. After 1905, local nationalist politics had seen a running dispute between on one side the town’s Catholic business grandees, the church, the Sligo Champion and the UIL, and on the other ‘smaller men’ and the AOH. The leaders of each side, P.A. McHugh MP for the UIL and Daniel O’Donnell for the AOH, were both ‘friends of labour’ and both had cultivated support on the town’s Trades Council. However, in the jostling to fill the vacuum left by McHugh’s death after 1909, O’Donnell emerged as the leading champion of the labour cause and in 1911 actively promoted the arrival and growth in the town of the ITGWU. Annual elections to Sligo’s Corporation quickly witnessed a successful alliance between O’Donnell’s Hibernians and labour. Admittedly, the first major dock strike by the ITGWU, in 1912, did witness hostilities along class lines among nationalists. Some of the town’s leading Catholic businessmen (usually prominent in the UIL) were among those resisting the strikers. However, by the time of a second, protracted strike in 1913, there was virtually a solid Lab/Nat front against the Protestant controllers and owners of the town’s major shipping interests, docks and mills. UIL and AOH men, craft unions, transport workers, the church and the town’s Catholic haute bourgeoisie were now allied, electorally and industrially, under the leadership of O’Donnell and then of his opportunistic colleague/rival John Jinks, who was senior in both the UIL and AOH. This Lab/Nat alliance was to remain solid until the autumn of 1914. Even North Sligo’s MP, Tom Scanlan, could declare that as a member of the legal profession he too was a trades unionist.6

**Popular Opinion**

The political language of Irish party speakers and newspapers before 1914 covered the full spectrum of nationalist beliefs and attitudes, reflecting the breadth of the party as a comprehensive nationalist movement. Intense social conservatism, reverence for the Catholic church and a craving for respectability (‘the real conservative Ireland...profoundly sceptical of revolutionary movements and revolutionary ideas’)7 could combine, paradoxically, with a ‘democratic’, radical language imbued in nationalists over years of agitation and opposition.

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6 Sligo Independent, Sligo Times, 14th September 1912.
7 Colum. My Irish Year, p. 127.
Locally, however, the rhetoric used most consistently, by platform speakers, newspaper editors, clerics, councillors and committee men was that of Ireland's 'Cause', her fight for freedom, her suffering and conflict. While speaker after speaker would declare that the armed conflict of the past was no longer necessary, they also repeatedly paid homage to the party's Fenian predecessors (several of whom were still alive and MPs), and to the 'men of 1848' and 1798. The fight had to go on until Ireland had won her 'independence'. Even though the Irish party was now acknowledged to be in a constitutional, parliamentary alliance with Britain's 'democracy', local oratory and writings were suffused by the traditional, deeply-ingrained language of Ireland as a cruelly and unjustly-treated underdog and victim. The list of Ireland's enemies was still prolific. Traitors, 'blood-suckers' and oppressors of Ireland could include landlords, aristocrats, land agents, government officials, 'the garrison', 'the Castle', Orangemen, 'Tories', Ulster unionists and carrion crows.

Though this catalogue of enemies was also nearly all Protestant, it was unusual for Protestants to be attacked solely on the basis of their religious creed. Party speakers went out of their way to emphasise that Home Rule would not mean Rome Rule. Unionist claims of discrimination against local Protestants were indignantly denied and a pantheon of nationalist, Protestant heroes, from Tone to Parnell, constantly praised. However, nationalists' equally-repeated claim, that no religion would be privileged under Home Rule, carried the obvious implication that those who were widely believed to enjoy privileges would have to surrender them. As Sligo's favourite son, Daniel O'Donnell, put it at the great Dublin Home Rule rally in 1912, a minority had been nursed and pampered off the feeding bottle of Dublin Castle for over 300 years. Soon the 'health' of these 'superior persons' would 'return to a more normal state'.

(Sectarianism did surface more often in O'Donnell's home town, where there was still a wealthy, politically-vocal, Protestant business class to be resented. It was the Sligo Champion which in 1909 predicted 'Catholic omnipotency and its attendant conciliatory results'.) The AOH, of which O'Donnell was the Connaught regional director and national trustee, remained explicitly sectarian throughout the pre-war period and dedicated to advancing the interests of Catholics. Was it any coincidence that it was also, until 1914, by far the most vigorous organisation across the region, whether, political, cultural or social?

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8 Sligo Champion, 6th April 1912.
9 Ibid, 9th October 1909.
Another component of the prevailing nationalist orthodoxy was a perennial distrust and contempt for most things 'English', whether defined as English materialism, dishonesty, commercial self-interest, cruelty or decadence - or even the 'mincing' English accent. In its impact on contemporary debate this was far greater than the praise given, often by the same speakers and writers, to the Irish party's parliamentary alliance with England's 'democracy'. A ritualistic but vehement dislike of England and Englishmen was easily triggered, whether by the activities of 'English' trades unions, the supposed English plot to destroy the Irish cattle trade or the importation of dirty English books and newspapers. In the late-summer of 1913 it was about to blossom again. The Irish party locally may have been run by small-town conservatives, with its policies more constitutional and the countryside more pacified than for years, but nationalism's political orthodoxy was still one of resentment and conflict. Nationalism was defined by reference to its enemies and far and away the greatest of these was England.

Encouragement of the local manifestations of Gaelic, 'cultural' nationalism - its festivals, sports, language teaching, music and dramas - was therefore wholly consistent with the prevailing outlook of almost all leading local nationalists. While local Irish party leaders and newspaper editors were more often than not too old to take part in football, athletics or hurling and quite unable (in common with most adults) to acquire more than a smattering of Irish, they were fully supportive of what were seen as respectable, 'national' organisations such as the Gaelic League and GAA. Support for Ireland's 'national day', for the campaign for Essential Irish in the National University, for the temperance movement, the Gaelic League's 'Language Fund' or a succession of 'Buy Irish' initiatives was nearly always axiomatic. Press coverage of such politically-correct Gaelic activities was pervasive. Gaelic sports certainly flourished locally in the period and the activities of the Gaelic League were usually an integral, albeit fluctuating, part of small-town social life. Interwoven into almost all of this local activity was the Catholic clergy, very often local guardians of nationalism's cultural orthodoxy and just as active in nationalism's 'politics' as they were in its 'culture'.

It would be wrong, however, to say that these cultural organisations were affiliated to or came under the control of the Irish party. The Gaelic League remained resolutely 'non-[party] political' and a large number of its activists, while they might welcome Home Rule and anticipate the advance of Irish culture under it, took little or no part in UIL or AOH affairs.
Indeed some ‘Gaels’ formed a nucleus of advanced nationalist opposition to the party, particularly in Athlone, and nationally the GAA remained more under the control of the IRB than any other ‘cultural’ organisation. For all that, there was significant local overlap between Irish party activists and those prominent in Gaelic sports, language and temperance. It was just as normal for prominent party men to participate in their local Gaelic League, finance a football or hurling tournament or speak at a temperance rally as it was for them to take part, sometimes to excess, in the battery of other local activities and committees available to them. At this local level, talk of a separate world view or weltanschauung for ‘political’ as opposed to ‘cultural’ nationalists is simply meaningless.

If a barrier was being thrown across the current of Irish nationalism (whether ‘modern’ or atavistic, ‘cultural’ or ‘political’, democratic or conservative), the culprit was not, therefore, the Irish party. Nor could a gulf be discerned, before the Home Rule crisis, between the political outlook of the party in Ireland and that of its parliamentary wing. This is hardly surprising, given that the majority of MPs were local men who had served long apprenticeships as agitators, editors, committee men, party officers and/or councillors. They had for years lived either in their constituencies or home towns, dispensing patronage and sustaining local networks of supporters and societies. Farrell in Longford, Fitzgibbon in Castlerea, Hayden in Mullingar, O’Dowd in Tubercurry and Meehan in Manorhamilton were archetypal political ‘bosses’, while Smyth and Phillips were both fundamentally ‘local’ politicians. Admittedly, presiding over such parish pump operations was not necessarily essential to stay in harmony with local opinion. Neither the totally-absent J.J. O’Kelly nor Ginnell, who for years had pursued his political career in Dublin and London, could be said to be swimming against the stream of their followers’ beliefs. Nevertheless, a regular, local presence surely helped and when the MPs came to be absent in Britain for long periods, as they were for much of 1913 (whipped in at Westminster to vote for the Home Rule bill or travelling across England and Scotland on speaking tours) their responsiveness to local political pre-occupations must necessarily have weakened.

The region’s two MPs most removed from the prevailing nationalist orthodoxy, though locally born and bred, were both politicians whose careers and social lives were conducted well away from their constituencies. Sir Walter Nugent and Thomas Scanlan most consistently gave voice to those views on Ireland’s loyalty to the British empire, the need to
conciliate Protestants and unionists and the need for men of standing to play their full role in an independent Ireland which echoed those of their national party leader, John Redmond. Neither MP could be said to be a marginal figure, with Nugent chairing the Freeman's Journal Company and Scanlan co-running the Irish Press Agency and secretary to the parliamentary party. Their local political position appeared unaffected by their conservative moderation. Their commitment to Home Rule was beyond doubt and their continued political success was a tribute to the breadth of opinion which could be encompassed in an all-embracing national movement. Their Redmondism was, however, distinctly a minority view in the five counties, and makes the party's continued, undoubted loyalty to its leader all the more noteworthy.

Of course, Redmond himself could at times be anything but 'Redmondite' and over his career had voiced the full range of nationalist rhetoric, from mild-mannered to bellicose, from imperialist to separatist. His unionist opponents would happily quote selectively from his speeches and writings to demonstrate that behind his conciliatory façade there lurked a man as extreme as any Fenian. Redmond had also several times in his career - in 1904, 1907 and 1910 - backtracked from moderate proposals for Irish devolution and/or federation in the interests of nationalist unity and party management. His position as party chairman was not always secure, but it had been boosted hugely by his electoral and tactical successes of 1910, which created the real possibility, for the first time in decades, of Irish self-government. With his oratorical and parliamentary skills, his management of the parliamentary party's inner leadership and his status as Parnell's disciple and successor, he was regarded as far more than just the 'chairman' of the parliamentary party. Throughout the local press he was referred to as 'the leader', and there is no doubt that in the late-summer of 1913 the Irish party considered itself to be right behind him.

The Irish party in the late summer of 1913 was, therefore, waiting, confident that Home Rule would become law during 1914 and come into operation during 1915. The overall popular mood of local nationalists in relation to the progress of the Home Rule bill was quiet and complacent, leaving them open to the unionist charge of apathy, that they did not care. The bill had survived the theatrical terrors of the Ulster campaign substantially unscathed and the *Roscommon Journal* really could 'rest somewhat contented, with the long lost goal appearing
in view'. In at least five counties of 'middle Ireland' the Irish party may, chronologically, have been close to its political death, but it was not out of touch with popular opinion and was not at odds with 'modern' Irish nationalism. Weakened (in the UIL), parochial and faction-ridden it may have been, but taking into account its amorphous collection of affiliates, its ability to form local alliances and its harmony of outlook with the prevailing nationalist orthodoxy of the time, it was (with the clear exception of its dire state in North Westmeath) anything but terminally ill.

**July 1914**

In his biography of Parnell, Paul Bew has written of the period 1879-92 that 'once the masses got involved in politics...all the “leaders” were swept along'. Much the same could be said of the Irish party's relationship to popular nationalist opinion in the months leading up to July 1914, as the Home Rule crisis finally broke and Tom Kettle's 'great wave' of Volunteering crashed down across nationalist Ireland. The months before the Great War saw provincial opinion almost totally absorbed in the Home Rule crisis, with national rather than parish pump issues driving local political actions. Would Ireland achieve Home Rule despite a succession of 'English' betrayals? How far would 'Ireland's army', the Irish Volunteers, have to fight for it? The crisis entailed a mass political mobilisation, militarism and a bellicosity of language unseen in recent times. Some Irish party politicians still considered that they were at the head of the Irish Volunteers, but in reality the party's standing changed for the worse and its cohesion and organisation weakened, both relative to the burgeoning Volunteers and absolutely. The Irish party did not generate the 'great wave' of Volunteering and could not control it. It could only be swept along.

