

Advanced Nationalist Political Activity
in Ireland 1910 – 1917

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Abstract:

This thesis examines the political, as opposed to military, activities of advanced nationalists in Ireland, including the Irish Volunteers, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, Sinn Féin, the labour movement, the women's movement, and advanced men and women in the Gaelic League, from the 1910 elections to the 1917 Sinn Féin Ard Fheis. It finds that, even before 1917, Sinn Féin did not advocate a 'dual monarchy'; it was simply accused of doing so by a small number of militants because its constitution was framed so as to be inclusive of non-republicans. Thus, the IRB and Sinn Féin were able to work in harmony during this period, with even that militant group – who would go on to gain control of the IRB Supreme Council – becoming reconciled after a bitter controversy that lasted for most of 1910. Sinn Féin, the IRB, labour and the nationalist women worked successfully together to prevent an address of welcome to King George V when he visited Dublin in 1911, even drawing in – albeit somewhat grudgingly – members of the United Irish League and the Ancient Order of Hibernians. Both Sinn Féin and the editors of the IRB paper *Irish Freedom* were fully involved in the debate around the Third Home Rule Bill, despite not being in favour of home rule as a final settlement.

Advanced members of the Gaelic League, together with members of the IRB and Sinn Féin, were behind the formation of the Irish Volunteers in 1913. They recruited members of the UIL and AOH onto the Provisional Committee, but the Volunteer manifesto pointedly omitted any mention of home rule, and the committee strongly resisted any attempt by the Irish Parliamentary Party to control the movement, eventually being forced to add 25 members nominated by the IPP, but expelling them again in September 1914. Organisers of the much reduced Irish Volunteers were active in the opposition to recruiting to the British Army during the First World War, a political activity that was traditionally associated with Sinn Féin.

Following the Easter Rising of 1916, new organisations sprang up; none of these described themselves as republican, and all were absorbed into Sinn Féin. Although Sinn Féin, at the 1917 Ard Fheis, was formally constituted as a republican political party, it is seen that election literature both before and after the Ard Fheis made little mention of a republic. It is argued that for most people at that time, 'republic' was no more than a synonym for 'independence'.

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Abbreviations

AFIL	All for Ireland League
AOH	Ancient Order of Hibernians
BMH	Bureau of Military History
CMA	Competent Military Authority
CSORP	Chief Secretary's Office Registered Papers
DMP	Dublin Metropolitan Police
DORA	Defence of the Realm Act
DORR	Defence of the Realm Regulations
IPP	Irish Parliamentary Party
INB	Irish National Brotherhood
IRA	Irish Republican Army
IRB	Irish Republican Brotherhood
ITGWU	Irish Transport and General Workers' Union
MSP	Military Service Pension
NAI	National Archives of Ireland
NAUK	National Archives of the United Kingdom
PPC	People's Protection Committee
RIC	Royal Irish Constabulary
UIL	United Irish League
WS	Witness statement

Introduction

This thesis looks at the activity of advanced nationalists in Ireland in the period up to and immediately after the Easter Rising of 1916. Rather than the well-known military story, however, it looks at the political activity in which advanced nationalists were engaged during this time: the organisation of protests, the publication of newspapers and pamphlets, the continuation or escalation of propaganda campaigns begun in the 1900s, and so forth. It will examine the question of whether this political activity played a role in creating the climate which allowed the Rising to take place. It will ask how closely connected the political activists and the militants in this period were, and whether the ideologies and aspirations of the various groups involved were closer than is perhaps assumed. Consideration will be given to the question of whether those individuals, organisations and groups formed some sort of network, and whether and to what extent it is valid to refer to this network as the ‘Sinn Féin movement’ in the years before they explicitly united at the Sinn Féin Ard Fheis and Volunteer Convention of October 1917. It will also look at internal politics at both the beginning and end of this period.

Background: 1900–1910

Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Ireland was divided between unionists, who supported the union between Ireland and Great Britain, and nationalists, who aimed for a greater or lesser degree of self-government for Ireland. Nationalists, in turn, were divided between home rulers, or ‘parliamentarians’, and advanced nationalists. In the first decade of the twentieth century, home rulers were represented mainly by the Irish Parliamentary Party. Advanced nationalists included the militant Irish Republican Brotherhood, the political Sinn Féin organisation, and members of the cultural Gaelic League and of the labour movement.

The Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) itself was rooted in militancy. It was the result of the ‘new departure’ of 1879, which brought together the constitutionalist Charles Stewart Parnell, the IRB man Michael Davitt, and the American Fenian John Devoy, linking together the issues of self-government and land reform.¹ The party thereafter was closely

associated with the agrarian movement and, for some time, with Fenianism; four members of the first executive of the Land League were Fenians.² The National League, founded in 1882 to replace the Land League, became the electoral machine of the Irish Party.³ After the splits and feuds that followed Parnell's disgrace and death, William O'Brien, in 1899, founded the United Irish League (UIL), which took on the same role after the reunification of the party in 1900.⁴ Thus the party continued to be linked with an organisation committed to land agitation, including boycott and intimidation.⁵

John Redmond, chairman of the party after reunification, was an admirer of the British Empire, and saw home rule in terms of Ireland taking her place as a partner in the empire.⁶ Redmond placed his trust in the Liberal party, then in opposition, but when the Liberals won a landslide majority in the election of 1906, he was to be disappointed. Many of the Liberals were lukewarm towards home rule, and some were flatly opposed to it. In 1907 the government introduced the Irish Council Bill, offering Ireland a small measure of devolved government. Redmond and John Dillon, his deputy, while unhappy with the measure, were unwilling to rule it out completely. But when it became clear that the national convention of the UIL called to consider the bill would overwhelmingly oppose it, Redmond and Dillon rejected it in advance of the meeting, Redmond declaring it 'utterly inadequate in its scope, and unsatisfactory in its details'.⁷ The fallout from this led to the defection of Charles Dolan to Sinn Féin.⁸ No further measure of autonomy was forthcoming at that time, but circumstances changed dramatically when the Chancellor of the Exchequer, David Lloyd George, introduced a radical budget in 1909 which was rejected by the House of Lords. Parliament was dissolved and, in the general election of 1910, the Liberals lost their overall majority and the IPP held the balance of power; this

¹ R.F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (London, 1988), p. 403; T.W. Moody, 'Fenianism, Home Rule and the Land War: 1850-91', in T.W. Moody and F.X. Martin (eds.), *The Course of Irish History* (Dublin, 2001), p. 228.

² Foster, *Modern Ireland*, p. 404.

³ Moody, 'Fenianism', p. 241.

⁴ F.S.L. Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine* (London, 1985), p. 217.

⁵ Lyons, *Ireland*, p. 217.

⁶ Lyons, *Ireland*, p. 261.

⁷ Lyons, *Ireland*, p. 265; Ronan Fanning, *Fatal Path: British Government and Irish Revolution 1910-1922* (London, 2013), p. 26.

⁸ Fanning, *Fatal Path*, p. 27.

meant that the House of Lords' veto would be abolished or limited, and that a home rule bill would be introduced.⁹

The Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) was founded by James Stephens in 1858. It was divided into 'circles', each commanded by a 'centre', with the intention that any one member would know only the other members of his own group, thus insuring secrecy; in practice, however, the organisation was riddled with British agents and informers from the outset.¹⁰ When it launched a rising in 1867, it was quickly suppressed, and its leaders imprisoned. Having no objective other than the establishment of an Irish Republic, it had to bide its time for nearly another fifty years.¹¹ A new IRB constitution, drafted in 1873, said that the IRB should 'lend its support to every movement calculated to advance the cause of Irish independence consistently with the preservation of its own integrity', while at the same time re-iterating the fundamental objective of achieving an Irish Republic through physical force.¹² By the turn of the century it had become, in the words of F.S.L. Lyons, 'old and flabby';¹³ its work had changed from planning for insurrection to 'infiltrating and influencing the broader nationalist movement.'¹⁴

The revival of the IRB was begun in Belfast by Bulmer Hobson and Denis McCullough. McCullough, whose father was an IRB man, was dissatisfied with the state of the organisation in Belfast and set about recruiting young and dynamic men, such as Hobson and Seán MacDermott.¹⁵ MacDermott, who was from County Leitrim but worked as a tram conductor in Belfast, was said by Hobson and McCullough to have previously been a member of the Ancient Order of Hibernians.¹⁶ By 1908 he was the Ulster representative on the Supreme Council of the IRB.¹⁷ Hobson started the separatist newspaper, *The Republic*, in 1906, but it failed after six months and Hobson moved to Dublin. There he would found in 1909, with Constance Markievicz, the scouting movement Na Fianna

⁹ Lyons, *Ireland*, pp. 266-8.

¹⁰ Lyons, *Ireland*, p. 125.

¹¹ Moody, 'Fenianism', pp. 229-30.

¹² R. V. Comerford, 'Isaac Butt and the Home Rule Party, 1870-77', in W. E. Vaughan (ed.), *A New History of Ireland VI: Ireland under the Union 1870-1921* (Oxford, 1989), p. 21.

¹³ Lyons, *Ireland*, p. 315.

¹⁴ David Fitzpatrick, *Ernest Blythe in Ulster: The Making of a Double Agent?* (Cork, 2018), p. 2.

¹⁵ Lyons, *Ireland*, pp. 315-6; Marnie Hay, *Bulmer Hobson and the Nationalist Movement in Twentieth-century Ireland* (Manchester, 2009), pp. 44-7.

¹⁶ Gerard MacAtasney, *Seán MacDiarmada: The Mind of the Revolution* (Manorhamilton, 2004), p. 18

¹⁷ Lyons, *Ireland*, p. 317.

Éireann, whose purpose was to train boys for future military conflict with Britain. Within a few years the Fianna would have its own circle of the IRB.¹⁸ Meanwhile, the veteran Fenian, Tom Clarke, who had spent eight years in the United States after fifteen years of imprisonment in England for his involvement in the Fenian dynamite campaign, returned to Dublin in 1907, opening a tobacconist and newsagent premises which would become the hub of separatist activity in the following years.¹⁹ Clarke, though no longer young, supported the young activists in the IRB.²⁰

By 1910 McCullough, Hobson, MacDermott and Clarke, together with P.S. O’Hegarty, were all on the Supreme Council. This brought a new vitality into the organisation, but the IRB remained small – with a total membership of about 2,000 – and underfunded. Any future military action would require a new body distinct from the IRB, and the opportunity to create one did not present itself until 1913.²¹

The origin of Sinn Féin lay in the weekly newspaper, the *United Irishman*, started in 1899 and edited by Arthur Griffith. Griffith is described by F.S.L. Lyons as ‘more of the hawk than the dove’, and he and his early associates are referred to as ‘separatists in the fullest sense of the term.’²² The *United Irishman* extolled the principles of the insurgents of 1798, 1848 and 1867 as ‘the true nationalism’, but acknowledged that physical force at that moment was not practicable.²³ It was through the efforts of the paper that in 1900 a number of small nationalist literary and political societies banded together under an umbrella organisation, Cumann na nGaedheal.²⁴ A second organisation, the National Council, was formed in 1903 by a group of nationalists that included Edward Martyn and Maud Gonne to pressure Dublin Corporation not to present an address of welcome to King Edward VII on the occasion of his visit to Ireland. A third, the Dungannon Clubs, was founded in 1905 by Bulmer Hobson and Denis McCullough (who were at the same time working to revitalise the IRB in Ulster; see above), to promote a separatist project, although taking its name from the Volunteer convention of 1782 that led to the legislative independence of Ireland, in homage to Griffith’s tract, *The Resurrection of Hungary: A*

¹⁸ Lyons, *Ireland*, p. 317.

¹⁹ Lyons, *Ireland*, p. 318.

²⁰ Hay, *Bulmer Hobson*, p. 93.

²¹ Lyons, *Ireland*, p. 319.

²² Lyons, *Ireland*, p. 248.

²³ Lyons, *Ireland*, pp. 248-9.

²⁴ Lyons, *Ireland*, p. 250.

Parallel for Ireland.²⁵ These three organisations amalgamated in 1907 to form what would become Sinn Féin.²⁶

The Resurrection of Hungary appeared first as a series of articles in the *United Irishman* in the first half of 1904, and later the same year as a book.²⁷ It described how the Hungarian leader Ferenc Deák won independence from the Austrian Empire by a policy of abstention from the imperial parliament. The ‘parallel for Ireland’, according to F.S.L. Lyons, was that pursuing the same policy would result in a return to the legislative independence of 1782 by way of ‘the carrying through of an Anglo-Irish Ausgleich whereby the only institutional tie between the two countries would be the Crown itself.’²⁸ The ‘Hungarian policy’, as it was at first known, was formalised and fleshed out by Griffith at the first annual convention of the National Council, in a speech that was subsequently published as a booklet, *The Sinn Féin Policy*.²⁹ The Sinn Féin policy was to withdraw the Irish representatives from the imperial parliament at Westminster and, together with local government bodies, take on the business of governing Ireland. It was a policy of self-sufficiency, both political and economic.³⁰ Donal McCartney says that the objective of the policy was a ‘dual monarchy’, i.e. an Ireland independent of England, with the crown as the sole link between them.³¹ Griffith, he says, ‘was himself a separatist, *at least when he first formulated his policy*’ (emphasis added), but proposed the dual monarchy because he believed it would be more widely accepted in Ireland.³² When the National Council amalgamated with Cumann na nGaedheal and the Dungannon Clubs, its new constitution stated its aims as, first, ‘the re-establishment of the independence of Ireland’, and second, that there should be no agreement with Britain until Britain kept the compact she made in 1783.³³

Sinn Féin found itself contesting a parliamentary election when in 1907 a home rule MP, C.J. Dolan, resigned from the Parliamentary Party and chose to stand in the ensuing by-

²⁵ Lyons, *Ireland*, pp. 255, 316.

²⁶ Michael Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland: The Sinn Féin Party, 1916-1923* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 26.

²⁷ Lyons, *Ireland*, p. 251.

²⁸ Lyons, *Ireland*, p. 252.

²⁹ Lyons, *Ireland*, pp. 255-6.

³⁰ Donal McCartney, ‘From Parnell to Pearse, 1911-1921’ in Moody and Martin, *The Course of Irish History*, p. 248.

³¹ McCartney, ‘Parnell to Pearse’, p. 248.

³² McCartney, ‘Parnell to Pearse’, p. 249.

³³ Lyons, *Ireland*, p. 256.

election for Sinn Féin. In the election, which was not held until 1908, Dolan won 1,157 votes to the Party candidate's 3,103.³⁴ This was Sinn Féin's only venture into parliamentary politics before 1917. Following the North Leitrim election, the fortunes of Sinn Féin fell as those of the Irish Party rose.³⁵

The Gaelic League was founded by Eoin MacNeill and Douglas Hyde in 1873 with the aim, first, of keeping the Irish language alive among native Irish speakers, and second, of spreading it among English speakers by means of classes and other cultural events. Taking its cue from an 1892 address by Hyde, *The Necessity for De-Anglicising Ireland*, the League advocated replacing not just the English language but English culture, habits and even dress.³⁶ The League declared itself to be non-political, but its programme was in essence one of cultural nationalism, and presented a generation of Irish men and women with an argument for national independence.³⁷ Timothy McMahon has studied the make-up of the Gaelic League in the 1900s. Its leadership was 90% male, and made up mainly of professionals, artisans and clerical workers; notable Protestant members included George Irvine, Seamus Deakin, Sean O'Casey and Ernest Blythe.³⁸ Sinn Féin and the IRB were, in the words of Donal McCartney, 'among the political groups coloured to a greater or lesser extent by the Gaelic League's philosophy',³⁹ while F.S.L. Lyons said of it that 'of all the factors influencing the rise of new and urgent sense of nationality at the end of the nineteenth century, [the Gaelic League] has come to be regarded as perhaps the most significant'.⁴⁰ By 1913 at the latest, despite Hyde successfully maintaining the standing order against politics, radical nationalists were the most active members of the League, and held leadership positions.⁴¹ P.J. Mathews has noted an 'implicit coalition' between the League, the Irish Theatre Company and the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society,

³⁴ Lyons, *Ireland*, p. 257.

³⁵ McCartney, 'Parnell to Pearse', p. 253.

³⁶ McCartney, 'Parnell to Pearse', pp. 246-7.

³⁷ McCartney, 'Parnell to Pearse', p. 248.

³⁸ Timothy G. McMahon, *Grand opportunity: The Gaelic revival and Irish society, 1893-1910* (Syracuse, NY, 2008), pp. 95, 96, 118.

³⁹ McCartney, 'Parnell to Pearse', p. 248.

⁴⁰ Lyons, *Ireland*, p. 227.

⁴¹ Timothy G. McMahon, 'Douglas Hyde and the politics of the Gaelic League in 1914', *Éire-Ireland*, 53:1 (2018), pp 29-47.

leading to the 'emergence of a new non-clandestine separatist politics outside the Parliamentary Party, in the form of Sinn Féin.⁴²

The Labour movement in Ireland at the turn of the century was represented by the Irish Socialist Republican Party, founded by James Connolly. Connolly was an accomplished writer who analysed Irish history in Marxian terms, bringing together socialism and nationalism.⁴³ The first organised industrial action was seen with the arrival of James Larkin, born in England to Irish parents, in Belfast in 1907, sent by the British union, the National Union of Dock Labourers, to organise dock workers. He succeeded for a time in uniting Catholic and Protestant workers against the bosses, but was ultimately unsuccessful in his drive to institute a closed shop for workers.⁴⁴ In 1908 he relocated to Dublin, a city of appalling poverty, with high rates of unemployment, disease, and infant mortality. There he began organising dock workers – coal carriers and carters – using syndicalist tactics.⁴⁵ In the process he came into conflict with the union, which he left to form an Irish union, the Irish Transport and General Workers Union (ITGWU). It was not until 1911 that the ITGWU was affiliated to the Irish Trade Union Congress.⁴⁶ In 1910, James Connolly returned to Ireland from the United States, and became an ITGWU organiser in Belfast.⁴⁷ Larkin and Connolly would be central figures in the lockout of 1913, while Connolly and others remained active in nationalist affairs.

Major events: 1910–17

With the passing of the Parliament Act of 1911, the House of Lords veto was reduced to the power to delay bills for two years. The Liberal government introduced the Third Home Rule Bill in 1912. This met with intense opposition from unionists, led by Edward Carson.⁴⁸ Hundreds of thousands signed the Solemn League and Covenant rejecting home rule, and the Ulster Volunteers were formed in early 1913.⁴⁹ The impunity with

⁴² P.J. Mathews, *Revival: The Abbey Theatre, Sinn Féin, the Gaelic League and the Co-operative Movement* (Cork, 2003), p. 66.

⁴³ Foster, *Modern Ireland*, p. 439.

⁴⁴ Lyons, *Ireland*, p. 277.

⁴⁵ Foster, *Modern Ireland*, p. 443.

⁴⁶ Lyons, *Ireland*, p. 278.

⁴⁷ Lyons, *Ireland*, p. 280.

⁴⁸ McCartney, 'Parnell to Pearse', p. 253-4.

⁴⁹ McCartney, 'Parnell to Pearse', p. 254.

which the Ulster Volunteers met and drilled led nationalists to form their own army, the Irish Volunteers, in November 1913.⁵⁰

Tensions rose over the following year: in March, the Asquith government proposed the exclusion of all or part of Ulster from the provisions of the Home Rule Bill; the same month, army officers in the Curragh threatened to resign rather than accept orders to act against the unionists; in April, the Ulster Volunteers imported a large consignment of arms in the Larne gun-running; and in July the Irish Volunteers also imported a cargo of arms in the Howth gun-running.⁵¹ This was the situation when the First World War broke out in August 1914. In September, the Home Rule Bill was enacted, but its operation was suspended until the end of the war.⁵²

Redmond, dismayed at the growth of a private army outside his control, had in May tried to get the Irish Volunteers' leader, Eoin MacNeill, to modify the Provisional Committee to be more representative of the Parliamentary Party. MacNeill had stalled and, after two months of correspondence between them, Redmond had issued an ultimatum in July, demanding that 25 people nominated by him be added to the committee. Through the support of MacNeill, Bulmer Hobson and Roger Casement, the committee had accepted, though not without a great deal of acrimony, directed particularly against Hobson.⁵³ With the coming of the war, Redmond first (3 August) offered the services of the Volunteers to defend Ireland while the British army was withdrawn to go to the front, and then (20 September) called on the Volunteers 'to go wherever the firing-line extends'.⁵⁴ The latter speech caused a majority of the original Provisional Committee to expel Redmond's nominees and led to a split in the Volunteers, with a very large majority (the National Volunteers) staying with Redmond and a small minority (the Irish Volunteers) staying with MacNeill.⁵⁵ Key positions in the headquarters staff of the Irish Volunteers were held by members of the IRB: Patrick Pearse, Thomas MacDonagh and Joseph Plunkett, and according to F.S.L. Lyons, the IRB had a controlling majority on the Volunteers' General

⁵⁰ McCartney, 'Parnell to Pearse', p. 255.

⁵¹ Lyons, *Ireland*, pp. 307-9.

⁵² Lyons, *Ireland*, p. 310.

⁵³ Lyons, *Ireland*, pp. 327-8.

⁵⁴ Lyons, *Ireland*, pp. 310, 329.

⁵⁵ Lyons, *Ireland*, pp. 329-30.

Council.⁵⁶ Shortly after the outbreak of war, these and other IRB members held a meeting, which also included James Connolly of the Irish Citizen Army, where it was agreed to stage an insurrection before the war's end.⁵⁷

The Rising took place in Easter week in 1916. It was followed by a wave of executions and arrests, the effect of which was to turn the tide of public opinion in favour of the insurgents.⁵⁸ The leaders of both Sinn Féin and the Volunteers were imprisoned or interned. Upon their release, first the internees in December 1916 and then the prisoners in 1917, political activity quickly gathered momentum. After Count Plunkett, the father of the 1916 leader Joseph Plunkett, won a by-election in North Roscommon in February 1917, he summoned a convention of interested parties in April, at which he announced his intention of starting a new party, the Liberty League. This led to friction with Sinn Féin, the outcome of which was the absorption of the Liberty League and another group, the Irish Nation League, into Sinn Féin.⁵⁹ There was further conflict, primarily between Griffith and Cathal Brugha, over whether the party should stand unequivocally for a republic; this was resolved by a compromise formula suggested by Éamon de Valera, that it would seek independence as a republic, but having achieved that, the people might choose by referendum what form of government they desired. At the Ard Fheis in October, Griffith stepped down as leader to allow de Valera to be elected.⁶⁰

The historiographical gap

Other general histories of Ireland follow the same lines as those cited above.⁶¹ They all deal with Sinn Féin, the IRB and other advanced nationalist individuals and parties and organisations in the years leading up to the House of Lords crisis and the 1910 elections. Between 1910 and 1916, however, two separate and non-overlapping strands emerge: on

⁵⁶ Lyons, *Ireland*, pp. 330.

⁵⁷ McCartney, 'Parnell to Pearse', p. 256.

⁵⁸ McCartney, 'Parnell to Pearse', p. 256.

⁵⁹ Lyons, *Ireland*, pp. 389-90.

⁶⁰ Lyons, *Ireland*, p. 391.

⁶¹ Paul Bew, *Ireland: The Politics of Enmity, 1789-2006* (Oxford, 2007); Richard English, *Irish Freedom: The History of Nationalism in Ireland* (London, 2007); Alvin Jackson, *Ireland 1798-1998: Politics and War* (Oxford, 1999); Robert Kee, *The Green Flag: A History of Irish Nationalism* (London, 1972); Joseph Lee, *Ireland 1912 – 1985: Politics and Society* (Cambridge, 1990); James Lydon, *The Making of Ireland: From Ancient Times to the Present* (London, 1998); Oliver MacDonagh, *Ireland* (New Jersey, 1968); Patrick Maume, *The Long Gestation: Irish Nationalist Life, 1891-1918* (Dublin, 1999); John A. Murphy, *Ireland in the Twentieth Century* (Dublin, 1975); Senia Pašeta, *Irish Nationalist Women, 1900-1918* (Cambridge, 2013); Margaret Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries: Women and Irish Nationalism* (Dingle, 1983).

the one hand, the party political debate around the Home Rule Bill, both within the Westminster parliament and outside it, involving discussion between John Redmond, Edward Carson and British prime minister H.H. Asquith; on the other hand, the formation of the Irish Volunteers, the ‘infiltration’ of them by the IRB, the Howth gun-running, and the planning and execution of the Easter Rising. In other words, political activity during these years is equated with the ‘constitutional’ parties, while advanced nationalism is equated solely with militant activity. What is missing is any detailed treatment of the *political* activity of, for instance, the IRB, and in particular the *Irish Freedom* group within it, of Sinn Féin – which, although reduced in support, was not extinct – or of the Irish Volunteers (apart from the politics involved in the Redmond takeover and the subsequent split).

Strikingly, books dedicated to advanced nationalist organisations fail to fill that historiographical gap. Richard Davis, in *Arthur Griffith and Non-Violent Sinn Fein*, has two chapters entitled ‘Sinn Fein United’ and ‘Sinn Fein Divided’. The former deals with the coming together of Sinn Féin – as described above – from the disparate groups including the Dungannon Clubs, with emphasis on the role of Bulmer Hobson and P.S. O’Hegarty.⁶² The latter deals with the decline of the organisation after 1910, again with frequent reference to Hobson and O’Hegarty (the relations between these two and Griffith will be dealt with in Chapter 2 of this thesis), but apart from a short paragraph on the royal visit of 1911 and a brief mention of anti-enlistment activity, it says nothing about the political activity of Sinn Féin after 1910.⁶³

Michael Laffan, in *The Resurrection of Ireland*, paints an almost unrelentingly negative portrait of early (pre-1916) Sinn Féin. In his view, Arthur Griffith’s emphasis on the 1783 Renunciation Act ‘paid no attention to the most fundamental principle of the British political system: that every parliament could repeal any previous legislation, including all restrictions on its own powers.’⁶⁴ Griffith’s booklet *The Resurrection of Hungary*, he says, made the case for a settlement with Britain ‘along the lines of the Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy’, but he remarks that Griffith was not perturbed by the failure of a similar

⁶² Richard Davis, *Arthur Griffith and Non-violent Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1974), pp. 24-34.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 60-66, 68-9.

⁶⁴ Michael Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland: The Sinn Féin Party 1916-1923* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 17.

system linking Sweden and Norway.⁶⁵ He cites the writings of Friedrich List as Griffith's economic 'gospel', but says that 'he was dishonest in his omissions, and he ignored the awkward fact that in the book's 435 pages the only two references to Ireland were at odds with his own beliefs.'⁶⁶ But all of the foregoing ignores the fact that Griffith's writings were propagandist, and not attempts at academic analysis.

Griffith, says Laffan, believed his theories would narrow the distance between home rulers and separatists, but he was unsuccessful in attracting the home rulers, while the separatists were put off by his moderation. 'Many of his early admirers', he says, 'soon drifted away.'⁶⁷ The Dungannon Clubs were started by Bulmer Hobson in March 1905, their name a homage to Griffith's theories, but very quickly declared that their aim was an Irish Republic.⁶⁸ They merged with the Cumann na nGaedheal organisation in 1907, forming the Sinn Féin League, and wanted Griffith's National Council to come in with them, but it held aloof. The resignation of the North Leitrim MP Charles Dolan, and his contesting of the subsequent by-election as a Sinn Féin candidate, shifted the balance back to Griffith; he 'took over his rival and forced it to adopt his policy', although Laffan does not explain exactly how this was possible.⁶⁹ Sinn Féin briefly blossomed, 'at least in relative terms', as a result of the election campaign, but 'it also encountered apathy and opposition.'⁷⁰

The increase in branches between 1906 and 1909 was 'sluggish', Laffan says, and even then its apparent strength was belied by the failure to take in membership fees and branch affiliation fees. After 1909, Sinn Féin's 'slow early growth was followed by a rapid decline.' The daily newspaper failed; the weekly paper was kept going only by a few 'wealthy sympathisers'.⁷¹ Within the organisation, there was tension between Griffith and radicals such as P.S. O'Hegarty. IRB members who had 'infiltrated' the organisation lost interest and turned instead to the new paper *Irish Freedom*, which claimed in 1912 that

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 18.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 19.

⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 19-20.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 22-3.

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 25-6.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 30.

⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 30-1.