In the autumn of 1913, a succession of initiatives, speeches and 'conversations' by British politicians aroused nationalist fears across Ireland that the Ulster unionist campaign of 'bluff' might actually be working and Home Rule lost or mutilated. Local calls for nationalists to imitate the Ulster Volunteer Force multiplied, both as a political counter-bluff to scare British opinion back into line and as a defensive force to protect Connaught or Leinster towns and villages against a widely-feared incursion by Carson's men. Coverage of the Irish Volunteers became the major news story of the local press and leading articles consistently supported the

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10 *Roscommon Journal*, 16th August 1913.

idea of local men drilling and bearing arms. Such calls came not just from ‘cranks’ and factionists, but from right across the mainstream, party-supporting press. Indeed the *Westmeath Independent*, arguably the most Redmondite of the local newspapers, gave the movement a boost nationally with its own published fantasy of thousands of men marching through the streets of Athlone. The change of popular mood, from complacent anticipation of Home Rule to palpable sense of crisis, was sudden and dramatic. A range of nationalist speakers and writers - many of them middle-aged, bourgeois, conservative and ‘respectable’ - now advocated the use of arms.

However, with the first Volunteer companies forming in Dublin and elsewhere, the Irish party moved against this groundswell of popular opinion and tried to hold it back. In this, the party’s parliamentary wing was at odds with the mood of many of its followers in Ireland. For the parliamentary party, which had for several years focused on securing the passage of the Home Rule bill, the ‘battleground’ of Home Rule was in Britain, either through the MPs’ presence at Westminster to protect the bill against tactical ambushes or via their participation in a succession of British speaking tours. Not only had the party leadership been focused on the campaign in Britain, but the crisis had come upon them suddenly. There had been no long build-up to accustom them to the idea of radically different tactics. Redmond himself was instinctively hostile to mass mobilisation and physical force. Others in the leadership feared that the Volunteers would be impossible to control or calculated that an armed mobilisation would only alienate British politicians and parties.

The parliamentarians did, therefore, go against the grain of local opinion, but the majority of the party locally was nevertheless prepared to follow its leaders. Moreover, the party’s success in stifling the spread of Volunteering was indicative not of its decay, but of the organisational cohesion and loyalty upon which it could still draw. Even J.P. Farrell, the only party MP in the five counties living locally in the autumn of 1913 and the only local party MP (surely no coincidence) then to call publicly for Volunteers, would for nearly the next six months tell his Longford followers that the time was not ripe. The party was able to restrict, if not stop, the spread of Volunteering until the late spring of 1914.

Paradoxically, the scale of the party’s influence could also be seen where its internal discipline failed and local nationalists pressed on with the formation of Volunteer
companies. In three of the four local instances where this occurred (in Sligo, Granard and Boyle) the active support of local UIL/AOH men of ‘influence’ was both forthcoming and an essential ingredient of the new companies’ success. Arguably the healthiest party organisation in the region, in Sligo town, took the lead from the outset in the town’s Volunteers and backed one of the strongest corps in Ireland. By contrast, where a Volunteer company was organised without local party support, in Athlone, it was nearly still-born.

If the party nationally retained a sufficient grip over its followers to hold back the formation of Volunteer companies, its efforts were ultimately futile. A steady trickle of new companies in the five counties indicated that the party’s discouragement of the Volunteers was only partially effective. By the end of April, as the Home Rule crisis gathered in intensity, the initial four companies in the region had grown to seventeen. As event followed on event, it became apparent to local nationalists that Ulster’s unionists and the UVF could act with impunity (and if they could, why shouldn’t nationalists?), that the Home Rule bill would be at best ‘mutilated’ through Ulster’s exclusion, that ‘Ireland’ was indeed being betrayed by the ‘English’ political parties and that purely parliamentary tactics were not enough. It was still believed that some form of Home Rule Act would pass through parliament, but the chances of it coming peacefully into operation across the whole of Ireland were progressively more remote. The public rationale for the Volunteers, therefore, changed and they were seen increasingly as ‘Ireland’s army’, which would not only stay in being after Home Rule’s passage, but might well have to fight to secure Home Rule’s operation.

Moreover, though party support was still fundamental to the success of individual Volunteer companies, the party locally tended to lose status relative to the new force. Sportsmen, language enthusiasts, farmers and their sons, shop assistants and labourers who had not been politically active were mobilised, but not into a ‘party’ organisation. Villages and country districts were re-mobilised back into political life after several years of relative inaction. At the peak of the movement, between 25% and 35% of young and young middle-aged men had enrolled locally. This mass of men joining up might still cheer for Redmond and Home Rule, but they did not necessarily represent a new burst of support for the Irish party. Former Sinn Fein supporters and IRB men who had been quite marginalised were now given a local prominence they had not enjoyed for years. A new, much more numerous nationalist
coalition was forming, centred on a paramilitary movement, and the Irish party was only a part of it.

The response of the party leadership was to recognise the inevitable and, from the end of April 1914, positively to encourage support for the Volunteers. The immediate result was a mushrooming of Volunteer numbers and activities across the five counties, a tribute to the effectiveness of the party's previous restraint. It did not, however, increase the party's control over the movement, nor did it reverse the trend for the party to be sidelined within it. Of course, thousands of party members did now join up, and each new company was graced by senior UIL and/or AOH men on its governing committee. Statistically, as the police still counted over 20,000 UIL members in the five counties in 1914 and over 20,000 Volunteers by the end of August, significant overlap was unavoidable, but the majority of UIL men who enrolled in the Volunteers had been 'nominal', passive non-participants in the UIL for years. At the level of 'activists' - comparing UIL/AOH speakers, officers and committee men against comparable Volunteer leaders - the level of commonality between the two movements was far from high, at only 25 - 35%. The new nationalist coalition represented by the Volunteers was just as broad after the party leadership took its foot off the brakes as it had been before.

The next move by the party's leadership, to attempt a formal, national takeover of the Volunteers at the end of June, encountered almost no local resistance but was wholly ineffective. In less than a handful of local companies, Athlone being the most conspicuous, was there any change of local Volunteer leadership. Not only did the party 'vampire' not feast on the blood of the Volunteers, but its largest affiliate, the UIL, began to appear decidedly anaemic. June and July 1914, the peak months for new Volunteer company formation, also saw a sharp downwards lurch in UIL activity and even a temporary dip in that of the AOH. UIL activity, fund-raising and the number of branches 'in good order' with the National Directory all fell rapidly in 1914. Not only was the Irish party no longer a near-monopolist of local politics, having failed to gain in vigour and popular participation from the national crisis, but it also appeared to lose ground absolutely, crowded out of nationalist activity by the new movement.
The beginnings of the collapse of the Irish party can, therefore, be traced to its failure to lead local nationalist opinion during the Home Rule crisis which erupted in late-1913. On balance, the failure the Irish party was not one of local organisation or ideology, but of its national political leadership. In temperament, its local, small-town politicians with 'blinking eyes and wavering speech...representative of the real conservative Ireland'\(^{12}\) might seem to be the last people to be carried up in a wave of paramilitary emotion, but when the crisis broke their initial endorsement of drilling and the use of arms was clear. Party men in towns such as Boyle and Sligo proved perfectly able and willing to start successful Volunteer companies - it is noteworthy that such towns had 'bosses' linked to the more vigorous and militant Hibernians and who also operated independently of largely-absentee MPs. It was by contrast the parliamentarians, though they were still able to harness the discipline of a far from rotten local organisation, who attempted, and failed, to place a 'barrier against the current' of popular Irish opinion. The result was that by the time the party came actively to back the Volunteers it was marginalised and definitely, in John Dillon's words of late-May, 'playing with fire', running the risk that the Volunteers could 'utterly ruin the National movement - and repeat the disasters of 1798'.\(^{13}\) Given the anger and excitement that would soon follow, with constant drilling and parades, rumours, linguistic bellicosity ('Ireland is out for blood and murder'),\(^{14}\) arms landings and Dublin shootings, Dillon's lack of enthusiasm was perhaps understandable, but the party's position as the leader of nationalism had been significantly weakened.

Though the goal of almost all nationalists was still 'Home Rule' and Redmond was still seen as their leader, forces other than the constitutional Irish party were now 'right behind' him and were quite often menacing in their support. In mid-July, the staunchly-Hibernian Henry Monson could of course stress, to a County Sligo audience of 'soldiers of Ireland', that the rights they would defend had been won by 'great leaders' and that the use of arms could be dangerous unless 'properly guided'. However, his description of the constitutional agitation as a 'flimsy dam' holding back a 'mighty pent up volume of water' that was Ireland's revived martial spirit (see page 127), was truer to the mood of the time. So too was his conclusion that if English statesmen should surrender Ireland's cause to her enemies,

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\(^{12}\) Colvin, *My Irish Year*, p. 127.

\(^{13}\) Dillon to Blunt 21\(^{st}\) May 1914. Blunt Mss., West Sussex Record Office, Chichester. Box 16 Vol. 6.

\(^{14}\) John Jinks reported in the *Western Nationalist*, 8th August 1914.
then down will go the dam, and like a mighty devastating torrent the Irish Volunteers will
sweep over Ireland, and it will be well for England if they demand no more than Home
Rule (loud and continuous applause).\textsuperscript{15}

\textbf{December 1914}

Though an eventual war between England and Germany was long anticipated, particularly by
Jasper Tully, the actual outbreak of a European war in August 1914 was almost totally
unforeseen in an Ireland that was wrapped up in its own crisis. The war immediately and
undoubtedly acted as a ‘deus ex machina’, altering the course of Irish politics. However, its
initial impact was not to discredit either constitutional nationalism or the Irish party, but to
defuse the immediate crisis that had been faced by so many Irish politicians at the end of July.
‘Home Rule’ was temporarily submerged by the impact of local soldiers and reservists going
off to battle, by panic buying, spy and invasion scares, relief work, tax increases and a
general, nervy anticipation of a terrible war. The habitual anglophobia running through
nationalist political rhetoric, which had been given full rein in the Home Rule crisis, was
immediately stilled by a widespread belief that England and her wartime allies were, for once,
clearly in the right. Not only was the crisis which had propelled the ‘great wave’ of
Volunteering superceded but the Irish party proceeded to take control of the Volunteers in a
way which had completely eluded it during the summer months.

However, the remarkable swing of nationalist opinion, towards what Augustine Birrell called
‘great friendliness’ towards England in the war, would only fleetingly re-secure the position
of Irish party as the undisputed leader of nationalist opinion, let alone make Ireland safe for
Redmondism, the empire or conciliation with England. Instead the Irish party, committed to a
policy of active participation in the war effort and support for recruiting, would now decline
almost uninterruptedly until it went to electoral oblivion in 1918. The relative quiet and
stability of nationalist politics at the end of 1914 reflected not the wartime health of the Irish
party but rather its own, imminent mortality.

However, Redmond’s first wartime initiative, his early-August offer that the Irish Volunteers
and UVF should together defend Ireland against invasion, was absolutely in tune with the new
popular mood triggered by the war and was hailed, locally, by almost all nationalists. It held

\textsuperscript{15} Monson speaking at Highwood, County Sligo. \textit{Sligo Champion}. 18\textsuperscript{th} July 1914.
out the promise of securing the future role of ‘Ireland’s army’, increased the probability of the passage of Home Rule, tactically outflanked the unionists in parliament and gave clear voice to Irish support for what was seen as a just cause. Most notably, the long-standing Redmondite themes of conciliating England, taking Ireland’s rightful place in the empire and uniting all Irishmen in a common cause appeared for once to be fully in harmony with the ‘current’ of popular thought. The offer was seen as an act of friendship towards England, and approved as such.

Equally startling, but indicative of just how volatile the popular mood was in 1914, was the speed with which the new national consensus given form by Redmond’s offer began to unravel. Within two to three weeks, discussion of what was seen as yet another betrayal permeated the local nationalist press, in a range of loyal, party-supporting papers. The progress of the Home Rule bill was being stalled; the Volunteers were being given no support or training; Redmond’s offer was being spurned; the war would be long and might trigger conscription. Dissidents within the Volunteers, former Sinn Fein supporters, former and current IRB men and some habitual, local ‘cranks’ began to form a distinct nationalist opposition, given coherence by their attacks on the war effort and the Irish party, and even acquiring the soubriquet of ‘Sinn Feiners’. Moreover, their ranks were swelled by the first ‘trickles’ of what was to prove a long stream of defections from the Irish party - of politicians, clerics and newspaper editors who simply could not stomach being on the same side as Ireland’s ‘real enemy’, England.