Sinn Féin was ‘temporarily suspended’, because it had tried to ‘drop the separatists, but when the separatists were dropped there was no movement left.’⁷²

Laffan says that ‘the fact that first the Volunteers and then the Easter Rising were given the sobriquet “Sinn Féin” was one of the principle reasons for the party’s importance in later years’, and that ‘Griffith’s party acquired an unearned prestige simply because it was the only group to call itself “Sinn Féin”’.⁷³ During 1917 there was a rapid increase in the number of Sinn Féin clubs formed, often initiated by leading separatists such as Austin Stack.⁷⁴ Count Plunkett launched a rival organisation, the Liberty League, but it could not match the progress of Sinn Féin, and was eventually absorbed by it, as was another new organisation, the Irish Nation League.⁷⁵ Republicans such as Éamon de Valera and Cathal Brugha came to the fore in the organisation, and in October 1917 de Valera became president, and Sinn Féin became a republican party.⁷⁶ The question Laffan does not ask is, why? If Sinn Féin was an organisation with a small – and rapidly declining – number of adherents, with a policy inimical to home rulers and separatists alike, why would anyone use its name as a ‘sobriquet’ for the Irish Volunteers and the leaders of the 1916 Rising? If republicans after 1916 were looking for a political vehicle, why would they choose a moribund organisation with objects which were irreconcilable with their own? And most importantly, why would so many people around the country show their support for the aims of the Rising by joining such a small and irrelevant organisation? Laffan’s assertion, that the ‘misattribution’ of the Rising to Sinn Féin by the authorities was enough to cause a surge in support for it, is shared by other historians, but does not really hold water. This will be discussed in the thesis.

Leon Ó Broin, in his 1976 book on the IRB, *Revolutionary Underground*, describes a split in the IRB in the 1890s which followed a split in Clan na Gael in the US. The ‘new movement’, as he calls it, was known as the Irish National Alliance or Irish National Brotherhood (INB), and was led in Britain and Ireland by Mark Ryan.⁷⁷ Its membership included James F. Egan and W.B. Yeats; John MacBride and Arthur Griffith were

⁷² Ibid., p. 31.

⁷³ Ibid., pp. 68; 69-70.

⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 94-5.

⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 104-6.

⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 116-7.

⁷⁷ Leon Ó Broin, *Revolutionary Underground: The Story of the Irish Republican Brotherhood 1858-1924* (Dublin, 1976), p. 59.

‘staunch supporters’, and Maud Gonne may have been a member, sworn in by Mark Ryan.⁷⁸ Egan tried to bring John Daly and Tom Clarke into the INB, but failed.⁷⁹ The INB ‘appeared to the police to be the more secret body’, and it criticised the IRB, led by Fred Allan, for its emphasis on Parnellism, rather than physical force.⁸⁰ Funds from the American faction came to Ireland through Mark Ryan.⁸¹

The INB lost ground during 1898, as the IRB used the 1798 centenary movement to bring secret society men together. A large demonstration took place in August 1898, organised by the IRB, with the INB excluded.⁸² The end of the split in America, with John Devoy as leader, left the INB without any purpose. Most rejoined the IRB; some, such as Yeats, were quietly dropped.⁸³ In 1899 the police were told by an informer that ‘the policy of crime, outrage and insurrection would be abandoned.’⁸⁴

Ó Broin reports on the foundation of the *United Irishman* in 1899 and of Cumann na nGaedheal in 1900. Of the latter he says that it ‘became largely an open propagandist cover for the IRB’, with John O’Leary as president, John MacBride, Robert Johnston, John Daly, James Egan and Maud Gonne as vice-presidents, and Arthur Griffith ‘leading the committee.’⁸⁵ The IRB itself, from a high point in 1898 of 25,000 members, declined steadily until by 1903 it was ‘nothing but the shadow of a once terrifying name’.⁸⁶ Cumann na nGaedheal was ‘greatly stimulated’ by the publication of *The Resurrection of Hungary* in 1904. Ó Broin (initially) portrays the IRB and Sinn Féin as acting in concert. He describes P.T. Daly, secretary of the IRB, addressing meetings and ‘advising his listeners to spread the Sinn Féin movement, which since its formation had strengthened the IRB beyond all expectation.’⁸⁷ Noting that the IRB in 1912 had only 1,660 members, and that it had achieved little beyond keeping alive the belief that Ireland would ultimately gain freedom through physical force, he adds that much the same was true of

⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 63, 81.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 87.

⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 65-6.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 84.

⁸² Ibid., pp. 86-7, 90-1.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 95.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 102.

⁸⁵ Ibid., pp. 116, 119.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 125.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 133.

‘Griffith’s allied Sinn Féin’.⁸⁸ Only a few pages later, however, he states that by 1907 ‘Griffith had left the IRB and was concentrating on the repeal of the Union and the re-establishment of the King, Lords and Commons of Ireland’.⁸⁹ This is not elaborated on, nor ever mentioned again, and Ó Broin had stated a few pages earlier that Griffith left the IRB in 1910, not before 1907, that his departure was solely due to personal differences with the IRB leadership, and that he remained, in the words of P.S. O’Hegarty, ‘the greatest separatist force in the country’.⁹⁰

Ó Broin devotes roughly a page to the friction between Bulmer Hobson, P.S. O’Hegarty and Tom Clarke, who proposed to start a newspaper, *Irish Freedom*, and the leading Supreme Council members Fred Allan and Jack O’Hanlon, who first opposed it, then tried to wrest control of it, and then resigned when the Supreme Council failed to back them;⁹¹ this compared to 40-odd pages on the split of the 1890s. The book does not anywhere deal with the editorial content of *Irish Freedom*, a serious failing. In fact, the remainder of the book is little more than a general history of Ireland as detailed here already – the Home Rule crisis, the formation of the Ulster Volunteers and the Irish Volunteers, the Easter Rising and its aftermath – told from an IRB point of view.

Owen McGee, in *The IRB*, paints an even bleaker picture of the organisation than does Michael Laffan of Sinn Féin. In 1894 (four years *before* the ’98 celebrations), he says, ‘as the IRB had now been reduced to a policy of merely commemorating its own history, it could no longer act as a nucleus for radical political activity in the country, nor essentially be the source of any fresh new departures in republican propaganda.’⁹² He does allow that the ’98 commemoration had ‘a fairly positive effect’ on the movement.⁹³

According to McGee, the ‘Irish-Ireland’ movement that began at the turn of the century was distinct from, and opposed to, the republican movement. In 1898, he says, a Jesuit priest persuaded the Gaelic Leaguer D.P. Moran to write a series of articles for the *New Ireland Review* (the Catholic University’s journal), which were later published as *The*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 140-1.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 135-6.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

⁹² Owen McGee, *The IRB: The Irish Republican Brotherhood, from the Land League to Sinn Féin* (Dublin, 2005), p. 231.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 264.

Philosophy of Irish-Ireland, and were the basis of his new paper, *The Leader*. The paper proved popular, and led middle-class Catholics to join the Gaelic League, which was promoted by parish priests.⁹⁴ Before 1898 the league had been a ‘marginal, linguistic movement’.⁹⁵ The church abandoned the practice of denouncing republicans from the pulpit, and instead brought ‘the full weight of the Catholic education system to bear’ to promote its own moral agenda via its ‘Irish-Ireland’ movement, ‘which would target the same channels as had been used by republicans.’⁹⁶ Its growth ‘had a very negative effect on the IRB’s efforts to recruit members in several parts of the country...’⁹⁷

Jesuit priests in the London Gaelic League had acquired a strong influence on Mark Ryan, the leader of the INB in London.⁹⁸ With the Boer war in progress, Frank Hugh O’Donnell acquired a considerable amount from the Boers and handed it over to Ryan. Maud Gonne had obtained funds from a French nationalist organisation, so that, by mid-1900, Ryan and Gonne ‘virtually became the paymasters of all Irish separatist activities.’ The *United Irishman* editors sought and received money Ryan and Gonne to fund their paper.⁹⁹ The spread of the ‘Irish-Ireland’ movement resulted in the republicanism of the *United Irishman* being toned down.¹⁰⁰ McGee says that Cumann na nGaedheal was ‘a product of the London INB’, and that Fred Allan or other IRB leaders were not invited to the meeting at which it was launched. Fr. Patrick Kavanagh wrote to the *United Irishman* welcoming the new organisation, but warning against people being involved who followed ‘unCatholic doctrines.’¹⁰¹ This is totally at odds with Leon Ó Broin’s depiction of Cumann na nGaedheal as ‘an open propagandist cover for the IRB’. McGee estimates that by 1902 IRB membership had fallen considerably from a high of 9,000 men at the time of the 1898 celebrations, ‘as it had little or no funds and also clearly lacked initiative.’¹⁰² He goes so far as to say that those middle-class Catholics that went into the IRB via the Gaelic League or Cumann na nGaedheal were unaware that they were in an organisation which purchased arms.¹⁰³ This even included Bulmer Hobson and P.S.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 275-6.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 275.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 278.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 279.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 278.

⁹⁹ Ibid., pp. 282-3.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 279.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 288.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 298.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 314.

O’Hegarty.¹⁰⁴ *The Resurrection of Hungary* and the *Sinn Féin Policy* are presented as ‘Irish-Ireland’ policies, but somehow at the same time republican. It was, of course, both, but the two sit uncomfortably together here; thus, the Sinn Féin policy ‘introduced a republican dimension into Irish-Irelanders’ political thought, by linking the demand for economic self-determination with a coherent philosophy of citizenship...’. The Supreme Council officially adopted the Sinn Féin policy in April 1906.¹⁰⁵ It attempted to reorganise on the basis of its links with Sinn Féin. One result of this was that Denis McCullough, co-opted onto the Supreme Council, expelled the old members in Belfast, the effect being ‘to reduce the once-numerous Belfast organization down to a very small size’.¹⁰⁶ IRB leader P.N. Fitzgerald died in 1907, having failed, McGee says, ‘in his efforts to maintain the IRB as a secret revolutionary underground.’¹⁰⁷

Finally, McGee minimises the role of the IRB in the Irish revolution of the 1910s. He says it ‘provided neither the manpower nor the ideas of the “revolution”, although, as an organisation, it did provide an important political nucleus, or medium, to push an independence movement through’. He rejects the popular idea that the arrival of Tom Clarke in Dublin in 1907 was a key moment in the revitalising the IRB, arguing that, by then, ‘not only did the IRB not exist, except on paper, but its old style of republicanism was virtually dead as a factor in Irish popular politics.’¹⁰⁸ Instead, ‘a broad and very different independence movement to the IRB now existed, and the three Catholic poets, MacDonagh, Plunkett and Pearse....were undoubtedly its most symbolic representatives.’¹⁰⁹ Like Ó Broin, McGee finishes without saying what the IRB, as an organisation, actually did after 1910.

The only book to date on the Irish Volunteers is F.X. Martin’s *The Irish Volunteers 1913-1915: Recollections and Documents* (1963). As its title implies, however, this is not an academic study of the Volunteers. Rather, as Ruán O’Donnell says in his introduction to the 2013 edition, it was intended to fill the hole in the record left by the fact that the contents of the Bureau of Military History witness statements and the Military Service

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 291.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 316.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 317.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 318.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 349.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., pp. 356-7.

Pension files were closed at that time.¹¹⁰ Martin himself says that ‘it was decided that the volume should not attempt a full history of the Irish Volunteers, 1913-1915, but would present a selection of recollections and of original documents.’¹¹¹ Of the recollections, Bulmer Hobson has by far the most space – 50 pages. He writes mainly about his own contribution to the formation of the Volunteers, as well as that of the IRB and the Fianna. There is a chapter on the gunrunning at Howth and Kilcoole in July 1914, and another on the Redmond ultimatum and the subsequent split. His only mention of political activity is to note that during MacNeill’s prolonged discussions with Redmond, the Provisional Committee was not consulted by MacNeill at any point.¹¹² Eoin MacNeill has seven pages;¹¹³ Piaras Béaslaí four;¹¹⁴ and Seán T. O’Kelly eight and a half¹¹⁵ (the latter two taken from the *Irish Independent* and the *Capuchin Annual*, respectively). These deal only with the background to, and process of, the formation of the Volunteers. The documents consist of contemporary newspaper articles and speeches, including military matters such as ‘General Instructions for Forming Companies’, ‘Military Instructions for Units’, ‘The Volunteer Colours Flags for the Regiments’ and ‘The Volunteer Uniform Report’. The formation, takeover and split in the Volunteers have been dealt with in journal articles by Daithí Ó Corráin, and in a 1989 PhD thesis by Charles Hannon.¹¹⁶ Ó Corráin states unequivocally that the Irish Volunteers ‘were established principally to ensure [home rule’s] unconditional implementation’, contrasted with ‘an uncomplicated picture of IRB control from the outset with MacNeill as a mere figurehead.’¹¹⁷ Hay describes them as a ‘force controlled by an independent body of men free from any discernible political allegiance, backed and supported by the population at large’.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁰ Ruán O’Donnell, ‘New Introduction’, in F.X. Martin (ed.), *The Irish Volunteers 1913-1915: Recollections and Documents*, 2nd edition (Sallins, 2013), pp. 3-4.

¹¹¹ F.X. Martin, ‘Acknowledgements’, in F.X. Martin (ed.) *The Irish Volunteers 1913-1915*, 1st edition (Dublin, 1963), p. xiii.

¹¹² Bulmer Hobson, ‘Formation and Growth of the Irish Volunteers, 1913-14’, in *ibid.*, pp. 44-6.

¹¹³ Eoin MacNeill, ‘How the Volunteers Began’, in *ibid.*, pp. 69-75.

¹¹⁴ Piaras Béaslaí, ‘The National Army is Founded’, in *ibid.*, pp. 79-82.

¹¹⁵ Seán T. Ó Ceallaigh, ‘The Founding of the Irish Volunteers’, in *ibid.*, pp. 83-91.

¹¹⁶ Charles Hannon, ‘The Irish Volunteers and the concept of military service and defence, 1913-1924’ (PhD thesis, UCD, 1989).

¹¹⁷ Daithí Ó Corráin, ‘“A most public spirited and unselfish man”: the career and contribution of Colonel Maurice Moore, 1854-1939’, *Studia Hibernica* 40 (2014), pp. 88, 89; see also Daithí Ó Corráin (ed.), ‘J.J. O’Connell’s Memoir of the Irish Volunteers, 1914-16, 1917’, *Analecta Hibernica*, 47 (2016), pp. 2-15.