It was, therefore, against a background not of harmonious consensus but of mounting disaffection that Home Rule (still delayed indefinitely in its operation and highly likely to exclude most of Ulster) finally became law. The party’s leadership immediately went on the offensive to check this unrest, reaffirm its support for the war effort and curb the nascent Sinn Feiner opposition. The party’s MPs, local leaders, speakers and press were wheeled out to fight an uncomplicated, partisan battle to secure its organisational base, focusing on the body over which its control was weakest and in which its opponents were most entrenched, the Volunteers. The efficiency and speed with which the party now took control of the movement was, again, a tribute to the continuing internal cohesion and discipline of its machine. Within six weeks, right across Ireland, meetings were packed, parades mustered, dissidents isolated, committee members voted off and resolutions of loyalty to Ireland’s leader passed. This was
the time, above all others, when nationalists were meant to be 'right behind Mr. Redmond'. The party's public policy was now set by its leader, emphasising Ireland's friendship and alliance with England, her proper place in the empire, the need to honour the grant of Home Rule, the reconciliation of all creeds and classes (and unionists and nationalists) through shared military comradeship and, above all, the duty of Irishmen taking their place in the British army, 'in the firing line'.

That such an agenda was emphatically not in tune with popular nationalist opinion, that 'Redmondism' was always a minority taste in provincial, nationalist Ireland, has been one of the recurring themes of this study. Nevertheless, the Irish party locally in the autumn of 1914 appeared to throw itself with gusto into this new campaign. There seemed to be a clear perception that while Home Rule had passed, its coming into operation was anything but assured and that sullen defiance of England in the midst of the most terrible war in history would be, politically, suicidal. The Volunteers had to be controlled, disciplined and trained - there could be no more 'playing with fire'. What is striking, however, is how much of the specifically Redmondite agenda was lost by the party in its local campaigning. Men were indeed exhorted to join up, but to the Volunteers. They were told that they would not be 'called up' to the army and assured repeatedly that party speakers were not 'recruiting sergeants'. Appeals were made to nationalist unity and discipline rather than to friendship for England. The loyalty that was desired was to 'the leader' rather than to the empire. The party's conception and that of Redmond, as to what exactly they were 'right behind', were not the same.

The party's takeover of the Volunteers was also the most phryric of its victories. Not only did more of its traditional supporters defect, unable to declare for England (let alone tell young men to join the British army), but the newly-controlled National Volunteers crumbled to dust in its hands. It seems clear that while the takeover did not initiate the process of the Volunteers' collapse - it was already under way beforehand - it certainly hastened it. Volunteers stopped drilling, parading, even meeting, because of a pervasive fear that such public military activity increased the chance of their being called up for the army. The party's 'recruiting' campaign of support for Redmond and the war could only magnify such fears. Though publicly they declared their allegiance to Redmond, the mass of Volunteers showed their true intentions subsequently by voting with their feet.
The party’s autumn campaign, therefore, both accelerated the disintegration of the Volunteers and drove more of its supporters, local factionists and the formerly apolitical into the ranks of its opponents, who themselves became the focus for nationalist opposition to ‘England’ and the war. The party was now trapped by the exigency of war into a policy which it could not abandon without destroying Home Rule, and which it could not continue without alienating its natural supporters. That the party’s war policy was fundamentally against the grain of local nationalist thought was soon evidenced in the middle and west of Ireland, by levels of recruitment which were widely acknowledged to be ‘disappointing’ and which were in reality derisory when compared with other rural areas of the United Kingdom. The mid-October flight to the ports of hundreds of young men, panicked by a press rumour of imminent conscription, was a far more powerful testament to the mood of provincial Ireland than Redmond singing ‘God Save the King’ and flying the Union Jack alongside the Green Flag at Aughavanagh.

Paramilitary activity in general slumped in this environment, both for the party and, initially, for its Sinn Feiner opponents. The countryside retreated to inactivity and ‘apathy’. The effect on what was still the party’s main affiliate, the UIL, was little short of disastrous, coming as it did after several years of slow decline and the summer’s downwards lurch of activity. Though the more socially-active Hibernians (still buoyed by their recreational and benefits society roles and both more militant and more sectarian) were far more resilient than their UIL affiliates, the aggregate decline of the party’s organisation was now so steep as to call into question whether it could pull out of the dive. Increasingly divided over the issue of the war and losing touch with its natural base of support in provincial Ireland, the Irish party, for the first time, approached that state of terminal decay so often described by its contemporary enemies and by so many historians.

**As Always, Behind Mr. Redmond**

The story of the Irish party across provincial Ireland over the years 1910-14, was, therefore, undoubtedly one of failure. This failure was not the result of structural rottenness, nor of the party being ideologically obsolete and out of step with a ‘new’ Ireland. Rather it was a consequence of it adopting policies, formed by its parliamentary leadership, which went fundamentally against the grain of nationalist public opinion during the crisis of late 1913 and
again in the first months of the war. It is tempting to seek out a scapegoat for this in the form of the party’s respected, long-serving leader, Redmond. His perception of Ireland’s relationship with England, with parliament, men of property and the empire was for many years substantially different from that of the mass of his followers. His instinctive, conciliatory conservatism underpinned the party’s decisions first to check the spread of the Volunteers and then to campaign for England and recruiting in the war. Despite this, Redmond did not act alone. The party’s broader parliamentary leadership, while they may have backed their leader for quite different and far less Redmondite reasons, endorsed Redmond in both periods of crisis. Moreover, the party’s local ‘machine’ still functioned sufficiently well, and internal loyalty was still sufficiently strong, for it to weigh in behind its leader and implement his policies.

However, the roots of the Irish party were still deeply embedded in small-town, provincial Irish life. Its local leaders were steeped not only in conservative respectability and machine politics, but in the bellicosity of language, Catholicity, sense of victimhood, glorification of struggle, identification of enemies and antipathy to England which suffused provincial, nationalist orthodoxy throughout the pre-war period. The strains placed upon the party locally, in implementing policies which ran counter to its instinctive beliefs, were too great. In mid-1914, the party was able to abandon its policy of antipathy to Volunteering, but after the autumn of 1914 the protractedness and scale of the war left it no escape from its pro-England, pro-recruiting, pro-Redmond stance. Its organisation now decayed rapidly. The fissures of local, pre-war factionism widened and often acquired the dignity of being about the national question, whatever their parochial origins. Some long-standing party activists defected to the new Sinn Fein opposition. Others simply gave up the political ghost and, in the early years of the war, stopped all activity. The Irish party, if not yet discredited, now lacked the necessary resources of support, loyalty and cohesion to withstand the shocks and disasters of 1916.

In the end, the Irish party broke under the strain of following the wartime policies of its leader. Redmond’s political leadership had for years been placed rather uncomfortably at the head of the less compromising nationalism of the mass of his followers. In the autumn of 1914, however, the political imperative of not alienating England in a terrible war meant that the party was, on the surface, ‘right behind Mr. Redmond’. In fact, it was now so far behind
Redmond as to be almost out of sight. Redmond’s goals were not only against the stream of nationalist public opinion but were also beyond the powers and against the instincts of the organisation most representative of that opinion, his own party. Redmond’s moderate, conservative vision of a self-governed Ireland embracing all creeds and classes, of Home Rule peacefully and constitutionally achieved within the British empire, simply could not be realised.
Appendices

and

Bibliography
Appendix A: Continuity (1)

The Irish party 1914, Irish Volunteers 1914 and Sinn Fein 1917-18

The issue of ‘continuity’ between the Irish party and Sinn Fein, its wartime successor as an umbrella national movement, was raised among historians by David Fitzpatrick in Politics and Irish Life some twenty-five years ago. Fitzpatrick argued that there was significant continuity between the two movements: of personnel, campaigning methods, organisational models and ideology. It was, after all, Canon Cummins who in November 1918 hailed Sinn Fein as the ‘new, virile Irish Party’.¹ To requote the more recent observation of Fitzpatrick: ‘the political culture of nationalist Ireland re-emerged, draped in a tricolour that barely obscured the outline of a golden harp’.²

However, in his PhD thesis Land and Politics in Connacht 1898-1909, Fergus Campbell tested the hypothesis of continuity against the experience of the party in Galway. Campbell analysed a list of known 1914 Irish party members and supporters in East Galway against a comparable list of 1917/18 Sinn Fein members and supporters. The lists were derived from reports of, respectively, UIL meetings in 1914 and Sinn Fein meetings in 1917/18, both published in the Connacht Tribune. 334 UIL names were collated and 311 Sinn Fein names. Significantly, only 3% (i.e. 11 individuals) of those attending the 1914 UIL meetings were named as attending the later Sinn Fein meetings. To quote Campbell, this ‘does not suggest that there was a large amount of continuity between the two organisations’.³

In his earlier work on County Clare, Fitzpatrick had achieved rather different results. He compiled lists of:
- 749 Irish party lay ‘bosses’ and 46 Irish party priests from the years 1913-16, and
- 913 separatist secular leaders and 73 separatist priests from the years 1917-21.

Of the 1913-16 Irish party laity, 12% of Hibernian leaders, 13% of United Irish Leaguers and 23% of ‘Redmondite Volunteer chiefs’ were also on the later list of lay separatists. Of the

¹ Roscommon Journal, 30th November 1918.
² Fitzpatrick, The Two Irelands, p. 69.
³ Campbell, Land and Politics in Connacht, 1898-1909, p. 258.
1917-21 lay separatists, 55 had themselves been local councillors before 1920; 54 had been in the UIL and 72 in the ‘Redmondite Volunteers’. 4

The contrast between the two sets of results is substantial, prompting the understated observation from Campbell that Fitzpatrick’s conclusions on continuity did ‘not appear to be applicable to East Galway’. 5 Interestingly, Campbell saw far less continuity than Fitzpatrick even though in Galway he was comparing support for the 1914 Irish party with the essentially ‘political’ Sinn Fein movement of 1917-18. By contrast, Fitzpatrick’s Clare comparison also encompassed the more violent, revolutionary years of 1919-21. Intuitively, one would have expected Campbell to have found the greater continuity.

Campbell’s exercise has been replicated here to give a statistical indication of continuity in three of the five counties: Leitrim, Roscommon and Sligo. Data from two newspapers have been used in this exercise - the **Roscommon Herald** and the **Sligo Champion**.

**The Choice of Newspapers**

**The Herald and Champion**

Despite their differing political affiliations, these two newspapers were chosen because they both published extensive reports of Irish party meetings in 1914 and Sinn Fein meetings in 1917/18. Between them they covered virtually all of the three counties Leitrim, Roscommon and Sligo. Though overlapping, the geographical coverage of the two papers was complementary. The **Champion** covered North Sligo, Sligo town, North Leitrim, to a lesser extent South Sligo and, intermittently, South Leitrim and North Roscommon. The **Herald** covered North Roscommon and South Leitrim, to a lesser extent South Sligo and South Roscommon and only intermittently North Sligo and North Leitrim. In both cases, the geographic areas covered in 1914 were also covered in 1917/18 and good like-for-like comparisons between the two periods can be made.

In the case of the **Herald**, some additional Sinn Fein branch reports from 1917/18 have had to be excluded. By that time the **Herald** had become the ‘paper of record’ for almost the entire Sinn Fein movement of county Longford, whereas in 1914 it had carried only a handful of Longford Irish party reports. Mercifully, Jasper Tully always flagged the county origin of

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each branch report published. All Longford reports, and a smattering of reports from Galway and Mayo, have been excluded from the *Herald* analysis for both periods.

The differing political biases of the *Herald* and *Champion* may have affected the data provided by each paper. The *Herald* was relentlessly anti-party throughout while the *Champion* was a loyal party supporter. In 1914 the *Herald* carried significantly fewer UIL reports than the *Champion* and some UIL branches - notably Boyle - did not submit reports to the paper. The *Herald*’s under-reporting of UIL meetings may have removed a number of strong party supporters from the 1914 list, thus exaggerating the later continuity to Sinn Fein of those 1914 party men still named in the paper. This was, however, compensated for by a large volume of AOH reports. As a result, the list of 1914 Irish party supporters derived from the *Herald* was almost as long as that derived from the *Champion* (634 names against 643).