¹¹⁸ Hay, *Bulmer Hobson*, p. 26.

The Gaelic League is dealt with by Timothy McMahon in *Grand Opportunity*, cited earlier. Pádraig Yeates has dealt extensively with the labour movement in this period.¹¹⁹

Overview

This thesis will ask a number of questions. Can political acts by advanced nationalists during this period always, or ever, be associated with particular organisations – Sinn Féin, the Volunteers, the IRB or labour? To what degree was political activity coordinated between these organisations and individuals in the period? How great was the overlap between them? How did political activity dovetail with military strategy, organisation and preparation for the Rising? And has the influence of Sinn Féin, both its personnel and its policies, on both political and militant republicanism been under-estimated?

Political activity *within* advanced nationalism will be discussed, particularly the activity of a small but formidable group that was prominent in both Sinn Féin and the IRB, and its attempts to refashion each of those organisations in turn. This was the group that launched the republican newspaper *Irish Freedom* in 1910, and included P.S. O’Hegarty and Bulmer Hobson. This will question whether there was a fundamental fault line between the IRB and Sinn Féin, or whether, conversely, any disagreement was just between this group and Arthur Griffith. It will also ask whether the dispute, such as it was, was a lasting one.

The thesis will look at the 1911 visit of King George V to Dublin, and the campaign of opposition to the presentation of an address of welcome to him, an event of considerable significance in the light of previous such campaigns in 1900 and 1903, and of the imminence of a home rule bill following the elections of 1910. The involvement of the various advanced nationalist groupings, and the degree to which they co-operated with one another, will be examined, as well as the extent of their co-operation with home rule organisations.

The Home Rule Bill itself will then be discussed, asking whether advanced nationalists ignored it as being incompatible with their aims, or debated it on its own merits, or even

¹¹⁹ Pádraig Yeates, *Lockout: Dublin 1913* (Dublin, 2000); *Idem.*, *A city in wartime : Dublin 1914-1918* (Dublin, 2011).

saw it in a positive light as something that separatists could subsequently build on. It will be asked what difference in approach, if any, there was between Sinn Féin, the IRB, and individuals such as Patrick Pearse.

The political aspects of the formation of the Irish Volunteers, the Redmond takeover, and the split of September 1914, will then be examined. It will be asked whether that body, in its inception, was intended by its founders simply to defend home rule against the Ulster Volunteers; whether it was truly a cross-party venture, equally representative of home rulers and separatists; or whether its leadership was dominated by advanced nationalists from the outset. The makeup of the Provisional Committee will be looked at, and the 1913 Volunteer manifesto will be analysed, in order to shed light on this question. The correspondence of Eoin MacNeill with John Redmond, and with his associate Stephen Gwynn, will be looked at, to determine where the Volunteers, and MacNeill personally, stood in relation to the Irish Party.

The application of the Defence of the Realm Act (1914) in Ireland will next be studied. Under the act, a number of advanced nationalist publications were suppressed. These papers all opposed recruitment into the British Army during the war, and it will be asked whether that was the specific reason for their suppression. The act was also used, unsurprisingly, to deport or jail Irish Volunteer members, and particularly organisers. But the thesis will raise the question of whether these men were in fact engaging in political activity in the 1914-16 period, specifically anti-recruiting activity, and ask whether they were targeted because of this political activity, rather than because they posed a military threat. It will also raise the question of whether this political activity was a part of the preparation for the Rising

The Easter Rising itself will not be discussed in this thesis, as it was a purely military event. There will, however, be a discussion of the terms ‘Sinn Féin Volunteers’ and ‘Sinn Féin Rebellion’. It will be asked whether the commonly advanced explanation of the origins of these terms is in fact reasonable. References to the ‘Sinn Féin Volunteers’ in the newspapers between their formation and the Rising will be examined in order to clarify the origin and accepted meaning of the term. The thesis will then review the political developments in advanced nationalism after the Rising. It will look at the organisations that sprang up during the following eighteen months, such as the Repeal

League, the Irish Nation League and the Liberty League, and estimate their true level of support. It will critically re-examine the relationship between Count Plunkett, Éamon de Valera and Sinn Féin, and question whether any of them could validly claim to be more ‘republican’ than another. It will revisit the events leading up to and during the 1917 Ard Fheis, and finally, it will look at election literature both before and after the Ard Fheis to ascertain how much weight the Irish Republic was actually given in election campaigns.

Before any of the above can be discussed, however, the question of whether Sinn Féin differed from other advanced nationalists due to its supposed advocacy of a ‘dual monarchy’ needs to be addressed. The thesis will therefore begin by critically re-examining the seminal document of the Sinn Féin movement, *The Resurrection of Hungary*. The question of ‘dual monarchy’ is crucial in examining the relationship between the Sinn Féin organisation and other advanced nationalists; while Sinn Féin was designed to *appeal* to those who were willing to accept a monarchy, it could not have influenced separatists in the way that it did if it had explicitly *espoused* monarchism. The chapter will look at contemporary views of Sinn Féin – Irish, British and American – to ascertain whether it was actually seen as monarchist or, on the contrary, as republican. It will go on to ask, if Sinn Féin did not in fact stand for a dual monarchy, why do historians assume that it did?

1. Sinn Féin and ‘dual monarchy’

The idea that Arthur Griffith and Sinn Féin advocated a ‘dual monarchy’ – an Ireland independent of Great Britain but sharing a monarch – has been expounded in various ways by historians over many decades. Colum Kenny, Griffith’s most recent biographer, says that *The Resurrection of Hungary* ‘earned [Griffith] the reputation to this day of being a monarchist’, but that ‘Griffith, who spearheaded resistance to royal visits to Ireland, had not suddenly become an enthusiastic royalist.’ Rather, he portrays Griffith as a pragmatist who ‘thought that his idea of a dual monarchy might appeal to a broad cross-section of the people.’¹ Even while arguing that Griffith was not a ‘royalist’, Kenny does not question the perception that his ‘idea’ was dual monarchy. But a careful reading of Griffith’s seminal work shows that it was far from being his idea, or his ideal.

‘The Resurrection of Hungary’ was a series of 27 articles that appeared in the *United Irishman* between January and July 1904. The first 26 of these dealt with the history of Hungary and its relationship with Austria, two of the 26 being an outline of history to the nineteenth century and the remainder on the careers of the statesmen István Széchenyi, Lajos Kossuth and Ferenc Deák.² They related how, following the collapse of the 1848 revolution, the Hungarians under Deák resisted Austrian rule by a campaign of passive resistance, refusing to send members to the imperial parliament in Vienna, setting up institutions of government in Pest and rejecting all offers of negotiation as long as Austria refused to restore the constitution of 1848. The final article dealt with the parallel between Hungary and Ireland, suggesting that the same tactics, if adopted in Ireland, would lead to an independence as complete as Hungary’s.³ It put forward the idea of setting up in Ireland a ‘Council of Three Hundred’, to be made up of the 103 Irish MPs who would withdraw from the imperial parliament at Westminster, and members nominated by county councils, corporations and district councils, to pass measures, including the establishment of arbitration courts, which would be put into operation by local government bodies.⁴ When the articles were published as a booklet later in 1904, the

¹ Colum Kenny, *The Enigma of Arthur Griffith: ‘Father of us All’* (Newbridge, 2020), p. 152.

² P.S. O’Hegarty, *A history of Ireland under the Union, 1801-1922* (London, 1952), p. 645.

³ ‘The Resurrection of Hungary XXVII: Ireland and Hungary’, *United Irishman*, 2 July 1904.

⁴ Owen McGee, *Arthur Griffith* (Sallins, 2015), p. 81.

General Council of County Councils was suggested as the nucleus of the Council of Three Hundred.⁵

P.S. O’Hegarty, writing in 1952, said of ‘The Resurrection of Hungary’ that the articles exercised an immediate and permanent influence on all the readers of *The United Irishman*. The writing was masterly, with a pungency and a trenchancy and a directness that had been absent from Irish political writing since John Mitchel. There was no romantic, mawkish generalization, but a cool, aggressive and logical appeal to intelligence.⁶

Bulmer Hobson, in his 1968 book, *Ireland Yesterday and Tomorrow*, said of them:

Griffith traced the history of Hungary’s struggle against Austrian domination, laying emphasis on the Hungarian refusal to send deputies to the Imperial Parliament, and the policy of passive resistance carried out through the local authorities. The constructive work of reviving the language, improving education and strengthening Hungary’s economic position was strongly brought out, and he advocated the Hungarian policy as a model for use in Ireland against the British Government. The Hungarian movement was described in so persuasive a manner and depicted as proceeding so imperturbably to inevitable victory as to make the pamphlet a piece of propagandist writing of the highest order. Its effect was considerable.⁷

Hobson went on to say, however, that Griffith had ‘carried the parallel between Hungary and Ireland too far.’ It had led him to make the restoration of the ‘King, Lords and Commons of Ireland’ the aim of the policy.⁸ Since Hobson’s assertion has had an inordinate influence on all subsequent analysis of *The Resurrection of Hungary*, it merits a detailed discussion here.

The phrase ‘King, Lords and Commons of Ireland’ itself occurs only twice in the 1904 articles and book, and in a very specific context: the wording of the Volunteers’ resolution in Dungannon in 1782, and of the Renunciation Act of 1783. The convention of the Volunteers of Ulster, meeting in the church in Dungannon on 15 February 1782, resolved ‘that the claim of any body of men other than the king, lords, and commons of

⁵ Griffith, *The Resurrection of Hungary: A Parallel for Ireland*, 1st edition (Dublin, 1904), p. 93.

⁶ O’Hegarty, *A history of Ireland*, p. 647.

⁷ Bulmer Hobson, *Ireland Yesterday and Tomorrow* (Tralee, 1968), p. 19.

⁸ *Ibid.*

Ireland, to make laws to bind this kingdom, is unconstitutional, illegal, and a grievance'.⁹ This wording in turn came from a resolution moved by Henry Grattan in the Irish House of Commons on 19 April 1780, 'that the King's most excellent Majesty, and the Lords and Commons of Ireland, are the only power competent to make laws to bind Ireland.'¹⁰ Between 15 February and 16 April 1782, a total of eighty-five resolutions containing some variant of these words were passed by Volunteer conventions throughout Ireland, by the grand juries of Westmeath, Meath, Waterford, Wicklow, Fermanagh, Antrim, Londonderry, Carlow, Galway, Wexford, Limerick, Cork, Kilkenny, Kildare, Monaghan, Donegal, Tipperary, Queen's County and Dublin, by the 'gentlemen, clergy and freeholders' of Leitrim, Mayo, Clare, Longford and Kerry, and by general meetings in Belfast, Cavan, Lurgan, Monaghan Town, Tyrone, and an assembly at the Tholsel in Dublin. A hundred other Volunteer bodies passed resolutions approving of the Dungannon resolutions in general terms.¹¹ On 16 April, an address to the king from the Irish parliament was amended on a motion of Grattan to say that 'his subjects of Ireland are a free people', and that 'there is no body of men competent to make laws to bind this nation, except the King, Lords and Commons of Ireland'.¹² Consequent to this, the British parliament on 17 May granted legislative independence to Ireland.¹³ The following year it passed the Renunciation Act, by which the right to be bound only by the laws of the Irish parliament was 'declared to be established, and ascertained for ever, and shall, at no time hereafter, be questioned or questionable.'¹⁴

The argument in *The Resurrection of Hungary* in regard to the Renunciation Act was that it meant that the Act of Union could have no validity. The Renunciation Act precluded Britain from ever again asserting the dependence of Ireland, and precluded the Irish parliament from voting itself out of existence, and consequently 'no authority exists, under the Constitution, to legislate for this country except the King, Lords, and Commons

⁹ Ultán Gillen, 'Constructing democratic thought in Ireland in the age of revolution, 1775-1800', in Joanna Innes and Mark Philp (eds), *Re-imagining Democracy in the Age of Revolutions: America, France, Britain, Ireland 1750-1850* (Oxford, 2013), p. 152; idem., 'Ascendancy Ireland, 1660-1800', in Richard Bourke and Ian McBride (eds), *The Princeton History of Modern Ireland* (Princeton, 2016), p. 65.

¹⁰ S.J. Connolly, *Divided Kingdom: Ireland 1630-1800* (Oxford, 2008), p. 406.

¹¹ C.H. Wilson, *A Compleat Collection of the Resolutions of the Volunteers, Grand Juries, &c of Ireland* (Dublin, 1782), *passim*.

¹² Henry Grattan, *Memoirs of the life and times of the Rt. Hon. Henry Grattan*, Vol. 2 (London, 1839), p. 237.

¹³ James Kelly, *Prelude to Union: Anglo-Irish Politics in the 1780s* (Cork, 1992), p. 42.

¹⁴ Griffith, *Resurrection of Hungary*, 1st edition, p. 98.

of Ireland.¹⁵ This is a quasi-legal argument, necessitated partly by Griffith's desire to make the parallel with Hungary exact, and partly by the requirement of a 'constitutional' argument. *The Resurrection of Hungary* was directed at constitutionalists; any policy it recommended should not be in defiance of the constitution, but in defence of the constitution.¹⁶ 'Grattan's parliament' and the 'constitution of 1782' had been used by nationalist writers throughout the nineteenth century to provide legitimacy to the movement for independence.¹⁷ Therefore, as the Hungarians had refused to negotiate with Austria until Austria recognised the constitution granted by her in 1848, so the Irish must 'take our stand on the Compact of 1782, and the Renunciation Act'.¹⁸ This does not mean that the restoration of the constitution of 1782 was the desired goal. In fact, as will be seen, it was explicitly stated that any connection whatever between Ireland and Britain was undesirable.

In 1904, the events of the early 1780s were the high point in Irish history, the only time since the Norman invasion that Ireland had had a full measure of independence. W.E.H. Lecky aptly summarised its significance when he said that 'the establishment of legislative independence had become inevitable from the simple impossibility of governing Ireland on any other condition.'¹⁹ Grattan's 1780 speech, or the Dungannon resolution, or both, together with their respective dates, were quoted approvingly in 19th-century histories of Ireland, academic and popular, unionist and nationalist.²⁰ More significantly, the resolutions were quoted verbatim, and the circumstances around them and the measures resulting from them were described, enthusiastically and at length, in histories written by the Young Ireland writers Thomas MacNevin, Thomas D'Arcy McGee and John Mitchel, the latter two writing after the Rising of 1848.²¹ Pride in the

¹⁵ Griffith, *Resurrection of Hungary*, pp. 88, 89.

¹⁶ McGee, *Arthur Griffith*, p. 87.

¹⁷ Kelly, *Prelude to Union*, p. 1. See, for example, Thomas Davis, 'Speeches of Grattan' in *Thomas Davis, Selections from his Prose and Poetry* (London, 1914), pp. 128–9.

¹⁸ Griffith, *Resurrection of Hungary*, p. 92.

¹⁹ W.E.H. Lecky, *A History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century*, Volume 2 (London, 1892), p. 296.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 252, 288. Martin Haverty, *The History of Ireland, from the Earliest Period to the Present Time* (New York, 1867), pp. 655, 658; Patrick Weston Joyce, *A Concise History of Ireland: From the Earliest Times to 1837* (Dublin, 1903), pp. 254–5, 257; Emily Lawless, *The Story of Ireland* (New York, 1888), pp. 330–1.

²¹ Thomas MacNevin, *The History of the Volunteers of 1782* (Dublin, 1845), pp. 131–3, 154–60; Thomas D'Arcy McGee, *A popular history of Ireland: from the earliest period to the emancipation of the Catholics*, Volume 2 (New York, 1863), pp. 650–4; John Mitchel, *The History of Ireland: From the Treaty of Limerick to the Present Time* (Dublin, 1869), 220–3, 231–7.

‘revolution of 1782’, as symbolised in the wording of the Dungannon convention, could in no way be considered as contrary to the ideology of 19th-century republicanism.

In fact, the key words in the Dungannon resolution are not ‘King, Lords and Commons’ but ‘make laws to bind’. This distinctive phrase first appeared in the Declaratory Act 1719 (the 6th of George I) – the act which Grattan and the Volunteers sought to have repealed in 1782 – when it said that the British parliament ‘had, hath, and of right ought to have, full power and authority to make laws and statutes of sufficient force and validity to bind the Kingdom and people of Ireland.’²² It appeared again in the Declaratory Act 1766, which made the American colonies subordinate to the British parliament, declaring that that parliament had ‘full power and authority to make laws and statutes of sufficient force and validity to bind the colonies and people of America, subjects of the crown of Great Britain, in all cases whatsoever.’²³ The Second Continental Congress, in its ‘Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms’ of July 1775, made reference to the Declaratory Act when it said, ‘By one statute it is declared that Parliament can “of right make laws to bind us in all cases whatsoever.” What is to defend us against so enormous, so unlimited a power?’²⁴ It is quite likely that Grattan was familiar with that document when he was framing his ‘Declaration of Right’ in April 1780. Thus, the words of the statute were turned around to become a statement of revolutionary intent. The address to George III from the Irish parliament on 16 April 1782 used the same wording again, as well as the words ‘that his subjects of Ireland are a free people.’²⁵ It was this revolutionary wording, not the reference to the monarchy or the nobility, that Griffith was pointing to in *The Resurrection of Hungary*.

The ‘make laws to bind’ wording was to find its way into several of the seminal documents of the Sinn Féin movement over the next fifteen years, but without the attendant phrase ‘King, Lords and Commons’. The constitution of the Belfast Dungannon Club, founded in 1905, stated ‘That we maintain that the attendance of Irishmen at the

²² Charles Howard McIlwain, *The American Revolution: A Constitutional Interpretation* (New York, 1923), pp. 50-1.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ ‘A Declaration by the Representatives of the United Colonies of North-America, Now Met in Congress at Philadelphia, Setting Forth the Causes and Necessity of Their Taking Up Arms’, *The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy*, Yale Law School (http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/arms.asp).

²⁵ Mitchel, *History of Ireland*, Volume I, p. 247.

English Parliament is inimical to the best interests of the Irish nation by admitting the right of any body other than the Parliament of Ireland to make laws binding on this country.²⁶ At the public meeting that followed the launch of the Sinn Féin policy at the National Council convention on 28 November 1905, it was resolved ‘That the people of Ireland are a free people, and that no law made without their authority or consent is or ever can be binding on their conscience.’²⁷ When the National Council and the Dungannon Clubs merged in 1907, these same words were incorporated in the constitution of the new body.²⁸ The wording was again incorporated in the revised constitution adopted at the 1917 Sinn Féin *Ard Fheis*: ‘whereas no law made without the authority and consent of the Irish people is or ever can be binding on their conscience’.²⁹ And the Declaration of Independence, read at the first meeting of Dáil Éireann on 21 January 1919, said, ‘Whereas the Irish people is by right a free people...We ordain that the elected Representatives of the Irish people alone have power to make laws binding on the people of Ireland’.³⁰ With the single exception of the American ‘Declaration’ of 1775, the formulation ‘make laws to bind’ is not to be found anywhere outside the Sinn Féin movement, or outside Ireland.

‘King, Lords and Commons’, by contrast, together with every other reference to monarchy, however oblique, was removed from the third edition of *The Resurrection of Hungary*, published in 1918. The passage on the Dungannon convention now said that the Volunteers ‘resolved in the church in Dungannon that the independence of their country must ever be maintained’, and of the Renunciation Act it said that ‘no power exists or has existed since the year 1873 in the British Parliament to legislate for this country.’³¹ The book apparently did not thereby lose any of its original message. When the book was republished by the UCD Press in 2003, it was the third edition that was published.³² The introduction, written by Patrick Murray, makes no mention of the differences between the first and third edition, and even refers to ‘its emphasis on dual monarchy, on “king, lords and commons”’, despite the complete absence of any mention of dual monarchy or ‘king,

²⁶ Hobson, *Ireland Yesterday and Tomorrow*, p. 23.

²⁷ ‘Sinn Féin: The National Council Convention’, *United Irishman*, 9 December 1905.

²⁸ L.G. Redmond-Howard, *Six Days of the Irish Republic* (London, 1916), p. 73.

²⁹ Dorothy Macardle, *The Irish Republic*, 5th ed. (London, 1968), p. 838.

³⁰ ‘Declaration of Independence’, *Documents of Irish Foreign Policy*, Royal Irish Academy (<http://www.difp.ie/docs/1919/Declaration-of-independence/1.htm>).

³¹ Griffith, *Resurrection of Hungary*, 3rd edition (Dublin, 1918), pp. 85, 86.

³² Griffith, *Resurrection of Hungary (Classics of Irish History)* (Dublin, 2003), p. A-iv.

lords and commons' from the edition which it introduces.³³ Nor have other commentators remarked on the difference. Pádraic Colum's biography of Griffith merely states that 'in the third [edition], Arthur Griffith made some emendations', without elaborating further.³⁴ Nicholas Mansergh, like Murray, alludes to Griffith's belief in 'dual monarchy' while citing the third edition of *The Resurrection of Hungary*, apparently unaware of the absence of any reference to monarchy in that edition.³⁵ Patrick Maume, who makes repeated reference to 'dual monarchy' throughout his book, likewise cites the third edition, where the phrase is nowhere to be found.³⁶ Presumably, Murray, Mansergh and Maume expected the phrase to be there, and they may not have felt the need to read through the text to make sure that it was. Other writers simply fail to note that there was more than one edition.

In any event, *The Resurrection of Hungary* was not intended as a blueprint for advanced nationalists, still less for Griffith himself. Rather, it was a suggestion as to how home rulers might more effectively achieve self-government than by attendance at Westminster.³⁷ Advanced nationalists – whom Griffith referred to simply as 'nationalists' – could not cooperate with home rulers as long as they continued the policy of parliamentarianism, but if they were to adopt the Hungarian policy, as outlined in the article, then it would become possible for advanced nationalists to work with them. Even if they were to argue for the retention of the monarchy – something Griffith explicitly opposed – that would not render such cooperation impossible:

We hold that the subsistence of the connection between this country and Great Britain, in any form, is not for our country's good, but we recognise the existence of a large mass of our countrymen who believe as Deak believed in the case of Austria and Hungary, that, provided the countries retain each their independence, and exist co-equal in power, the rule of a common sovereign is admissible. With men of such views Nationalists are cordially prepared to co-operate, as the followers of Kossuth co-operated with Deak. A demand that England shall observe her own compact with the Parliament of Ireland, and keep her own law, and obey her own Constitution — all of which she has violated every day these 104 years past for the purpose of

³³ Ibid., p. A-xiii.

³⁴ Pádraic Colum, *Arthur Griffith* (Dublin, 1959), p. 77.

³⁵ Nicholas Mansergh, *The Irish Question 1840-1921* (London, 1965), p. 226.

³⁶ Patrick Maume, *The Long Gestation: Irish Nationalist Life, 1891-1918* (Dublin, 1999), p. 56 and fn p. 257.

³⁷ Richard P. Davis, *Arthur Griffith and Non-violent Sinn Féin* (Dublin, 1974), p. 21.

plundering this country— involves no abandonment of principle on the part of those who desire to see Ireland a sovereign independent state.³⁸

Note that there was no suggestion that even home rulers saw the monarchy as *desirable*, only that they believed it was *admissible*. Similarly, while suggesting that they might ‘take their stand’ on the 1782 constitution, the book showed no sentimental attachment to Grattan, to the repeal movement or to the king. Grattan, it said, ‘was incompetent. He was an excellent orator, sincerely patriotic, but he was neither a statesman nor a leader of men.’ O’Connell ‘had one statesmanlike idea in the course of his life’ (the Council of Three Hundred), but faced with opposition from Dublin Castle, he ‘re-appeared in the cap-and-bells, and ruined his own proposal.’ Of the king it said that ‘so long as he governs this country through the British Parliament [he] is not the constitutional King of Ireland, and all recognition of him as such is an offence against the Constitution.’ And it added, in a pointed reference to certain nationalist members of Dublin Corporation, ‘We state this fact for the benefit of the gentlemen who present “loyal” addresses to his Britannic Majesty’.³⁹ (The attitude of Griffith to ‘loyal addresses’ will be addressed in chapter 3 of this thesis.)

Any argument for a literal return to the King, Lords and Commons of Ireland would have been hopelessly out of date in 1904, since even Gladstone’s Home Rule bills of 1886 and 1893 did not make provision for an Irish House of Lords (the 1886 bill allocated 28 of the 103 seats in the ‘first order’ of the legislature to the existing representative peers, but envisaged their eventual replacement by elected members).⁴⁰ Even allowing for that, an earnest appeal for the retention of a monarch would surely have quoted not only the words of the April 1782 address to George III concerning the power to ‘make laws to bind’, but also its avowal that ‘the crown of Ireland is an imperial crown inseparably annexed to the crown of Great Britain, on which connexion the interests and happiness of both nations essentially depend’.⁴¹ The whole tenor of *The Resurrection of Hungary* shows that that was not its view. Griffith’s first biographer, Seán Ó Lúing, after devoting a full chapter of his book to a detailed synopsis of *The Resurrection of Hungary*, concluded that the book – as well as every page of every one of Griffith’s newspapers – proved that ‘no man ever lived who was more opposed to the royal house having any

³⁸ Griffith, *Resurrection of Hungary*, 1st edition, p. 95.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 90, 92, 96.

⁴⁰ Alvin Jackson, *Home Rule: An Irish History, 1800–2000* (London, 2003), pp. 57, 82.

⁴¹ Henry Grattan, *Memoirs* Vol. 2, p. 237.

connection, good, bad or indifferent, with Irish matters than Arthur Griffith.’⁴² (Ó Lúing’s is arguably the best biography of Griffith but, being written in Irish, is less accessible than others, and not often cited by historians.) *The Resurrection of Hungary* did not even consider that a shared monarch was an ideal or natural constitutional position for Hungary. On the first page of the book, corresponding to the first article in the series, it confidently predicted that the Hungarians would proclaim a republic ‘when the sad old man who reigns in Vienna dies’.⁴³ It was not far wrong: Hungary became a republic two years after the death of Franz Joseph in 1916, albeit under circumstances unimaginable in 1904.

In summary, the goal envisaged in *The Resurrection of Hungary* was the independence of Ireland, and the means of attaining it were abstention from Westminster and the setting up of institutions of government at home. The monarchy formed no part of the central argument.

Tom Kettle, the foremost of a group of radical University College Dublin students who formed the Young Ireland Branch of the United Irish League, and arguably the best mind in the home rule movement at the time, reviewed the book in the *New Ireland Review* in February 1905. He wrote his review from the standpoint of someone who wished to see home rulers and separatists united on a common platform. The Hungarian policy might be that platform, he suggested, but it had not been set out in sufficient detail for him to judge.⁴⁴ Kettle had some criticism of details of the book. Among other things, he judged that it was a mistake to object to the Act of Union on legal rather than on moral grounds; the effect of that, he maintained, would be to restrict freedom of action. Was the author saying that if a future Irish government believed it was in the national interest to declare a republic, that it would be prevented from doing so by the Renunciation Act? ‘Surely not’, was Kettle’s answer.⁴⁵ He concluded that the policy would stand or fall on whether it united the two sections of Irish nationalism, but that it was ‘certainly the largest idea contributed to Irish politics for a generation.’⁴⁶ Clearly, the ‘large idea’ was not one of a shared monarch.

⁴² Seán Ó Lúing, *Art Ó Gríofa* (Dublin, 1953), p. 127. Translation by the present author.

⁴³ Griffith, *Resurrection of Hungary*, 1st edition, p. 3.

⁴⁴ T.M. Kettle, ‘Would the Hungarian policy work?’, *New Ireland Review* 22 (Feb. 1905), 322-3.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 328.

That *The Resurrection of Hungary* was not intended as a programme for advanced nationalists was shown by the correspondence in the *United Irishman* that followed the publication of the final article. When John Sweetman wrote to say that the writer of the articles was the obvious candidate for an Irish Deák, Griffith replied that the writer of the article was a Kossuth, not a Deák.⁴⁷ The difference between them had been outlined in the articles: '[Deák] was willing to see Hungary linked with Austria, provided the link were one of friendship, not of steel. Kossuth was the foe of all links. His ambition was to see Hungary an independent Republic.'⁴⁸ Griffith could not be the Irish Deák, because the Irish Deák must be 'a man who can say, honestly, that he desires no more—while he refuses to accept less—than the acknowledgement of the “constitutional” rights of his country, that is, in Ireland’s case, the restoration of the Constitution of 1782'.⁴⁹ There is an echo here – almost certainly conscious – of Parnell’s 1885 speech in which he said that 'We cannot ask for less than the restitution of Grattan’s Parliament... but no man has a right to fix the boundary of the march of a nation.' F.S.L. Lyons said of that speech that 'the calculated ambiguity of these sentences needs no stressing. To some of those who heard or read him he seemed to have left the road to full independence wide open. To others...it sounded agreeably constitutional and that could not be bad.'⁵⁰ This was precisely the effect that Griffith had strived for in *The Resurrection of Hungary*. The question of a policy that 'sounded agreeably constitutional' will be returned to later in this chapter.