In 1917/18, the *Herald*’s strong support for Sinn Fein meant that its list of Sinn Feiners, even excluding those from Longford, Mayo and Galway, was considerably longer than that of the *Champion* (847 names against 548). It cannot be said with any accuracy whether this latter difference between the two papers acted to deflate or inflate the impression of Irish party/Sinn Fein continuity: it could reduce the percentage of 1917/18 Sinn Feiners who were previous party supporters, but inflate the percentage of 1914 party supporters who later embraced Sinn Fein.

**Other Newspapers**

None of the other newspapers studied in this thesis provided sufficient data to make valid like-for-like comparisons between the two periods and the two movements. Thus the Hayden-owned *Roscommon Messenger* and *Westmeath Examiner* carried almost no reports of Sinn Fein meetings in 1917/18; nor did J.P. Farrell’s *Longford Leader*. The *Westmeath Independent*, though both loyal to the party in 1914 and strongly pro-Sinn Fein by mid-1917, did not carry enough 1914 branch meeting reports to make sensible comparisons. Tully’s *Midland Reporter* carried almost no ‘Irish party’ reports in 1914, whether UIL, AOH or Ginnellite. Similarly, the *Roscommon Journal* did not carry many branch reports in either period. The remaining newspapers were either too small to produce enough individual names for both periods, or were incompletely preserved, or were unionist.
It is possible that a hybrid analysis could be constructed for County Longford - from the Longford Leader and Roscommon Herald for 1914 and the Herald for 1917/18 - but this would lack the validity of the immediate like-for-like analysis conducted by Campbell for East Galway (and which can be replicated well by using data from the Champion and the Herald). An even weaker hybrid for Westmeath would use Westmeath Examiner and Midland Reporter reports for 1914 (of which there are not many, from either paper) and Midland Reporter reports for 1917/18. This rather dubious construct would only cover the north of the county.

Composition of the Lists

From the Sligo Champion, the lists compiled are of 643 Irish party supporters from 1914 and 548 Sinn Fein supporters from 1917/18. From the Roscommon Herald the comparable figures are 634 Irish party supporters and 847 Sinn Feiners. The lists compiled are not of what Fitzpatrick referred to as ‘bosses’, but of activists, consisting of all those named as members, officers, speakers, proposers (and seconders) of resolutions and platform-attendees at public rallies. Public figures who declared openly for Sinn Fein in 1917/18 and those who nominated Sinn Fein election candidates in those years are also included on the Sinn Fein lists. No distinction has been made between laity and clergy; the latter, where named in the newspapers, are included on the lists.

Not included on the lists, unless they were clearly named as members of the relevant organisations, are those who were reported as helpers, donors, subscribers or (as was often the case) recipients of condolences. The same applies to those who were simply listed as attending public rallies, and to attendees at dances, balls and concerts. Similarly, members of ‘satellite’ or politically-allied organisations have not, generally, been included on the lists for either period. Thus, Town Tenants, Foresters, Land and Labour men, ITGWU members, GAA members and Gaelic Leaguers have been excluded. Also excluded - see below - are the Irish Volunteers of 1914. In the case of none of these organisations could the clear ‘party’ affiliation of all its individual members be demonstrated.

The major exception to this rule is, however, the Hibernians, whose influence was pervasive in Leitrim, Roscommon and Sligo in 1914 and whose organisation was undoubtedly loyal to the Irish party in that year. They are, therefore, most definitely included in the 1914 Irish
party lists (whereas they were not included by Campbell in his Galway study). In addition, for 1917/18 members of two other affiliates have been included on the Sinn Fein lists: first, the Irish Volunteers (though very few reports were published) and secondly, those Hibernian divisions which had formally defected to the 'Irish American Alliance'. Members of both organisations were clearly Sinn Feiners.

One 'satellite' excluded from the 1917/18 Sinn Fein lists is Cumann na mBan. While its branches and clubs were undoubtedly 'Sinn Fein', there is no valid comparison with the 1914 party list. Barring a handful of AOH 'ladies' auxiliary' divisions in Leitrim and Sligo, the Irish party locally made minimal local provision for the enrolment of women before the war and virtually no female party supporters were reported by either newspaper in 1914. There was, therefore, no like-for-like comparison between the two periods. This exclusion would clearly act to increase the percentage of later, male Sinn Fein supporters who had a prior Irish party affiliation.

In the case of both newspapers, two years of Sinn Fein reports were analysed against only one for the party. This is because neither the Herald nor the Champion published significant reports of Sinn Fein branch or club meetings until after the Longford by-election in May 1917. In addition, from June 1918 until October, some Sinn Fein reports were suppressed in the aftermath of the 'German Plot'. Sinn Fein support also built up cumulatively during 1917/18 and a number of Irish party supporters only 'came out' as Sinn Feiners in late 1917 or in 1918. The best like-for-like comparison is therefore derived from the use of Sinn Fein reports for both 1917 and 1918.

**Analysis - The Irish Party 1914/Sinn Fein 1917-18**

The Irish party and Sinn Fein lists of names derived from each newspaper were compared. This exercise was carried out first for the Sligo Champion lists and then for the Roscommon Herald. Names that were found to duplicate between 1914 and 1917/18 were classed as 'matches', 'probables' and 'possibles':

- **'Matches'** occurred when there was an obvious duplication of names between the two lists.
- **'Probables'** occurred when there was an element of doubt about the degree of matching.

In many instances, newspaper reports did not give an individual's full name, sometimes
quoting just one or more initials and sometimes just the surname. Thus a ‘J. Smith’ on a list for 1914 might compare with any one of ‘John’ or ‘James’ or ‘Joseph Smith’ on a list for 1917-18. In the case of particularly common first names, however, the assumption was made that the match, while imperfect, could be called ‘probable’ (for example, matching P. and Patrick, T. and Thomas, J. and John, M. and Michael). In addition, if a ‘J. Smith’ on one list was compared with two or more less common names on the other (for example with both Julian and Joseph Smith) then it was assumed that the individual on the first list was a probable match with one of the individuals on the second.

- ‘Possibles’ occurred when an individual’s initial on one list could be compared with only one less common first name on the other (eg J. with Joseph or M. with Martin).

It is recognised that the distinction between firm matches, ‘probables’ and ‘possibles’ is arbitrary and involves considerable guesswork. However, to exclude the latter two categories totally from the analysis would be equally arbitrary and, while a degree of continuity could still be discerned from the use of ‘matches’ alone, would certainly understate the degree of commonality between the two movements.

The Sligo Champion

As noted above, the lists generated from the Champion comprised the names of 643 Irish party members and 548 Sinn Fein members.

- 74 names were ‘matches’, equivalent to 11.5% of the party list and 13.5% of the Sinn Fein list.
- 48 names were ‘probables’, equivalent to 7.5% of the party list and 8.8% of the Sinn Fein list.
- 19 names were ‘possibles’, equivalent to 2.9% of the party list and 3.5% of the Sinn Fein list.

In total, therefore, ‘matches’, ‘probables’ and ‘possibles’ combined amounted to 21.9% of the party list and 25.8% of the Sinn Fein list. However, given the subjectiveness of the categorisation of ‘probables’ and ‘possibles’, such combined figures must be considered too high.

Excluding the ‘possibles’ and leaving just the ‘matches’ and ‘probables’ combined would give figures equivalent to 19.0% of the party list and 22.3% of the Sinn Fein list. If, more conservatively, it is assumed that only half of both ‘probables’ and possibles’ were actual
matches, then combining these with the 74 clear ‘matches’ would give figures equivalent to 16.7% of the Irish party list and 19.6% of the Sinn Fein list.

**The Roscommon Herald**

The lists generated from the *Herald* comprised 634 names of Irish party members and 847 Sinn Fein members.

- 81 names were ‘matches’, equivalent to 12.8% of the party list and 9.6% of the Sinn Fein list.
- 40 names were ‘probables’, equivalent to 6.3% of the party list and 4.7% of the Sinn Fein list.
- 27 names were ‘possibles’, equivalent to 4.3% of the party list and 3.2% of the Sinn Fein list.

‘Matches’, ‘probables’ and ‘possibles’ combined amounted to 23.4% of the party list and 17.5% of the Sinn Fein list. ‘Matches’ and ‘probables’ amounted to 19.1% of the party list and 14.3% of the Sinn Fein list. ‘Matches’ combined with half of both ‘probables’ and ‘possibles’ amounted to 18.1% of the party list and 13.5% of the Sinn Fein list.

The results from the two newspapers are compared in tabular form below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Irish Party 1914/Sinn Fein 1917-18</th>
<th>% of Champion Party List</th>
<th>% of Herald Party List</th>
<th>% of Champion Sinn Fein List</th>
<th>% of Herald Sinn Fein List</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Matches</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Probables</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Possibles</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A + B + C</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A + B</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A + ¼(B + C)</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In summary, the firm ‘matches’ alone, excluding any ‘probables’ and ‘possibles’. indicated that between 10 and 15 percent of Irish party activists in 1914 later became members of Sinn Fein. Taking account of all the imperfections relating to the categorisation of ‘probables’ and ‘possibles’, it seems likely that the actual rate of commonality between the two movements was closer to between 15 and 20 percent in counties Leitrim, Roscommon and Sligo. (In both cases, the outliers in these results are the lower percentages of the longer Sinn Fein list derived from the Herald.)

All of these percentages are significantly higher than those recorded by Campbell for Galway and more in line with those recorded by Fitzpatrick (for ‘bosses’ and for different periods) for Clare. The main variations of this exercise from that of Campbell are that:

- the lists in this exercise are rather longer than those compiled by Campbell and are derived from two newspapers,
- Campbell effectively limited his comparison to firm ‘matches’ and
- Campbell restricted his analysis of the party to UIL members, whereas here the party lists included large numbers of Hibernians.

Even taking all of these differences into account, the difference of these results from Campbell’s is still substantial. Admittedly, Galway was significantly more ‘disturbed’ than the counties of East Connaught in the pre-war years and serious land agitations persisted far more than in ‘middle Ireland’. However, it should be noted that Fitzpatrick’s Clare was also significantly more ‘disturbed’ than any of Counties Leitrim, Roscommon and Sligo before the war.

Based on ‘percentages’, Fitzpatrick’s hypothesis of continuity is, therefore, more supported than undermined these results. However, it remains equally clear that over 80% of local pre-war Irish party activists in these three counties did not become Sinn Fein activists, at least by 1917-18. Similarly, over 80% of wartime Sinn Fein activists had not been active in the Irish party in the immediate pre-war period. Number-counting alone will not resolve the debate about whether the glass of Irish party/Sinn Fein continuity was half full or half empty.

**The Irish Party and the Irish Volunteers 1914**

As noted above, Irish Volunteers were not included in the lists of Irish party members collated for 1914. However, a parallel exercise was also undertaken, compiling lists of Volunteer
activists for that year. From the *Champion* a list of 478 Volunteer names was compiled; from the *Herald* one of 649. These two lists were then compared with the lists of Irish party members derived from the same newspapers in the same year and ‘matches’, ‘probables’ and ‘possibles’ identified on the same basis used in the Irish party/Sinn Fein exercise. The results are shown in tabular form below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Irish Party/Irish Volunteers 1914</th>
<th>% of Champion Party List</th>
<th>% of Herald Party List</th>
<th>% of Champion Volunteer List</th>
<th>% of Herald Volunteer List</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Matches</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Probables</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Possibles</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A + B + C</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>44.5</td>
<td>28.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A + B</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>24.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A + ¼ (B + C)</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>36.0%</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the basis of firm matches only, some 18% to 20% of pre-war Irish party activists were also Irish Volunteer activists in 1914 and vice versa. Including half of the ‘probables’ and ‘possibles’, these numbers rise to about 25%. The major divergence from this pattern relates to the significantly higher percentages (27.6% and 36.0%) of the *Champion*’s Volunteers who were also party activists. These were inflated by the smaller number of Volunteer names derived from the *Champion*. These results are discussed in Chapter 9 of the main thesis. It remains the case that some two-thirds (and possibly closer to three-quarters) of the local Volunteer leadership in 1914 was not, in that same year, active in the Irish party.