Griffith had already protested his adherence to Kossuth and his unsuitability as an Irish Deák two years earlier.⁵¹ Now, however, the demand for him to start a movement to implement the Hungarian policy did not abate. In the words of P.S. O’Hegarty, 'he had written the articles to convert the Parliamentarians...and what he had done was to convert the separatists to it' (for whatever reason, this insight of O’Hegarty’s was not followed by later historians). Griffith’s own people were calling for him to formulate a detailed policy

⁴⁷ O’Hegarty, *Ireland under the Union*, pp. 648-9.

⁴⁸ Griffith, *Resurrection of Hungary*, 1st edition, p. 17.

⁴⁹ O’Hegarty, *Ireland under the Union*, p. 648.

⁵⁰ F.S.L. Lyons, *Charles Stewart Parnell* (London, 1977), pp. 260-1.

⁵¹ Davis, *Arthur Griffith*, p. 18.

and lead them in implementing it.⁵² Initially, however, it was not separatists of the IRB type that were pressing him to do so.

Griffith and Sweetman were approached by Thomas Martin of the Irish National Society in London. According to Richard Davis, the Irish National Society was opposed to parliamentarianism but was 'less radical' than the London Cumann na nGaedheal.⁵³ A meeting was arranged in Dublin at which Martin and three London associates met Griffith, Edward Martyn, Tom Kelly and Walter Cole.⁵⁴ Martyn, Kelly and Cole were all members of the fledgling National Council, formed the previous year to prevent Dublin Corporation from giving an address of welcome to King Edward VII on the occasion of his visit to Ireland. Martyn and Kelly were founders of the organisation. Martyn was its president, while Kelly and Cole represented it on Dublin Corporation. All three were advanced nationalists, but none of them was a declared republican. This group continued to meet through 1904 and 1905. In February 1905 they decided that, rather than start a new organisation, they should launch the policy through the National Council.⁵⁵ A national convention – the organisation's first – was arranged for 28 November, and at it Griffith delivered a lengthy address in which he outlined the policy that was subsequently published as *The Sinn Féin Policy*.⁵⁶

The Sinn Féin Policy addressed the questions of education, of industry and of agriculture. It advocated a protectionist economic policy. It promoted the idea of an Irish mercantile marine, an Irish consular service, the development of the rail system, of the poor law system, and a scheme of afforestation. It proposed the establishment of a national civil service, national courts of law, a national stock exchange and a national bank. Finally, it called for the formation of a Council of Three Hundred, 'composed of the members of the General Council of County Councils and representatives of the Urban Councils, Rural Councils, Poor Law Boards and Harbour Boards of the country to sit in Dublin and form a de facto Irish Government.'⁵⁷ Irish MPs who declined to sit in Westminster 'could' sit

⁵² O'Hegarty, *Ireland under the Union*, p. 648.

⁵³ Davis, *Arthur Griffith*, p. 22.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 23.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Arthur Griffith, 'The Sinn Féin Policy', in idem., *The Resurrection of Hungary* (Dublin, 2003), pp. 139-163.

and vote with this body.⁵⁸ No mention was made of the constitution of 1782.⁵⁹ As already noted, the resolution passed at the subsequent general meeting was not ‘that there is no body of men competent to make laws to bind this nation except the King, Lords and Commons of Ireland’, but ‘that the people of Ireland are a free people, and that no law made without their authority or consent is or ever can be binding on their conscience.’

In a Bureau of Military History witness statement dated 26 January 1948, which, in slightly expanded form, became a chapter of *Ireland Yesterday and Tomorrow*, Bulmer Hobson stated that in 1907 ‘Griffith and his National Council had declared as their aim the Repeal of the Union and the Establishment of the King, Lords and Commons of Ireland as the Irish Government, on the lines of 1782’.⁶⁰ The implication, that the ‘declaration’ for the King, Lords and Commons was subsequent to the publication of *The Resurrection of Hungary* and *The Sinn Féin Policy*, was accepted at face value by Richard Davis in 1974, but is not borne out in accounts of the organisation written in 1907.⁶¹ Another founder of the National Council, Seumas MacManus, writing in the *North American Review* following the debacle of the 1907 Irish Councils Bill, and somewhat optimistically predicting the imminent disintegration of the Parliamentary Party, described the Sinn Féin policy as one of setting up an administration in Ireland to develop education, the language, agriculture and industry, but also to ‘plan and direct the carrying on of a resistance (both passive and active) to all British law’.⁶² While it made reference to the Renunciation Act, it did not hold up Grattan’s Parliament as the end to which Sinn Féin aspired; rather, he said, ‘The struggle shall go on till Ireland’s rights, complete, sovereign and independent, are wrung from the power that has so long held them wrongfully’ (MacManus’s outlook was closer to Griffith’s than to Hobson’s).⁶³ In response, Tom Kettle, now opposed to Sinn Féin since it was clear that it was never going to be an ally of the Party, derided MacManus’s article as merely playing with words, saying that he claimed for the National Council the policies and achievements of the Gaelic League, the Irish Industrial Association and the cooperative movement. The true

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

⁵⁹ Davis, *Arthur Griffith*, p. 23.

⁶⁰ Bureau of Military History, WS 82 (Bulmer Hobson), p. 9; Hobson, *Yesterday and Tomorrow*, p. 10.

⁶¹ Davis, *Arthur Griffith*, p. 29.

⁶² Seumas MacManus, ‘Sinn Fein’, *North American Review* 185:621 (1907), p. 829.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 836.

genesis of Sinn Féin, he said, was as a remnant of the physical force tradition.⁶⁴ And what was its aim? ‘The answer is Babel. An independent Republic; an independent Monarchy; an Austro-Hungarian Union; Grattan's Parliament, and a whole medley of vaguer notions.’⁶⁵ Not only was Kettle not aware of any ‘declaration’ in favour of Grattan’s Parliament, but that option was fourth on his list, far behind an Irish Republic.

A 1907 book composed of articles from *The Outlook*, a conservative British political magazine, written by a southern unionist, with a foreword by Walter Long, former Chief Secretary for Ireland and current leader of the Irish Unionist Alliance, considered the history and objects of the United Irish League, the Ancient Order of Hibernians, the Gaelic League and several other bodies, and concluded that ‘in all the Nationalist organisations...a policy of greed and coercion is dominant’, and that nationalists were ‘bound in fetters of steel, or driven like sheep by the wirepullers of the organisations in which they are involved.’⁶⁶ Of Sinn Féin it said that there was ‘much to admire’ in its programme of self-reliance, which ‘casts aside the mean traditions of Irish mendicancy and calls on the Irish people to rely on themselves and themselves alone.’ In this respect, it said, it ‘stands out bravely from all other Irish organisations’.⁶⁷ Its ‘avowedly seditious object’ was another matter:

Is there the remotest ground for a reasonable hope that the Sinn Feiners would, under Home Rule, be induced to relax their determined opposition to the British connection? Of course, it is entirely the other way. They announce, in the plainest language, that while they repudiate the principle of Irish representation in an English Parliament, they will take the utmost advantage of anything done by that Parliament which is a step in the direction of separation and the establishment of an independent Republic.⁶⁸

The purpose of this book was to show the diversity of the (stated) objectives of the various nationalist organisations, and the contrast between their stated objectives and what the writer perceived as their actual positions. Having said that Sinn Féin ‘stands out bravely’ for self-reliance, there was no propagandistic or other reason not also to state that it ‘stands out’ in advocating a shared monarch, if that was in fact the case.

⁶⁴ T.M. Kettle, ‘A note on Sinn Féin in Ireland’, *North American Review* 187:626 (1908), pp. 48-9.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

⁶⁶ Anon., *National Organisations in Ireland* (London, 1907), pp. 7-8.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

Hobson's retrospective view of Griffith and the National Council was not shared by his contemporaries, even his closest colleagues. When his witness statement, at his request, was sent to others for comment, Denis McCullough, who had founded the Dungannon Clubs with Hobson, said that 'the opinion of Griffith expressed by Hobson is purely a personal one which I share in no way', while Patrick McCartan, under the heading 'King, Lords and Commons', said, 'I don't remember this declaration by the National Council.'⁶⁹ McCullough told Richard Davis in 1957 that he could 'say with confidence that no question of incompatibility between Griffith's "Hungarian Policy" and the frank republicanism of the IRB, ever existed.'⁷⁰

Hobson's writings suggest a desire to highlight his own contribution to the revolution of 1916–22 while playing down that of Griffith. Hobson was loath to admit that his political views were influenced by Griffith, even going so far as to claim that the concept of Sinn Féin had been independently formulated in Belfast at the same time as Griffith was expounding it in Dublin.⁷¹ He describes the Belfast Dungannon Club as 'thirty or forty young men at a white heat of enthusiasm.'⁷² It was 'the most vital political organism I have ever known', and it 'set itself the task of uniting Protestant and Catholic Irishmen to achieve the independence of Ireland.'⁷³ Hobson, by his own account, addressed meetings five or six nights a week, and often 'left my office at one o'clock on Saturday and spoke in London or Glasgow on Sunday and was back at work at 9 a.m. on Monday.'⁷⁴ The difference between the Dungannon Club(s) and the National Council was that

The National Council aimed at building up a political and economic organisation on conventional lines, whereas the Dungannon Clubs sought really to create an intense conviction and a passionate faith among a necessarily small number of people. Griffith looked to local and parliamentary elections, to economic exposition of a logical and hard-headed character, and used satire with great skill and effect. We, in the Club, while advancing much the same arguments, sought to give them an emotional content and force, and an intensity of conviction, with the definite aim of creating an unbreakable psychological strength which would compensate for the

⁶⁹ BMH, WS 111 (Denis McCullough), p. 2; WS 99 (Patrick McCartan), p. 6.

⁷⁰ Davis, *Arthur Griffith*, p. 26.

⁷¹ Marnie Hay, *Bulmer Hobson and the Nationalist Movement in Twentieth-century Ireland* (Manchester, 2009), p. 46.

⁷² Hobson, *Yesterday and Tomorrow*, p. 8.

⁷³ *Ibid.* pp. 21–2.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 25–6.

inevitable material weakness of the Irish movement, as compared with the power of Britain to crush it.⁷⁵

All of which says nothing more than that the southerners were cerebral, ineffectual and dull, while the northerners were passionate, strong and inspiring. He goes on to say that Griffith ‘supplied the façade of the policy’, but it was the men of the Dungannon Clubs who ‘supplied the driving force to organise the country’.⁷⁶ Later he says that while Griffith merely wrote against enlistment in the *United Irishman* – ‘preaching to the saved’ – the Dungannon Clubs printed leaflets, co-written by Alice Stopford Green and Roger Casement, ‘to cover large parts of the country.’⁷⁷ There is, however, no evidence of any part of Ireland being organised by people from Belfast and its environs in the 1900s, or that the Green/Casement leaflet was more widely circulated or more effective than other anti-enlistment literature of the time. The ‘white heat of enthusiasm’ seems not to have lasted very long: Denis McCullough recalled that when Hobson moved to Dublin in 1907, he ‘had to carry on largely on my own, as there were no others of our vintage left with whom I could co-operate...And so time moved on with little to show for our work’.⁷⁸

Hobson went further, claiming that the Dungannon Clubs ‘did not want any definition [of independence] that would exclude anybody’, while Griffith and the National Council ‘definitely wanted the repeal of the Union and the establishment of the King, Lords and Commons of Ireland’.⁷⁹ Even on the evidence of his own book, that is manifestly untrue. Hobson quoted from the first issue of *The Republic*, the organ of the Dungannon Clubs started by him in 1906: ‘We stand for an Irish Republic because we see that no compromise with England, no repeal of the Union, no concession of Home Rule, or Devolution will satisfy the national aspirations of the Irish people’; and from a 1907 article by P.S. O’Hegarty of the London Dungannon Club: ‘We are today at the outset of the fullest and most complete expression of militant Irish Nationalism yet reached’.⁸⁰ He admitted that the clubs had had ‘no hope and little desire’ to convert large numbers of people, and gloried in the fact that at one meeting they were attacked by members of the Irish National Foresters and defended by members of the Ancient Order of Hibernians,

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 22, quoted in M.J. Kelly, *The Fenian Ideal and Irish Nationalism, 1882-1916* (Woodbridge, 2006), p. 185, and Keiron Curtis, *P. S. O’Hegarty (1879-1955): Sinn Féin Fenian* (London, 2012), pp. 17-18.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 24.

⁷⁸ BMH, WS 915 (Denis McCullough), pp. 6-7.

⁷⁹ Hobson, *Yesterday and Tomorrow*, pp. 12-13.

⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 28-9.

knowing well that had the Foresters not made the first move, it would have been the other way round.⁸¹ Those members of the movement who were not republicans were referred to as ‘82 men’, and were seen as trying to undermine the separatists.⁸² Thus it was Hobson and O’Hegarty who were insisting on a narrow policy, and Griffith who ‘did not want any definition that would exclude anybody’. Griffith’s position, O’Hegarty relates, was ‘that the mass of the people were not separatists, and would not actively support a rigidly separatist policy.’ Even as O’Hegarty argued with him, he did accept ‘that the prospect of their doing so was sufficiently remote’ to justify ambiguity in the constitutional policy of the movement.⁸³ Patrick McCartan, in the comments on Hobson’s witness statement referred to earlier, said ‘Griffith was never hostile to a Republic nor Republicanism but a Republic did not appeal to the masses as they considered its attainment impossible.’⁸⁴

Another critic of *The Resurrection* was Terence MacSwiney of the Cork Celtic Literary Society. He was enthusiastic when the book was first published, helping to distribute a large number of copies ‘to assist in spreading the general idea supplied – that is self-reliance in political work’. Only later did he find himself in disagreement with the idea of taking a stand on the 1783 Renunciation Act, saying, ‘the Act of 83 – any argument to the contrary notwithstanding – recognises the connection between the two countries in recognising the King of England as Ireland’s king, and I am against it...considering it with Wolfe Tone to be the source of all the country’s misfortunes.’⁸⁵ MacSwiney found an ally when the Belfast nationalist Alice Milligan – friend and mentor of Bulmer Hobson – visited Cork, and the two talked of writing a pamphlet against ‘the 82 idea’. The pamphlet was never written because Milligan wanted it to be based on the ‘Fenian test’; that, to MacSwiney, was suggestive of a secret society, with which he also disagreed.⁸⁶ MacSwiney was not infrequently at variance with his colleagues in the Celtic Literary Society, including Liam de Róiste and Seán Milroy, and temporarily resigned from the society in 1905 over the issue of starting a branch of the National Council in Cork.⁸⁷

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 26.

⁸² Michael Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland: The Sinn Féin Party 1916-1923* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 24-5; Davis, *Arthur Griffith*, pp. 29-31; *The Republic*, 18 April 1907.

⁸³ P.S. O’Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Féin: How it Won it, and How it Used it* (Dublin, 1924), pp. 30-1.

⁸⁴ BMH, WS 99 (Patrick McCartan), p. 6.

⁸⁵ Terence MacSwiney diaries, 22 April 1905. UCD Archives, P48c/100, p. 79.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Terence MacSwiney diaries, 18 September 1905. UCD Archives, P48c/100, p. 123.

Notwithstanding Hobson, O’Hegarty and MacSwiney’s fixation with the idea of conflict between ‘republic’ and ‘monarchy’, the constitution of any country goes far beyond the title by which the head of state is known. In the 1900s there were a number of constitutional models to choose from, ranging from Russian-style autocracy through American-style democracy to the socialism of the Second International. This last was the choice of James Connolly’s small, Dublin-based Irish Socialist Republican Party, but for the majority of Irish nationalists, the two most familiar models were British-style liberalism and French-style republicanism. British-style liberalism was the model of choice for nationalist political leaders from Daniel O’Connell to John Redmond, and therefore of Irish nationalists in general. It envisaged the handover of power to an Irish parliament in Dublin under an otherwise unchanging constitution. French-style republicanism, on the other hand, was viewed with suspicion by most ordinary nationalists, not only because of its association with revolution and bloodshed, but also because of its anticlericalism.

Irish Catholics were alarmed by the policies of the French Third Republic. In 1905, the year Griffith presented the *Sinn Féin Policy*, the French government passed the Law on the Separation of Church and State, which unilaterally revoked the 1801 Concordat with Napoleon and transferred church property to state ownership. Pope Pius X responded by issuing the encyclical *Vehementer Nos*, in which he ‘reprove[d] and condemn[ed] it as gravely offensive to the dignity of this Apostolic See, to Our own person, to the Episcopacy, and to the clergy and all the Catholics of France.’⁸⁸ When, as a consequence of that law, Monsignor Carlo Montagnini was expelled from France in December 1906, and his papers seized, at least thirty local government bodies across Ireland passed resolutions of protest. A number of them adopted a resolution passed by the Queenstown Urban District Council which protested ‘against the tyrannical treatment to which the Catholic prelates and clergy of France have been subjected by an atheistical Government’.⁸⁹ Cardinal Logue’s Lenten pastoral of February 1907 was devoted to the affair, which, he said, ‘only emphasises a fact that cannot be dissembled, that of all the forms of government in Europe the present rulers of France have proved that a republic

⁸⁸ Pius X, *Vehementer Nos*, 11 February 1906. The Holy See (http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-x/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-x_enc_11021906_vehementer-nos.html).

⁸⁹ ‘Dungarvan Urban Council’, *Munster Express*, 5 January 1907.

can be the most tyrannical.’⁹⁰ An appeal to republican sentiment at that moment in time was unlikely to be very productive.

In addition, home rulers referred to themselves as ‘constitutionalists’, thus implying that republicans, whether or not they advocated physical force, were ‘unconstitutional’.⁹¹ It was in this context that Griffith invoked the ‘Constitution of ’82’, to show that anti-parliamentarians could be fully as constitutional as parliamentarians. In the early 1900s, Cumann na nGaedheal already existed to preach republicanism to the converted; any new movement, to be worth the trouble of starting, needed to appeal to the masses, to ‘constitutionalists’.

The great majority of republicans had no problem with this ‘halfway house’, seeing it as a means to an end. Thus Denis McCullough wrote in his witness statement that he ‘was most anxious for the development of [the Hungarian] policy, which I felt must eventually lead to armed action, while the Movement itself would be an excellent cover for the continued activities of the IRB’.⁹² Seán T. O’Kelly was, by his own account, ‘a very active recruiter and organiser’ for the Bartholomew Teeling Circle of the IRB in Dublin, yet joined Sinn Féin at its formation in 1905 and ‘took quite an active part in it from that time on’, while fully aware of the doubts expressed by O’Hegarty and others.⁹³

Outside the cities these ‘constitutional’ questions do not appear to have arisen. In several parts of Ireland, it was the leading separatists – all, or nearly all, IRB men – who set up branches of the National Council: Tom Kenny in Craughwell, County Galway, Tomás Ó Lochlainn in Carron, County Clare, Paddy Hughes and Thomas Hearty in Dundalk, William Sears in Enniscorthy, Joseph O’Flaherty in Loughrea, Frank Lawless in Swords, County Dublin.⁹⁴ In none of those places is there any record of a debate over the admission of non-republican members to the Sinn Féin organisation, or over the constitution of 1782. Kenny, a prominent member of the local GAA, was sworn into the

⁹⁰ ‘Armagh’, *Cork Examiner*, 11 February 1907.

⁹¹ Dermot Meleady, *Redmond: the Parnellite* (Cork, 2008), p. 202; ‘Speech of Mr. Wm. O’Brien’, *Cork Examiner*, 8 January 1900.

⁹² BMH, WS 915 (Denis McCullough), p.1.

⁹³ BMH, WS 1765 (Seán T. O’Kelly), pp. 3, 21.

⁹⁴ Fergus Campbell, *Land and Revolution: Nationalist Politics in the West of Ireland 1891-1921* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 172-3; David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life, 1913-1921: Provincial Experience of War and Revolution* (Dublin, 1977), pp. 113,114; BMH WS 232 (Thomas Hamill), p. 1; WS 26 (P.S. O’Hegarty), p. 8; WS 1043 (Joseph V. Lawless), p. 9.

IRB by John MacBride in 1905, left the United Irish League for the National Council the following year after reading *The Resurrection of Hungary*, and founded the National Council Craughwell branch in early 1907.⁹⁵ Described in police reports as ‘one of the most advanced IRB men in the country...in touch with all the leaders of that movement’, he brought a number of members of Craughwell hurling club into Sinn Féin by having them also read *The Resurrection of Hungary*.⁹⁶

Marnie Hay, the biographer of Bulmer Hobson, speaks of the tension that existed ‘between the periphery (Belfast) and the centre (Dublin), represented by Hobson and Griffith respectively.’⁹⁷ A quick survey of the periphery from west Galway around to Louth suggests that this tension was not the norm. Indeed, while Hobson and O’Hegarty sometimes appear to have been consumed by this ‘struggle’ with Griffith and the Dublin people, there is little evidence that it impacted on Dublin Sinn Féiners very much at all. The correspondence of John Sweetman, vice-president of the National Council at this time, does not include any reference to it before late 1907, when the question of amalgamation with the Dungannon Clubs and Cumann na nGaedheal was about to be decided.⁹⁸

Books published after 1907 include *The Pope's Green Island* by W.P. Ryan and *One Irish Summer* by William Eleroy Curtis. Curtis, an American travel writer, included a short chapter on Sinn Féin in *One Irish Summer*. It was uncomplimentary but very well informed.⁹⁹ Ryan, an advanced nationalist and former editor of the *Irish Nation*, briefly described Sinn Féin's 'rather spacious and heroic programme', but was equally sceptical about its long-term prospects. Of Bulmer Hobson and others he said that they ‘were amongst those attracted at first, but they did not find official Sinn Fein quite bold enough or congenial enough.’¹⁰⁰ Neither writer made any mention of monarchy.

In 1917 a controversy arose between Griffith and Cathal Brugha when Brugha insisted that the Sinn Féin constitution state as an object the establishment of an Irish Republic,

⁹⁵ Campbell, *Land and Revolution*, pp. 172-3.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

⁹⁷ Hay, *Bulmer Hobson*, p. 46.

⁹⁸ National Library of Ireland, Sweetman Family Papers, MSS. 47,585-47,587.

⁹⁹ William Eleroy Curtis, *One Irish Summer* (New York, 1909), pp. 202-8.

¹⁰⁰ W.P. Ryan, *The Pope's Green Island* (London, 1912), pp. 316-7.

and Griffith resisted that object's inclusion. Agreement was finally reached on a compromise, proposed by Éamon de Valera, whereby the constitution would state that the object of Sinn Féin was to achieve independence as a republic, but that having achieved that independence the Irish people might choose by referendum what kind of government they wanted. That episode is the subject of a later chapter of this thesis, where it will be argued that Griffith's position did not amount to a demand for a monarchy. It is sufficient here to note that during that year the (pre-Ard Fheis) organisation was never portrayed as monarchist in character in the national or local press. In fact, an article in the *Freeman's Journal* in September pointed to the absurdity of a republican party [Sinn Féin] having the 'Hungarian policy' as one of its planks: 'Ferenc Deak's party were the Liberal patriots – the moderates, the Redmondites, so to speak, of Hungary. And to-day we have Irish Republicans trying to shelter under Deak's mantle.'¹⁰¹ Even the detailed report of the Ard Fheis prepared for the Chief Commissioner of the Dublin Metropolitan Police makes no reference to the organisation having been hitherto a monarchist one, although it does report – without comment – de Valera's remarks on the inclusion of an Irish Republic in the revised constitution.¹⁰²

Among the books published in and after 1917 are Francis P. Jones's *History of the Sinn Féin Movement*, Diarmuid Coffey's *Douglas Hyde* and Robert Mitchell Henry's *Evolution of Sinn Fein*. Jones was an emigrant to the United States and a former activist who referred to Griffith as a friend and was also on close terms with Tom Clarke and Seán MacDermott. His *History of the Sinn Fein Movement* devoted over 50 pages to the origins of Sinn Féin, without making any mention of 'King, Lords and Commons'.¹⁰³ Jones's view of Sinn Féin was largely based on the 1905 'Sinn Féin Policy' which, it may be remembered, made no mention of Grattan's Parliament or the Renunciation Act. In dealing with the relationship between Sinn Féin and the IRB in the years before the war, Jones said simply that 'in effect their aims were identical', and that they differed only on the necessity for physical force (he added that Griffith had always believed that there would ultimately have to be a resort to arms).¹⁰⁴ Clarke, MacDermott and others moved away from Sinn Féin at that time, according to Jones, because they disagreed with its

¹⁰¹ 'Ulad', 'Hungarian Policy: Fallacy of Sinn Fein History Exposed', *Freeman's Journal*, 22 September 1917.

¹⁰² Dublin Castle Records, CO 904/23: Sinn Fein Convention 1917.

¹⁰³ Francis P. Jones, *History of the Sinn Fein Movement and the Irish Rebellion of 1916* (New York, 1917), pp. 1-51.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

decision not to actively oppose the Irish Party while the Home Rule Bill was being debated; he did not suggest that there was any disagreement over ideology.¹⁰⁵ Jones's book had an introduction by the American Fenian Judge John W. Goff, who similarly failed to detect any attachment to a monarchy in the teachings of the Sinn Féin organisation.¹⁰⁶

Coffey, a personal friend of Douglas Hyde, and a member of the original Volunteers where he was secretary to Colonel Maurice Moore and took part in the Kilcoole gunrunning in 1914,¹⁰⁷ devoted several pages of his biography of Hyde to the history of Sinn Féin and its relationship with the Gaelic League from its formation to the Gaelic League Ard Fheis of 1915.¹⁰⁸ Coffey thought it 'natural [that] a movement advocating that Ireland should completely ignore the connection with England, should boycott the English Parliament, and should behave as though she were an independent country, was much drawn towards the Gaelic League', and that 'it was equally natural for Gaelic Leaguers to be attracted by Sinn Fein.'¹⁰⁹ Again, this description contains no hint of a monarchist ideology.

Robert Mitchell Henry's *The Evolution of Sinn Fein* was published in 1920. Henry was another ardent Gaelic Leaguer who saw the creation of Sinn Féin in the context of the previous work of Hyde and the Gaelic League.¹¹⁰ Of Sinn Féin he said that it was 'an expression in political theory and action of the claim of Ireland to be a nation, with all the practical consequences which such a claim involves. It differs from previous national movements principally in the policy which it outlines for the attainment of its ultimate end, the independence of Ireland'.¹¹¹ He correctly said that

It was strictly constitutional...While the Parliamentary Party claimed to be the only constitutional party by its use of the forms of the existing constitution, Sinn Fein laid claim to the merit of a superior constitutionalism. It relied upon the Renunciation Act of 1783...¹¹²

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 146.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., ix-xi.

¹⁰⁷ Diarmuid Breathnach and Máire Ní Mhurchú, 'Coffey, Diarmuid (1888–1964)', *Ainm.ie* [<https://www.ainm.ie/Bio.aspx?ID=415>].

¹⁰⁸ Diarmuid Ó Cobhthaigh, *Douglas Hyde: An Craoibhín Aoibhinn* (Dublin, 1917), pp. 44–51.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 46.

¹¹⁰ Robert Mitchell Henry, *The Evolution of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1920), pp. 47–50.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 50.

¹¹² Ibid., pp. 51–2.