**The Irish Volunteers 1914/Sinn Fein 1917-18**

The final comparison undertaken was between the lists of Irish Volunteers compiled for 1914 and those of Sinn Fein activists for 1917-18. Again, ‘matches’, ‘probables’ and ‘possibles’ were identified and the results are shown in the table below. On the basis of ‘matches’ alone, some 10% to 15% of Irish Volunteer activists in 1914 later became Sinn Fein activists in
1917-18, and vice versa. On the broader basis, adding in half of the ‘probables’ and ‘possibles’, these numbers rise to between 15% and 20%.

On the surface, the continuity between the 1914 Volunteers and later Sinn Fein activists appears to have been similar to that between the 1914 Irish party and Sinn Fein. This seems to imply that many Sinn Feiners in 1917-18 were new political activists, who had been prominent in neither the Irish Volunteers nor the Irish party in 1914. However, this analysis is confined to comparisons between activists in both periods. The mass of Volunteers, whose names were rarely recorded in the press and who are thus not included in the Volunteer data analysed here, may or may not have contained many who later committed themselves to Sinn Fein. Nevertheless, the commonality between those who were prominent in the ‘great wave’ of Volunteering in 1914 and those who were mobilised to become Sinn Fein activists during the later upsurge of nationalist anger three to four years later is surprisingly low.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Irish Volunteers 1914/Sinn Fein 1917-18</th>
<th>% of Champion Volunteer List</th>
<th>% of Herald Volunteer List</th>
<th>% of Champion Sinn Fein List</th>
<th>% of Herald Sinn Fein List</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Matches</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Probables</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Possibles</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A + B + C</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A + B</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A + ½ (B + C)</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B: Continuity (2)

Irish party activists 1910-14 and their politics in 1917-18

In this thesis, over one hundred individuals, all of them male, have been named who were active in the UIL and/or the AOH at a relatively senior level in the years 1910-14, whether as MPs, party officers, councillors, candidates or influential patrons. Like so many other nationalists, almost all of them were faced with the wartime choice between staying loyal to the Irish party, embracing what became the new national movement of Sinn Fein, or dropping out of active politics. In the case of the senior activists identified in the thesis, their subsequent political careers can in almost all cases be charted. Such an analysis provides another indication of the degree of continuity between the pre-war Irish party and the Sinn Fein party of 1917-18.

Specifically, 104 party activists were named in the thesis:

- 12 based in Leitrim;
- 13 in Longford;
- 29 in Roscommon;
- 25 in Sligo and
- 18 in Westmeath.
- 7 (such as John Hayden or Patrick McKenna) not be categorised into any one county.

Supporters of Home Rule and Redmond who did not have an identifiable link to the party organisation in the years 1910-14, such as the owners of the *Leitrim Observer* (Patrick Dunne), *Roscommon Journal* (William Tully) and *Stroketown Democrat* (P. Morahan), have not been included.

A short narrative for each of the 104 individuals, outlining their pre-war Irish party connections and their subsequent fate and/or wartime political experiences, is given below. Each has been placed in one of four groups:

- stayed with the party (IP),
- moved to Sinn Fein (SF),
- died (D) or
- became inactive, neutral or independent (I).
By county, the 104 individuals were categorised as follows:

- **Leitrim**: IP 5; SF 4; D 0; I 3;
- **Longford**: IP 6; SF 5; D 1; I 1;
- **Roscommon**: IP 16; SF 8; D 1; I 4;
- **Sligo**: IP 8; SF 9; D 4; I 4;
- **Westmeath**: IP 10; SF 5; D 1; I 2;
- **Others**: IP 2; SF 1; D 0; I 4.

This analysis carries significant caveats. First, the list is arbitrarily selected, solely from those party figures named in the thesis. Secondly, Leitrim and Longford are under-represented in the analysis primarily because there were no separate ‘case study’ chapters on these two counties. Of the 104 named, seven died before or during the war. A further 18 either dropped out of politics, stayed neutral between the party and Sinn Fein, or (in the case of two) left the party in favour of more pro-British, pro-union policies. Nevertheless, there remains a significant balance of 79 individuals who did not die or opt out. Of these, 47 were still party supporters in the last months of the war while 32 by then backed Sinn Fein, indicating that in the five counties there was a significant minority of leading party figures who gravitated to Sinn Fein before the end of the war.

Within the counties, two significant variations stand out. In Sligo, continuity between the party and Sinn Fein appeared greatest and more named individuals transferred to Sinn Fein than stayed with the party. This outcome was very largely the result of developments in Sligo town: seven of the county’s nine party activists who later joined Sinn Fein came from the town. In Westmeath and Roscommon, party/Sinn Fein continuity was much less, if still far from insignificant. Here, the durability of urban party cliques, long opposed to local ‘factionists’ and in 1917-18 opposed to Sinn Feiners, was undoubtedly important. In Westmeath, no fewer than seven of the ten remaining party loyalists in 1918 came from Hayden’s North Westmeath clique around Mullingar.

Overall, the erosion of commitment and loyalty to the Irish party during the war is only too evident. Even excluding those who died, the proportion of leading, pre-war activists who stayed publicly loyal to the Irish party up to the end of 1918 was less than half.
Individual Narratives:

William Barry (IP): a Hayden and UIL loyalist. Barry was secretary of the Mullingar UIL, a Forester and a Mullingar district councillor. He stayed loyal to the party right through the war and signed the parliamentary nomination papers of P. J. Weymes in December 1918.1

Rev. Butler (IP): became chaplain of the Sligo Hibernians on his return from the USA in 1913. He succeeded Rev. Doorly as the clerical administrator of Sligo in 1916 and became president of the town branch of the UIL in that year. In 1918 he threw in his lot with the town’s Ratepayers’ Association (joining several of the town’s leading unionists) and in December 1918 served on the committee selecting ratepayers’ candidates for the January 1919 Corporation elections. Nevertheless, in December 1918 he also signed Scanlan’s parliamentary nomination papers.2

Joseph Callaghan (SF): one of Farrell’s clique running Longford politics and secretary of Clonguish UIL branch. He broke with Farrell and the party at the time of the Volunteer split in September 1914 and was a vocal Sinn Feiner thereafter. Callaghan was arrested in Longford in Easter Week 1916 for refusing to give his name and for carrying a revolver. Tried by court martial, he was acquitted on the technicality that he was arrested before the Martial Law proclamation was posted in the town.3

Michael Carter (SF): Leitrim county president of the AOH, president of the Kiltubride UIL branch, county councillor and joint secretary of the County Leitrim ratepayers. He continued to support the party during most of 1917-18, but opposed the recommendations of the Irish Convention in 1918, resigned as county president of the AOH in October and in December declared that he would vote for Sinn Fein and James Dolan. On the day of the election he worked on the local “Sinn Fein staff”.4

Peter Cawley (IP): leading party and committee man in County Sligo, UIL organiser and county councillor. He stayed loyal to the party and signed Scanlan’s nomination papers in December 1918.

Thomas Chapman (SF): proprietor of the Westmeath Independent and a Westmeath county councillor and party member. The paper became bitterly disillusioned with the party after the failure of Lloyd George’s proposals for an Irish settlement in July 1916 and advocated the policies of the Irish Nation League in the autumn of that year. By August 1917 Chapman was president of the Athlone Sinn Fein club, but in 1918 was criticised by Tim Healy as a man with two sons at the Front who was a Sinn Feiner only because he happened to employ a ‘fiery editor’ (i.e. MacDermott-Hayes).5

1 Westmeath Examiner, 7th December 1918
2 Sligo Champion; Sligo Independent, 7th December 1918.
3 Monthly report of the Longford county inspector, April 1916 (PRO CO 904/100).
4 Sligo Champion, 19th October; Leitrim Observer, 22nd June. 21st December 1918.
5 Midland Reporter, 6th June 1918.
John Connolly (D): the longest serving of Sligo town’s grandees, a leading UIL man and a member of Sligo Corporation since 1878. Connolly died at the end of 1915 leaving an estate of over £20,000.

Patrick Conry (IP): Fitzgibbon’s closest associate in Castlerea politics, a former Fenian, Castlerea guardian, county councillor and cousin of one of Fitzgibbon’s local opponents, John Hanson. Conry stayed loyal to Fitzgibbon and the party in 1918.

Christopher Corcoran (IP): a Hayden and UIL loyalist in Mullingar who lost his district council seat to a Ginnellite in 1911. He stayed loyal to the party throughout 1917-18, signing Weymes’s nomination papers in December 1918.

Michael Cox (SF): secretary of the Longford town division of the AOH, of which Farrell was chairman. Cox broke with Farrell and the UIL at the time of the Volunteer split in September 1914, but remained secretary of the town AOH. He was suspended from the AOH in 1917 after campaigning for Joe MacGuinness in the South Longford by-election. In 1918 he called himself ‘county secretary’ of those Hibernians supporting Sinn Fein.

Dr. Coyne (1): while parish priest of Boyle a close associate of T.J. Devine, in both the town’s Gaelic League and the UIL. Coyne nominated J. J. O’Kelly as candidate for the January 1910 general election at the North Roscommon UIL convention at the end of 1909. He was also a contributor to the Irish party’s Home Rule fund when Bishop of Elphin. There was, however, no local press record of his intervening in political debates among nationalists in 1917-18, though he disciplined Father Michael O’Flanagan for his political (Sinn Fein) activity.

Rev. Crehan (SF): president of the St. John’s branch of the UIL when he was resident in Sligo. Crehan publicly advocated loyalty to Redmond during the Volunteer split of autumn 1914. In September 1916 he was still president of the Grange branch of the UIL, which unanimously passed a resolution of confidence in Redmond. By May 1918 he was president of the Grange Sinn Fein club and in December signed the nomination papers of J. J. Clancy as Sinn Fein candidate for North Sligo.

Canon Cummins (SF): president of the Sligo town UIL when he was Sligo administrator, and the chairman of meetings of the North Sligo UIL. Cummins pitched into Roscommon town politics on his return there, including the selection, with Hayden, of a county council candidate. It was this latter issue that triggered his permanent breach with the town’s UIL branch in 1911. He remained a supporter of Home Rule and of Redmond until 1914, but was disaffected soon after war broke out. In November 1918 he declared unequivocally for Sinn Fein and became a leading speaker/organiser in Harry Boland’s South Roscommon campaign.

Rev. Daly (IP): a noted UIL supporter in the later 1900s when he was administrator at Mullingar. Daly seems not to have been active in the UIL after he became parish priest in Castlepollard, an area of strong Ginnellite support where the UIL was moribund. In November 1918 he wrote a public letter describing sovereign independence for Ireland as

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6 *Midland Reporter, 7th February 1918.*
7 *Sligo Champion, 23rd September 1916: 11th May, 7th December 1918.*
'impractical' and in December he subscribed funds to the campaign of P. J. Weymes against Ginnell.8

**T. W. Delany (I)**: Longford crown solicitor, vice-chairman (under J. P. Philips) of Longford county council and a cousin by marriage of Farrell. Delany was a supporter of recruiting in 1916 and active in the county recruiting committee. He resigned from the county council in 1916 for personal reasons and was not politically active thereafter until, in January 1918, he advocated the formation of an All-Ireland Farmers' Society.9

**Harry Depew (SF)**: Henry Monson's closest associate among the Sligo Hibernians and a member of Sligo Corporation. Depew was a committed Sinn Feiner by early 1917 and in December 1918 signed J. J. Clancy's nomination papers. In January 1919 he was re-elected to Sligo Corporation as a labour candidate.10

**T. J. Devine (IP)**: the Irish party boss in Boyle and in January 1917 the party's defeated candidate in the North Roscommon by-election. Devine remained loyal to the party thereafter, though the party did not contest the North Roscommon seat in December 1918.

**O. J. Dolan (SF)**: Chairman of Athlone UDC in 1914 and a leading Forester. Dolan led the takeover of the local Volunteers, in the interests of the party and in support of Redmond, in the summer of 1914. By August 1918 he was at least in sympathy with Sinn Fein, attending a major Sinn Fein rally and a month earlier voting for the co-option on to the UDC of the town's leading Volunteer, Sean Hurley.11

**Rev Doorly (IP)**: president of the Sligo town UIL branch while he was clerical administrator. He became president of the Cliffoney UIL when he became parish priest there in 1916. Like his bishop, Dr. Coyne, whom he would eventually succeed, he was not politically vocal during 1917-18, though he remained a UIL officer and at least a passive supporter of the party.

**Joseph Dorr (SF)**: Roscommon county councillor and party man who in 1914 acquiesced to the demands of the County Ratepayers' Association in order to secure re-election. By 1918 he was seen as a Sinn Feiner, but in September was attacked for not supporting a Sinn Fein candidate for a county council job.12

**J.P. Dowdall (D)**: one of Hayden's leading supporters in North Westmeath, Dowdall died in July 1916. His son was crown solicitor for Westmeath.

**Robert Downes (IP)**: with Dowdall, another of Hayden's 'clique' in North Westmeath. Downes remained a party supporter through to the 1918 election and contributed funds to P. J. Weymes's unsuccessful campaign against Ginnell.

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8 *Westmeath Examiner*, 30th November, 14th December 1918.
9 *Longford Independent*, 26th January 1918.
10 *Sligo Champion*, 21st December 1918, 18th January 1919.
11 *Westmeath Independent*, 18th August 1917, 24th July 1918. In the Dail elections of September 1927, Dolan was to stand unsuccessfully as a Cumann na nGaedheal candidate.
12 *Roscommon Herald*, 14th September 1918.
Thomas Duffy (IP): One of Farrell’s lieutenants in Longford town who stayed loyal to Farrell when the town’s Volunteers split in September 1914. Duffy supported the Irish party in both the South Longford by-election and the 1918 general election (though his support for McKenna in the by-election, as was Farrell’s, was lukewarm).

C. J. P. Farrell (IP): J. P. Farrell’s younger brother, Christopher Farrell, a solicitor and stalwart of the Longford town UIL. He remained loyal to his brother and the Irish party.

J. P. Farrell MP (IP): Farrell, the party boss of Longford politics, both North and South, stayed loyal to the Irish party throughout the war, going down to defeat in the 1918 general election. The strain that this created for him was demonstrated after the formation of the wartime coalition government in 1915, when he denounced the ‘lying and hypocrisy’ of Liberal ‘gentlemen’ and said that for ten years he had been voting ‘often against his will...like a chained dog.’

John Fitzgibbon MP (IP): Fitzgibbon remained committed to the Irish party and the war effort right through to the end of 1918. Two of his sons were killed in the war, one at the Dardanelles and one in France. He did not contest the 1918 election and died soon thereafter.

Thomas Flanagan (I): a long-serving Sligo alderman and UIL man, Flanagan remained out of sorts with the Lab/Nat coalition running the town and stood down from the Corporation in January 1914. At the end of 1918, he was chosen by the town’s (unionist-led) Ratepayers’ Association as a candidate for the January 1919 Corporation elections, but was not elected.

John Flanagan (IP): one of the dissidents on the Strokestown guardians and active in the Roscommon ratepayers’ movement in 1913-14. Flanagan was still on the county board of the AOH in October 1918, well after it had been purged of Sinn Feiners.

Thomas Fleming (IP): one of the most prominent placemen and job-seekers around Roscommon town, Fleming remained loyal to the Irish party through the war. He remained a UIL branch secretary and was a public supporter of Hayden in the December 1918 general election.

James Flynn (IP): editor of the Sligo Champion after 1912. Flynn became assistant secretary of the North Sligo UIL (his rival, Bernard McTeman of the Sligo Nationalist, was secretary) in December 1913. Loyal to the party, he became secretary of Sligo’s re-formed National Volunteers in November 1914. Flynn stood for election to Sligo Corporation in January 1915, but failed to be elected. He succeeded McTeman as secretary of the North Sligo UIL in June 1916. The Champion continued to support the party during 1918.

Patrick Flynn (IP): the omnivorous party boss, office-holder and committee man of Carrick-on-Shannon, who despite signs of wavering stayed with the Irish party during the war. In March 1916 he publicly supported recruiting. On June 1918, he was challenged unsuccessfully by his long-standing rival and now-committed Sinn Feiner, Michael McGrath, for the chairmanship of Carrick No. 1 RDC. Flynn’s response was to declare that if he joined

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13 Strokestown Democrat, 12th June 1915.
14 Sligo Independent, 7th December 1918.
15 Sligo Champion, 13th December 1913; 21st November 1914.
Sinn Fein he could not be in entire agreement with it. He was for attendance at any Peace Conference, against conscription and for unity. If Sinn Fein ‘changed its rules’ he would join them. He didn’t.

Edward Foley (I) : one of Sligo town’s commercial grandees and aldermen, Foley was Jink’s closest associate in promoting the Volunteer movement in 1914. He was still on the county recruiting committee in January 1916 and at that time backed Jinks against a mayoral challenge from D. M. Hanley. In March 1917 he was accused by Sam Tarrant of having campaigned for Count Plunkett in the Roscommon by-election and of being on the reception committee organising Plunket’s award of the freedom of the town. However, he avoided both the reception and banquet for Plunkett and in April backed Jinks in voting, unsuccessfully, against sending delegates to Plunket’s Mansion House conference. In September 1918 there was talk of his being associated with a new (but stillborn) Irish Progressive party. He took no part in the general election campaign, being seriously ill.

Frank Forde (SF) : one of the Fitzgibbon’s Castlerea associates, secretary of the Town Tenants’ association, who was one of the few beneficiaries of the 1912 deal brokered by Fitzgibbon carving up the Sandford demesne. Nevertheless, Forde was one of Fitzgibbon’s opponents when the town’s Volunteers split in October 1914 and in March 1918 was publicly aligned with the new Sinn Fein.

Patrick Gaffney (IP) : a county councillor, founder of the Leitrim Ratepayers’ Association and a Carrick associate of Patrick Flynn. Gaffney stayed loyal to the party during the war, but showed no hostility to Sinn Fein. In June 1918 he expressed his views, as reported in the Roscommon Herald, at the county council: ‘He is not a Sinn Feiner; he is a Nationalist and he thought that after time had left its mark on the two movements that it would result favourably to all Ireland. They were all Irishmen and loved their country and with them it was Ireland over all and God save Ireland (applause)’.

John Galvin (IP) : a Fitzgibbon loyalist and Roscommon county councillor, chairman of the county agriculture committee, who stayed loyal to the party and signed Hayden’s nomination papers in December 1918.

James Geoghegan (I) : active in the Leitrim ratepayers’ and farmers’ protection movements, it was Geoghegan who in March 1913 proposed a UIL resolution of ‘love and gratitude’ to Liberal, Scottish and Irish MPs who had worked to achieve Home Rule. He does not appear to have been politically active during the war.

William Gibbons (SF) : a member of the Sligo town UIL branch and of the North Sligo executive, he was elected as a labour member of Sligo Corporation, with Hibernian support,

16 Leitrim Observer, 8th June 1918.
17 Sligo Independent, 29th January 1916; 16th November 1918; Sligo Champion, 24th March, 7th April 1917; 14th September 1918.
18 Henry Fitzgibbon to Fitzgibbon, 4th October 1914. enclosed in a letter from Fitzgibbon to Dillon, 12th October 1914, Dillon papers. TCD, f 6754/480; Westmeath Independent, 23rd March 1918.
19 Roscommon Herald, 22nd June 1918.
20 Roscommon Messenger, 7th December 1918.
21 Leitrim Observer, 29th March 1913.
22 Sligo Champion, 7th June 1914.
in 1911. In September 1914, Gibbons, with fellow Corporation member Ned Harte, showed his anti-war allegiance by heckling Thomas Scanlan MP at a public meeting after the passage of Home Rule. Gibbons and Harte, now deprived of party support, were defeated by Jordan Roche and Samuel Tarrant in the January 1915 Corporation elections.

**P. J. Gillooly (SF)**: secretary of the Four Mile House UIL branch, on the executive of the South Roscommon UIL, assistant secretary of the county council, Gaelic Leaguer and leading supporter of the GAA. By 1916 he was seen as one of those sufficiently disaffected to be arrested in the aftermath of the Easter Rising. In October 1918 he chaired a meeting setting up a branch of the ITGWU in Roscommon town and in December signed Harry Boland's nomination papers. 23

**James Grogan (I)**: a Roscommon town commissioner, senior in the local Town Tenants' association and a regular attendee at meetings of the town’s UIL ‘clique’. He did not appear to have been politically active, at least publicly, during the war.

**Michael Grogan (SF)**: one of Fitzgibbon's Castlerea associates and a Roscommon county councillor. Despite his opposition to Fitzgibbon's Sandford demesne land deal, Grogan reverted to supporting Fitzgibbon and backed him and Redmond at the time of the 1914 Volunteer split. By January 1917, however, he voted with other Sinn Feiners against Fitzgibbon at the Castlerea guardians and became a committed Sinn Fein organiser and speaker thereafter. This did not stop him signing the county council's resolution regretting the death of Redmond in March 1918. Grogan then said that Redmond, strictly honest and upright, had devoted the best days of his life to Ireland - 'like many other Irishmen he was betrayed by England'. 24

**John Hanson (I)**: a Castlerea district councillor and Roscommon county councillor who was one of the county's leading pre-war 'disappointed men' and a critic of Fitzgibbon. He was not politically active, at least in public, during the war.

**John Hayden MP (IP)**: Hayden remained loyal to Redmond and the Irish party during the war and campaigned vigorously against Sinn Fein right through to his defeat by Harry Boland in the 1918 general election.

**J. J. Healy (IP)**: a Strokestown district councillor and Hibernian who became active in the Roscommon ratepayers' movement, against Fitzgibbon, in 1913. Healy supported the war effort and his brother was killed in the war. He remained a vocal opponent of Sinn Fein until he left Ireland, moving to Swansea in February 1918.

**John Heverin (IP)**: a solicitor, secretary to Roscommon county council and a long-standing Parnellite associate of Hayden and Fitzgibbon. Heverin stayed loyal to the party throughout the war and campaigned for Hayden in the 1918 general election. 25

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23 *Roscommon Herald*, 13th May 1916; *Roscommon Journal*, 12th October and 7th December 1918. He eventually succeeded Heverin as secretary to the county council, retiring in 1943.


25 Heverin was suspended by the Sinn Fein-controlled county council in the autumn of 1920, resumed work in April 1921 and finally resigned in January 1922 (see Daly, *The Buffer State*, p. 58).
James Higgins (IP): another of Sligo town’s commercial grandees and aldermen, Higgins stayed loyal to the Irish party during the war. In the 1918 general election he was one of those signing Scanlan’s nomination papers and he both campaigned for and spoke publicly in favour of Scanlan.

Dr. Hoare (IP): closest to the Irish party of all bishops in the five counties, Dr. Hoare’s political allegiance did not waver during the war. He actively sought to influence the choice of the party’s candidate for the South Longford by-election in 1917 and headed the list of those nominating the eventual choice, Patrick McKenna. He also signed Farrell’s nomination papers in December 1918.26

John Jinks (IP): the unchallenged boss of Sligo town politics by early 1914, Jinks eventually surrendered the mayoralty of the near-bankrupt Corporation in January 1917. Jinks was undoubtedly loyal to the party during the war. His son joined the army and he went into opposition on the Corporation after January 1917. In December 1918 he both signed Scanlan’s nomination papers and campaigned actively for him.27

John Keaveny (IP): UIL National Directory member and organiser for North Roscommon, business partner of T. J. Devine and joint Connaught regional director (with Monson) of the Hibernians. He stayed loyal to the Irish party throughout the war, finally losing control of Boyle No. 1 RDC, and his chairmanship of that council, in June 1918.28

Denis Kelly (SF): chair of the Athlone guardians, vice-chair of Roscommon county council and a long-standing Parnellite associate of Hayden and Fitzgibbon. In July 1916 Kelly, though saying he was still a party supporter, was critical of the Lloyd George plan for Ulster and claimed that it was being forced down Ireland’s throat by martial law. A week later, he resigned as chairman of the guardians (after 34 years in the role) calling them catspaws of the Local Government Board.29 From mid-1917 Kelly was an active and senior Sinn Feiner, both in Athlone and across South Roscommon.

Rev. Langan (I): president of the Abbeylara UIL when in county Longford and politically active for years, having been one of the leading anti-Parnellites in Athlone in the 1890s. Langan was undoubtedly a supporter of Redmond during the Volunteer split of 1914, but while he stayed active during the war (chairing the Westmeath county agriculture committee and leading all-party moves against conscription in 1918) he seems to have become neutral between the party and Sinn Fein.

John Ledwith (SF): the Granard district councillor and former Longford county councillor who stayed in the UIL after William Ganly was expelled. He nominally headed the Granard Volunteer company from its formation. Ledwith was a consistent Sinn Fein supporter from the spring of 1917 at the latest.

26 *Longford Leader*, 5th May 1917; 7th December 1918.
27 Jinks again became mayor of Sligo in 1921 and was briefly a TD for the Nation League in 1927. He used his ‘senior alderman’s’ casting vote to re-elect himself mayor in 1934, just before his death.
28 Keaveny stood unsuccessfully as an Independent candidate for the Dail in the two 1927 general elections.
29 *Westmeath Independent*, 22nd July and 5th August 1916; *Leitrim Advertiser*, 27th July 1916.
M. J. Lennon (IP): Lennon had once been chairman of the Athlone branch of Sinn Fein, but he 'regained confidence in the Irish party' in December 1909. Chairman of Athlone UDC until the beginning of 1913 and sometimes (when the clergy were absent) acting as chairman of the Athlone UIL, Lennon was still a supporter of the Irish party in March 1917, opposing support for Plunkett's 'manifesto'. He was still serving as an Athlone magistrate in October 1918, but appears to have had played no active part in the general election. 

James Lynott (SF): a supporter of F. E. Meehan MP in Manorhamilton since the 1908 by-election and Meehan’s deputy in the Manorhamilton UIL branch. Lynott was a Sinn Fein supporter, active both in Manorhamilton and across Leitrim, from November 1917 at the latest.

Patrick McCann (IP): uncle of Patrick McKenna, ally of John Phillips MP and deposed by Farrell in late 1908 as president of the Clonguish UIL branch. He regained his seat on Longford District Council in 1911. McCann continued to be a supporter of the party, and of his nephew McKenna, in the South Longford by-election.

H. I. McCourt (IP): secretary of the Roscommon town UIL and an employee of the Roscommon Messenger. McCourt stayed in the Roscommon town UIL branch through to 1918.

Thomas MacDermott (I): chairman of the Carrick-on-Shannon AOH and vice-president of the Carrick UIL. MacDermott was an associate of Michael McGrath and set up a branch of the Foresters in Carrick with McGrath in August 1916, but there was no public indication, in the press, of MacDennott following McGrath into Sinn Fein during the war.

Michael MacDermott-Hayes (SF): editor of the Westmeath Independent and secretary of the South Westmeath UIL. MacDermott-Hayes was bitterly critical of the proposed Lloyd-George settlement July 1916. In August 1916 a leading article in his paper praised 'Sinn Fein' for reawakening the spirit of the country and called on the Irish party to go back to independent opposition. By September the paper was praising the Irish Nation League. However, in February 1917 MacDermott-Hayes appeared on the same public platform as Hayden and praised him as 'distinguished among the Nationalists of Ireland'. To add to the confusion, the same edition of the paper that reported the Hayden meeting carried a leading article hailing the outcome of the South Roscommon by-election. By May 1917 the paper was a strong supporter of Joe MacGuinness in the South Longford by-election. Thereafter the paper, and MacDermott-Hayes, were consistently pro-Sinn Fein.

Martin McDonnell (IP): the elderly former Parnellite and Roscommon county councillor whose rigged selection as candidate by the Roscommon town UIL in 1911 so outraged Canon Cummins. McDonnell was still voting with the party majority on the county council in June 1918.
Thomas McGovern (I): supporter of F. E. Meehan and chairman of the Manorhamilton guardians and RDC. On the county council he abstained, with Michael Carter, on a vote congratulating the South Longford electors in May 1917 and did not appear to take sides politically in 1918. In June of that year he was re-elected to his chairmanships unopposed, at a time when Sinn Feiners were contesting elections on public boards across the region.

Michael McGrath (SF): pre-war Hibernian and critic of Patrick Flynn in Carrick-on-Shannon. McGrath became president of the Carrick Sinn Fein club in February 1918 and in that year was one of the leading Sinn Fein speakers and organisers in County Leitrim.

Frank MacGuinness (SF): J. P. Farrell’s chief lieutenant in Longford town since the 1880s, secretary of the South Longford UIL and a leading Hibernian. MacGuinness broke with Farrell at the time of the Volunteer split in September 1914, but in March 1916 was still secretary of the South Longford UIL, a JP and, when Farrell was absent, chaired meetings of Longford UDC. He travelled to Dublin during the Easter Rising (his brother, Joe, was ‘out’) and was jailed for a month afterwards. He became a key organiser for Sinn Fein in Longford and his brother became South Longford’s MP in May 1917.

James McGurrin (SF): a party ‘orator’ who returned to Leitrim from the USA in the autumn of 1913 and addressed a number of party rallies and Volunteer parades in Leitrim and Sligo in 1914. McGurrin was a public Sinn Fein supporter in Leitrim from November 1917 at the latest.

Alfred McHugh (I): proprietor of the Sligo Champion, member of Sligo Corporation and son of the late P. A. McHugh MP. He stood down from the Corporation at the beginning of 1913 and appears to have taken little or no active personal role in Sligo politics thereafter, though his paper continued to support the party during the war.

Eugene McHugh (D): secretary of Sligo county council and son of the late P. A. McHugh MP. McHugh died in 1912, aged only 25.

Patrick McKenna (IP): after his defeat by Ginnell in January 1910, McKenna became the UIL National Director and organiser for South Westmeath and a Westmeath county councillor. He stayed loyal to the Irish party and was the party’s candidate, again unsuccessfully, in the South Longford by-election of May 1917.

Patrick McManus (IP): the UIL candidate defeated by the Hibernian Michael Carter in the 1911 Leitrim county council elections, but also chairman of the dissident Arigna AOH and enemy of John Keaveny. In June 1918 on Carrick No. 1 RDC, he appears to have voted for the party man Flynn when the Sinn Feiner McGrath unsuccessfully challenged Flynn for the chairmanship.

35 Sligo Champion, 2nd June 1917.  
36 Longford Leader, 4th March 1916  
37 McKenna was elected a Farmers’ party TD in 1923, but lost his seat in 1927.  
38 Leitrim Observer, 8th June 1918.
N. T. McNaboe (IP): one of Hayden’s supporters in Westmeath and a Westmeath county councillor. He stayed loyal to the party and consistently voted with the party on the county council in 1918.

Bernard McTernan (D): founder and editor of the Sligo Nationalist and secretary of the North Sligo UIL. McTernan was killed in a cycling accident in May 1916. The Nationalist remained pro-party through to the end of 1918, only being transformed into the radical nationalist Connachtman on its sale after the war.

Joseph Maguire (SF): chairman of the Strokestown guardians, vice-president of the Roscommon County AOH and leading ratepayer scourge of Fitzgibbon. Maguire initially supported the war effort, but lost the chairmanship of the guardians, to a party candidate, in June 1916. He consistently voted with the Sinn Fein group on the guardians through 1917 and 1918.

Patrick Mallon (SF): one of Farrell’s UIL associates in Longford until 1912, when he promoted the Foresters in the county in rivalry to Farrell’s Hibernians. Both he and his brother William became speakers at Sinn Fein rallies in the county in 1918.

Rev. Manning (I): president of the Mohill UIL branch while in Leitrim, but not publicly politically active after he moved to Mount Temple, Westmeath in 1914.

F. E. Meehan MP (IP): Meehan remained a party stalwart throughout the war, but did not contest the 1918 election for the new, single Leitrim seat. As Smyth also stood down, the party had to draft in one of J. P. Farrell’s sons, Gerald, to be defeated by James Dolan.

Henry Monson (SF): Daniel O’Donnell’s successor as leader of Sligo’s Hibernians and the joint Connaught director of the Order. Monson voted against Jinks in the January 1916 Sligo mayoral election. Though in September 1916 he denounced the Irish Nation League as vampires who cared for nothing but their own selfish interests, he campaigned for Count Plunkett in the Roscommon by-election. He was suspended from the AOH in May 1917 and campaigned actively for Sinn Fein thereafter. He failed, however, to be re-elected to Sligo Corporation in January 1919.

E. P. Murray (I): the original compromise UIL candidate to contest the Roscommon town division in the 1911 county council elections, who was then passed over by the town UIL in favour of Martin McDonnell. Murray played no further public political role.

P. V. C. Murtagh (IP): Athlone’s town clerk, a Gaelic Leaguer, supporter of votes for women, and UIL man. Murtagh stayed with the National Volunteers after the September 1914 split and campaigned for Hayden in the 1918 general election.

P. J. Neary (SF): AOH county secretary for Roscommon, Gaelic sportsman, Gaelic Leaguer, UIL man and writer of political verse. Neary had broken with the party by the end of 1916 and campaigned for Count Plunkett. The dissident Roscommon AOH county board was

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39 Sligo Nationalist. 23rd September 1916.
dissolved in May 1917 and Neary was suspended as secretary for twelve months. By November 1917 he was recording secretary of the North Roscommon Sinn Fein executive.\footnote{He became a county councillor in 1920.}

**P. J. Neilan (I)**: a partner in the same law practice as John Heverin, trustee of the Roscommon AOH county board and a prominent speaker at Volunteer rallies across South Roscommon in 1914. Though he was made the solicitor to Cummin’s RAEC in 1917 and acted for several Sinn Fein defendants in criminal proceedings in 1918, he was not publicly politically active during the war.

**Michael Nevin (SF)**: secretary in 1914 of the Sligo town AOH. Nevin gravitated to Sinn Fein at the same time as Monson and Depew. He also became secretary of the Sligo Trades Council and stood, successfully, with Depew as a labour candidate in the Corporation elections of January 1919.\footnote{He later became a leading enemy of the Treaty in the civil war and mayor of Sligo (see Farry, *The Aftermath of Revolution*).}

**Sir Walter Nugent MP (I)**: Nugent eventually broke with the party in 1918 because of the party’s alliance with Sinn Fein in the campaign against conscription. He stood as an independent candidate in the 1918 general election, gaining only 603 votes against 3,458 for Weymes and 12,435 for Ginnell.\footnote{He was subsequently a Senator and a governor of the Bank of Ireland.}

**Daniel O’Donnell (D)**: the leading Hibernian and nationalist in Sligo until his death in February 1914.

**John O’Dowd MP (IP)**: O’Dowd stayed loyal to the party throughout the war, going down to a heavy defeat by Alex McCabe in the 1918 general election.

**J. D. O’Farrell (IP)**: a long-standing party man, friend of J. J. O’Kelly MP, county councillor and one of the enemies of Fitzgibbon on the Strokestown public boards. Though he declared at the county council in June 1916 that his conscience could no longer let him support the Irish party,\footnote{*Roscommon Herald*, 24th June 1916.} he campaigned for Devine in the Roscommon by-election and consistently voted for the party on public boards in 1918.

**Rev. O’Grady (SF)**: president of the Keash UIL and member of the South Sligo UIL executive, as well as one of the leading GAA men in County Sligo and one of the county’s Volunteer organisers in 1914. In 1915 he was responsible for Alex McCabe losing his job as a National schoolteacher, giving him three months’ notice because of his ‘objectionable political activity’. By June 1917 he had given his support to Sinn Fein and the Keash Sinn Fein club, of which he later became president.\footnote{Farry, *Sligo, 1914-1921*, p. 57; *Sligo Champion* 30th June 1917.}

**Charles O’Keeffe (IP)**: accountant and clerk to Roscommon county council, secretary of the county agriculture committee and one of the small group running the Roscommon town UIL throughout the pre-war period. O’Keeffe stayed loyal to the party during the war and campaigned for Hayden in the December 1918 election.
J. J. O’Kelly MP (D) : did not actually attend his North Roscommon constituency after 1902 and died in December 1916.

Michael O’Mullane (SF) : though Sligo-born, not a local political figure - he was president of an AOH division in Dublin - until he became a prominent speaker at Volunteer parades in County Sligo in 1914. By the spring of 1917 he was Count Plunkett’s secretary and campaigned for Joe MacGuinness in the Longford by-election.

Seamus O’Mulloy (I) : the UIL organiser who memorably described getting money from farmers as ‘trying to knock blood out of a tumip’. He was not publicly politically active in the area during the war.

J. J. O’Neill (SF) : Longford county councillor who became president of the North Longford UIL when William Ganly was expelled from the party. He was re-elected president of the North Longford UIL executive on January 1917, but by May 1918 was vice-president of the North Longford Sinn Fein executive. (He should not be confused with another James J. O’Neill, chairman of Granard RDC, who stayed loyal to the party and was killed in a riding accident in 1917.)

George O’Reilly (IP) : Roscommon county president of the AOH. O’Reilly stayed loyal to the party throughout the war, campaigning for Devine in the North Roscommon by-election.

Rev. O’Reilly (I) : parish priest of Tang and president of the Tang UIL. A well-known Gaelic scholar and enthusiastic Volunteer in 1914. O’Reilly effectively broke with the party in the autumn of 1914 by being ostentatiously neutral during the Volunteer split. He went to China as a missionary in 1916.

O’Shea T. F. (SF) : chairman of the Mullingar AOH division from its formation, O’Shea was voted off the town’s Volunteer committee when it was re-formed in the autumn of 1914. When in December 1917 the Mullingar Feis committee was taken over by supporters of Sinn Fein, O’Shea was elected to the committee. By mid-1918 O’Shea was speaking and voting against the party on the Mullingar town commissioners.45

John Phillips MP (D) : though privately denounced by Farrell to Dillon as being ‘pro-German mad’ in the autumn of 1914, Phillips gave no public sign actually of being so. Indeed Phillips signed a Longford Recruiting Committee circular in March 1916, pledged loyalty to Redmond at a UIL meeting with Farrell in April 1916 and, when very frail, deferred his resignation at Redmond’s request in November 1916.46 He died in April 1917

Henry Reilly (I) : chairman of the Sligo Trades Council, a Hibernian and vice-president of the North Sligo UIL. In 1912 he stood down from these positions on becoming a registration clerk at Sligo town’s new labour exchange. Though still speaking at town tenants’ meetings and associated with the National Volunteers in the autumn of 1914, he was not thereafter politically active during the war.

Eugene Robins (SF) : chairman of Athlone No. 1 RDC, president of the South Westmeath UIL, chairman of the Moate AOH and the party’s leading ‘boss’ in the south of the county.

45 Midland Reporter, 6th December 1917; 8th June 1918.
46 Longford Leader, 18th March. 8th April: Longford Independent, 11th November 1916.
Robins supported the party during the Volunteer split in the autumn of 1914. In July 1916 he expressed his strong discontent with the party and with Redmond, whom he said had acted as a ‘recruiting agent’, at the time of the proposed Lloyd George Ulster settlement. In February 1917, at the South Westmeath UIL, he backed a resolution congratulating Count Plunkett on his election victory. In August 1917 he joined the committee of the newly-formed Moate Sinn Fein club, of which his son, Lorcan, was the president.47

Jordan Roche (SF) : a Sligo UIL man and organiser of the Town Tenants association, under Jinks. Roche was elected to the Corporation in January 1915 when two sitting labour candidates, Ned Harte and William Gibbons, were defeated. In January 1919, however, he stood unsuccessfully as a Sinn Fein candidate in the Corporation elections of that month.

Michael Ronan (IP) : a long-standing UIL organiser in North Westmeath and an ally of Hayden. Ronan was also Westmeath county president of the AOH. He stayed loyal to the party and campaigned for Weymes in the 1918 general election.

Thomas Scanlan MP (IP) : Scanlan remained loyal to the party, going down to defeat by J. J. Clancy in the 1918 general election.

Peter Shanagher (IP) : president of the Tulsk UIL and one of the Roscommon county councillors who reached an accommodation with the county’s ratepayers to secure re-election in 1914. He stayed loyal to the party during the war, voting for the party on various public boards in 1918.

Rev. Sharkey (IP) : Coyne’s curate in Boyle who led a major AOH parade there, with Joe Devlin, in 1911. By January 1917 the parish priest of Boyle, he was one of the nominators of T. J. Devine in the North Roscommon by-election.48

T. F. Smyth MP (IP) : Smyth stayed loyal to the party, but could still say in March 1918 that ‘he did not blame the Sinn Feiners and everyone was entitled to their views’. He went on to stress that all Irishmen had to sink their differences for the sake of Ireland.49 He lost his chairmanship of Mohill RDC, to a Sinn Feiner, in June 1918 and like his fellow Leitrim MP, Meehan, did not stand in the 1918 general election.

Samuel Tarrant (SF) : a Sligo solicitor and member of the North Sligo UIL executive in 1913. Tarrant was elected to Sligo Corporation in January 1915 at the same time as Jordan Roche, defeating the two anti-war labour men, Ned Harte and William Gibbons. During the war he was a bitter critic of the incompetence, corruption and near-bankruptcy of the Corporation and attacked nearly all of his fellow members, whatever their political persuasion. He was a declared supporter of Sinn Fein during most of 1918 and stood unsuccessfully as a Sinn Fein candidate in the 1919 Corporation elections.50

47 Westmeath Independent, 22nd July 1916; 17th July, 11th August 1917.
48 Strokestown Democrat, 3rd February 1917.
49 Leitrim Observer, 23rd March 1918.
50 Roscommon Journal, 13th December 1913.
P.J. Weymes (IP): a UIL loyalist and supporter of Hayden in North Westmeath. Weymes stood as the party’s candidate for Westmeath in the 1918 general election and duly lost to Ginnell.

P. N. White (SF): a long-standing UIL and AOH associate of Daniel O’Donnell in Sligo town. By early 1916, White was voting with the opponents of Jinks on the Corporation and was made an alderman, backed by their votes, in January. In December 1918 he signed J. J. Clancy’s nomination papers and was re-elected to the Corporation in January 1919.

Owen Wickham (IP): a Hayden and UIL loyalist, active in the Mullingar UIL branch who gave up his chairmanship of Mullingar RDC in 1911. He was a prominent supporter of Hayden who remained loyal to the party throughout the war.

51 Sligo Champion, 15th January 1916.
Appendix C: Provenance of the diaries of
Laurence and Alice Ginnell

In 1970, Charles Kelly wrote an unpublished MA thesis for Maynooth College, *Laurence Ginnell - 1852-1923, A Short Biography*, which is now lodged in the Westmeath County Library in Mullingar. In this biography, Kelly made several references to the diary of Laurence Ginnell, which had been made available to him by a member of Ginnell’s family. That diary has not subsequently been researched.

Another researcher, John Wylie, a Mullingar accountant who is writing a biography of Ginnell, had been informed by Ginnell’s great-nephews, who had earlier lived in Laurence Ginnell’s house and subsequently moved on from it, that they could now find no trace of Ginnell’s diaries. At a meeting on 14th October 2001, however, Wylie informed the author that he believed the diary of Alice Ginnell, Ginnell’s second wife still existed. Moreover, Alice Ginnell may have rewritten extracts of Ginnell’s own diary notes into her own diary. This had in turn been transcribed from shorthand (both Laurence and Alice Ginnell were shorthand writers) at a later date. It was believed that this was the source used by Charles Kelly in 1970.

On 15th October 2001, the author met Charles Kelly, who is now a Mullingar solicitor and a partner of Kelly, Caulfield and Shaw (the ‘Shaw’ in the firm being descended from the pre-WWI Shaw family). Kelly informed the author that in 1970 he had worked on a photocopy of extracts of much of Ginnell’s diary. This had been ‘more or less put together’ and provided for him by Philip Ginnell, Ginnell’s nephew, as a favour to the Kelly family (Philip Ginnell and Kelly’s father having been friends). This Philip Ginnell, now dead, was the father of two of Ginnell’s great nephews, Martin and another Philip.

On being told by the author that John Wylie believed the original of Laurence Ginnell’s diary had been lost, or was at best unobtainable, Kelly replied that he still had in his loft at home the photocopy which he had used in 1970. However, Kelly could not share this copy without the consent of Ginnell’s nephew, the now dead Philip Ginnell. Kelly also informed the author
that the other Phillip Ginnell, Laurence Ginnell’s great-nephew, was an architect working in Mullingar. He gave the author Phillip Ginnell’s address and when the author suggested getting his consent in place of his late father, Kelly had no objections. The author then met Phillip Ginnell, also on 15th October 2001. He gave his consent to the author being given the photocopy currently in Kelly’s possession. He said that he believed that his father Philip had transcribed the diary from shorthand.

As a result of this, the author gained possession of the photocopy used by Kelly in 1970. This is of a manuscript transcription of extracts from the shorthand diary of Laurence Ginnell, together with extracts from the diary of his second wife, Alice Ginnell. The whole document is titled *Diary L Ginnell 1852-1912*.

**The Diaries of Laurence and Alice Ginnell**

The ‘diary’, comprising 85 hand-written pages, actually begins not with diary entries but with ‘Autobiographical Notes (“Transcribed from LG’s shorthand notes”)’ and commences:

‘I am the third son of Laurence Ginnell...My father was born in the same neighbourhood in 1799.’

The first 34 pages of the document comprise these autobiographical notes, covering Laurence Ginnell’s life up to 1895. They are all written in the first person by Laurence Ginnell himself. The style of these autobiographical notes quickly changes, however, from a brief history of Ginnell’s life to the reproduction of selected daily events, obviously culled by Ginnell from a diary or diaries. As a result, from page 14 (1882) onwards Ginnell’s ‘autobiography’ consists mostly of a succession of selected, dated, daily notes and events.

From the end of page 34 (1896), the autobiography ends and is succeeded by straightforward diary entries. Such entries cover the period 1896 to 1912 and continue through to the end of the document. It is not possible to say whether they were transcribed into longhand direct from Ginnell’s original diaries. However, as will be seen, Ginnell’s diary entries later become intermingled with those of Alice Ginnell. It therefore seems probable that the shorthand document transcribed into manuscript was in fact the diary of Alice Ginnell (as believed by John Wylie) and that she had in turn copied and inserted extracts from her husband’s original documents.
The entry for 29th May 1899 on page 38 provides a clue as to the earliest date of the longhand transcription. That entry (‘Was received in private audience by Pope Leo XIII, to whom I presented my book “The Doubtful Grant of Ireland”, dealing with Pope Adrian’s Bull.’) is followed by a note written by the transcriber:


The diary entries for both Laurence and Alice Ginnell are irregular, with long gaps, and it is quite possible that the manuscript transcriber/s were also selective in the material they used.

In September 1900, Ginnell married Alice King, daughter of James King of Kilbride, Mullingar.

From page 39 (1st April 1903) some entries begin to appear which were clearly not written by Laurence Ginnell but by Alice. These entries from Alice Ginnell’s diary are then interspersed with those from Ginnell’s diary for most of the rest of the document. Moreover, some entries for a single date combine passages from both diaries. For example, the entry on page 52, for 7th May 1907, starts with Laurence Ginnell describing Birrell’s introduction of the Irish Council Bill:

Redmond practically accepted it. In the course of his speech he asked: “Is this a Bill which we ought to accept?” I answered “NO”. No other member of the Irish Party answered, though all of them I heard murmuring agreed with me.

The next paragraph in that day’s entry then switches to Alice Ginnell’s diary, as she describes how she did not get into parliament to hear the debate and how she then edited a letter of ‘L’ to the Times.

However, despite this mixture of entries from both diaries, Alice Ginnell in all cases referred to Ginnell as ‘Laurence’ or as ‘L’, while Laurence Ginnell continued to use the first person ‘I’. It is, therefore, clear throughout which entries were Alice’s and which Ginnell’s. The last entry in the document, from Ginnell’s diary, is dated 6th January 1912.
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