But he concluded that '[Griffith's] claim was not a Republic but a national constitution under an Irish Crown.'¹¹³ Henry described the founding of *Irish Freedom* by Hobson, O'Hegarty and others as the start of 'the movement which eventually drove out of Sinn Fein the idea of the re-establishment of the King, Lords and Commons of Ireland under the Constitution of 1782 and replaced it by that of an Irish Republic.' He quoted an early editorial in that paper which said that 'the Irish Nation must be built on Sinn Fein principles, or non-recognition of British authority, law, justice or legislature', but that the movement was 'temporarily suspended because some of its leaders directed it into an '82 movement, thinking they could collar the middle classes and drop the separatists.'¹¹⁴ The statement of the *Irish Freedom* point of view is hardly surprising; as a Protestant Belfast nationalist, Henry would have had every opportunity to speak to Hobson, and would likely have taken anything he said at face value. This view of a perpetual struggle between Sinn Féin and the republicans does not permeate the book, however. Henry wrote of the amalgamation of the Belfast Dungannon Club with the West Belfast Branch of the National Council in 1907 without any surprise, or suggestion that their aims were incompatible.¹¹⁵ Subsequently, references to the Sinn Féin organisation were of the form 'Sinn Fein and the Republican Party', which, while drawing the distinction between them, nevertheless suggested a unity of purpose and action.¹¹⁶ And describing the 1917 Ard Fheis, he said that in electing de Valera as president Sinn Féin 'silently and without any formal repudiation of its previous constitutional attitude accepted the Republican programme'.¹¹⁷

At this time, too, the first of P. S. O'Hegarty's books was published, a slim volume entitled *Sinn Fein: An Illumination*. O'Hegarty was a fiery and impulsive character whose beliefs changed several times in the course of his life, and often in the course of a few years. A passionate believer in physical force in the 1900s and early 1910s, by 1919 he was condemning in hysterical tones the violence of his erstwhile comrades; yet when he came to write the history of the period in 1952 he was again exalting them with suitable

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 107, 109, 130, 133, 138, 149, 166.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 240.

militaristic imagery.¹¹⁸ He wrote without deliberation, and copied the contents of his articles directly into his books, so that in *The Victory of Sinn Fein*, for instance, he occasionally contradicted himself.¹¹⁹ Where he was consistent, however, was in always portraying himself as the guardian of ideological purity, forever defending it against its enemies. In the 1900s, the perceived enemy of the true faith was Arthur Griffith, but not so in the late 1910s. As Frances Flanagan put it, his 'sense of obligation to this unalterable nationalist spirit led him to adopt a series of contradictory positions over time, as he placed his allegiance with nationalists he thought to be more "purely" Separatist: Hobson and MacSwiney against Griffith; Griffith against Collins; Griffith against de Valera...'.¹²⁰

In *An Illumination*, O'Hegarty echoed Hobson's later assertion that Griffith 'definitely' wanted to base his movement on the constitution of 1782 (though not that he 'definitely' wanted the repeal of the Union'), but gave an accurate if somewhat biased description of the state of the organisation in 1907:

It was really composed of two sections one, led by Mr. Griffith, wished to base the movement definitely on the Constitution of 1782 and the Renunciation Act of 1783, and the other composed of the Separatists was for independence pure and simple. As a compromise, the object of the movement was defined as "the re-establishment of the Independence of Ireland," which satisfied the Separatists, with an addendum committing it, as a minimum, to the "King, Lords and Commons" solution, which satisfied the others. Both sections were agreed as to the general lines of policy.¹²¹

More significant, however, is O'Hegarty's description of Griffith the man. Far from depicting him as some milk-and-water repealer, O'Hegarty states that he 'is not alone the ablest Irishman now alive, but the ablest Irishman since John Mitchel, and the only political thinker since Mitchel who has displayed the statesman's mind...it may be said that no man alive is more responsible for the Fenian spirit in Ireland than Griffith. From 1899 to 1911 the "United Irishman" and its successor, "Sinn Fein," were the chief inspiration of all extreme propaganda and extreme discussion in Ireland'.¹²²

¹¹⁸ Frances Flanagan, *Remembering the Revolution: Dissent, Culture, and Nationalism in the Irish Free State* (Oxford, 2015), pp. 82-3.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

¹²¹ P.S. O'Hegarty, *Sinn Fein: An Illumination* (Dublin, 1919), p. 25.

¹²² *Ibid.*, pp. 28-9.

Writing in *Studies* in 1922, immediately after Griffith's death, O'Hegarty did not repeat the 'King, Lords and Commons' comment; rather, he said that Griffith 'was all his life a Separatist and a physical force man of the old philosophic school', and that 'the IRB never quarrelled with Griffith but always worked with him and recognised him for what he was, the greatest Separatist force in the country.'¹²³ In his best-known book, *The Victory of Sinn Fein*, he presented a somewhat different version of the 1907 amalgamation from the one he gave in *Illumination*. Where in the earlier book, he had said that Griffith 'wished to base the movement definitely on the Constitution of 1782 and the Renunciation Act', in *Victory* he said only that there had been 'a question whether the constitution of the amalgamated organisation should be a rigidly separatist one or whether it should cover also the Dual Monarchy idea', and that Griffith had argued privately 'that the mass of the people were not separatists, and would not actively support a rigidly separatist policy.'¹²⁴ In a separate chapter written immediately after Griffith's death, he wrote of 'the greatness of the man', and said, in the identical wording to his *Studies* tribute, that Griffith 'was all his life a separatist and a physical force man of the old philosophic school'.¹²⁵

There was only a single reference to 'King, Lords and Commons' during the Treaty debates of December 1921 – January 1922. It came from Mary MacSwiney, Terence MacSwiney's sister, after an ill-advised joke by W. T. Cosgrave about it being the basis of the Sinn Féin movement in the early days. MacSwiney, in the course of a long speech, responded that it was 'perfectly true of many Members here' that they had been 'members of Sinn Fein once together, and all Sinn Fein stood for then was the King, Lords, and Commons of Ireland.' She said it was 'absolutely true to say that that Treaty as it is given to you was the be-all and the end-all of Sinn Fein's existence up to 1918. It is the darling and the pet of Mr. Arthur Griffith's life...He did not believe in a Republic.'¹²⁶ But Mary MacSwiney had never had any connection with Sinn Féin before 1917, and was not party to the negotiations that preceded the Ard Fheis of that year. She spoke on Thursday, 21 December, the third day of the (public) debate on the Treaty, yet none of the subsequent speakers agreed with or even made reference to her description of early Sinn Féin. Old Sinn Féiners such as Liam de Róiste, William Sears or Pádraic Ó Máille did not say that

¹²³ P.S. O'Hegarty, 'Arthur Griffith IV', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, 2:2 (September 1922), p. 354.

¹²⁴ O'Hegarty, *Victory of Sinn Fein*, pp. 30–1.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 128, 134.

¹²⁶ Dáil Debates, vol. T, no. 8, Wednesday, 21 December 1921, col. 110.

they approved of the Treaty because they were, or had once been, monarchists at heart, just as old Sinn Féiners who opposed the Treaty, such as Constance Markievicz or Seán T. O’Kelly, did not say that they had once been monarchists but had experienced a Damascene conversion in 1917. Cathal Brugha, in a speech as trenchant as MacSwiney’s, recalled that in the autumn of 1917 he had argued with Griffith for three successive days because Griffith opposed the addition of a clause in the Sinn Féin constitution calling for an Irish Republic. He said that if Griffith had not accepted de Valera’s compromise wording at that time, ‘he would not be in public life to-day any more than he was before 1916.’¹²⁷ He did not, however, say that Griffith had opposed the Republic itself, or that he had declared himself a monarchist. If Griffith had done that in 1917, it is certain that Brugha would have said so in unambiguous terms in the December 1921 debate. More interesting still is Éamon de Valera’s recollection of the event. He also did not say that at that time Griffith had held out for a monarchy – something that would have been repugnant to him – but rather, he said that when, on his release from prison in 1917, he had found Griffith and Brugha in disagreement, he ‘found that I was a sort of connecting link between the two, and at the first Convention of Sinn Féin, or a night or two before it, we devised a basis on which we have worked so successfully for the past four years: the basis of the Sinn Féin Constitution.’¹²⁸

J. J. O’Kelly (*Sceilg*), who was also a party to the 1917 negotiations, and who in his 1956 witness statement would say, ‘Griffith’s organisation had no real influence. People would not have rallied to it at all if Arthur Griffith had continued to rule it. He never wanted a Republic, he wanted a kingdom – wherever the king was to come from!’, spoke passionately against the Oath of Allegiance, and Griffith’s acceptance of it, in the debate on 22 December, but without ever suggesting that Griffith’s motive for accepting it was anything other than the belief that at that moment it was something that could be accepted with honour, and certainly not that a monarchy was ‘the darling and the pet of Mr. Arthur Griffith’s life’. Of Griffith himself he said that ‘in the old days...heedless of an unheeding world, [he] ploughed the lonely furrow and was not less sound than he is to-day. I

¹²⁷ Dáil Debates, vol. T, no. 15, Saturday, 7 January 1922, col. 332.

¹²⁸ Dáil Debates, vol. T, no. 14, Friday, 6 January 1922, col. 272.

respected and trusted Arthur Griffith ploughing the lonely furrow; I have lost confidence in Arthur Griffith, the plenipotentiary.’¹²⁹

Six months after the Treaty debates came the sudden death of Griffith. Surely now was the time that friends, associates, commentators and indeed opponents could talk freely about his abiding affection for the monarchy and his dream of an independent Ireland sharing a king with England, if that had been his sentiment and his dream, especially since there was now a provisional government in place and the ‘dream’, in the 26 counties at least, was a reality. Nobody did. The Irish newspapers, for instance, described him in various terms in the days after his death, but never as an advocate of dual monarchy. It might be argued that, in the aftermath of the Treaty debates and the outbreak of civil war, supporters of Griffith were sensitive to republican charges that he, and the other members of the delegation, had betrayed the Republic, but Michael Collins, for one, showed no such sensitivity. In his 1922 book, *The Path to Freedom*, Collins had said that ‘we strove for a greater measure of freedom under the name of a Republic. But it was freedom we sought for, not the name of the form of government we should adopt when we got our freedom.’¹³⁰ He had restated this position several times throughout the book, and it would not have weakened his argument, or made him any more vulnerable to accusations of apostasy, if he had said that Sinn Féin had once advocated a monarchy, yet he did not.

Even *Poblacht na hÉireann*, an anti-Treaty paper edited by Erskine Childers, whom Griffith had attacked in the Dáil as a ‘damned Englishman’, wrote, ‘We, too, lament the death of Arthur Griffith, Third President of the Republic’. Criticising Collins for using Griffith’s death for propaganda purposes, it said, ‘To demand the surrender of Republican arms on the coffin of the President of the Republic is not the way to secure peace.’ The piece finished with a quote from Griffith himself: ‘The history of every nation is the success or failure of an ideal.’¹³¹ In death, Griffith was represented, even by his enemies, as a republican and as somebody who shared their ideology.

If there was a popular perception in August 1922 that Griffith and Sinn Féin had stood for a dual monarchy until 1917, then his friends and supporters would best have countered

¹²⁹ BMH, WS 384 (J.J. (Sceilg) O’Kelly), p. 19; Dáil Debates, vol. T, no. 9, Thursday, 22 December 1921, col. 137.3

¹³⁰ Michael Collins, *The Path to Freedom* (Dublin, 1922), p. 37.

¹³¹ ‘Arthur Griffith’, *Poblacht na hÉireann War News*, 15 August 1922.

accusations that he had betrayed the Republic by stressing that he had been a staunch republican *after* 1917. Instead, they stressed that he was consistent in his nationalism throughout his life. In September, the Jesuit quarterly *Studies* carried appreciations from four contributors. Alice Stopford Green wrote of Griffith's tireless work for Irish nationality over thirty years. There was no mention of monarchy. She did, however, say that Irish nationalists, 'whether they have been drawn into one side or the other of the present conflict...will tell with the same emotion how they saw in their youth the shining of the new light flashed out by Griffith in dark places.'¹³² This is totally at odds with the notion of a nationalist Ireland divided between republicans and Griffithite monarchists. James Stephens, a friend of Griffith's since the days of the *United Irishman*, wrote an intensely personal piece, without any reference to Griffith's politics, except to say that he had seen 'a free Ireland, that he had helped to free', and to compare him to Pearse, Connolly and MacBride.¹³³ As previously noted, P.S. O'Hegarty described Griffith as 'the greatest Separatist force in the country.'¹³⁴ Only R.M. Henry, who had never been close to Griffith or his movement, repeated the claim that at one time Griffith 'had advocated the restoration of "the King, Lords and Commons of Ireland," not an Irish Republic.'¹³⁵

Griffith was remembered, too, in *The Voice of Ireland*, a book published in 1923 containing reflections on the revolution from both sides of the Treaty divide.¹³⁶ One of Griffith's oldest friends, *Sean-Ghall* (Henry Egan Kelly), said of the 1916 Rising that Griffith subsequently 'turned that apparent fiasco into dazzling success.'¹³⁷ Liam Ó Briain, who became close to Griffith after 1916, told how Griffith had been asked to join the IRB Supreme Council in the lead-up to the Rising, and related Griffith's actions during Easter Week, including his agreement with Eoin MacNeill to issue a call for a general rising.¹³⁸ The book also included an account by Mary Ellen Butler (who died in 1920, before the Treaty) of Griffith's launching of the Sinn Féin Policy in 1905, which

¹³² Alice Stopford Green, 'Arthur Griffith I', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, 2:2 (September 1922), p. 344.

¹³³ James Stephens, 'Arthur Griffith II', *ibid.*, pp. 346, 348.

¹³⁴ P.S. O'Hegarty, 'Arthur Griffith IV', *ibid.*, p. 354.

¹³⁵ R.M. Henry, 'Arthur Griffith III', *ibid.*, p. 352.

¹³⁶ Flanagan, *Remembering the Revolution*, p. 12.

¹³⁷ *Sean-Ghall* (Henry Egan Kelly), 'Arthur Griffith', in William Fitzgerald (ed.), *The Voice of Ireland: A Survey of the Race and Nation from All Angles by the Foremost Leaders at Home and Abroad* (Dublin, 1923), p. 102.

¹³⁸ Liam Ó Briain, 'The Historic Rising of Easter Week, 1916', in *ibid.*, pp. 132–9.

she described in terms of ‘a sovereign state in every sense of the term.’¹³⁹ None of them made any mention of monarchy. *Sean-Ghall* also co-wrote a booklet, *Arthur Griffith, Michael Collins*, published in 1922. His half of the booklet, ‘Arthur Griffith’, numbering 13 pages, told of Griffith’s work for Ireland, from the first days of the *United Irishman* until his death, again with no mention of monarchy. Indeed, he described a 1904 meeting between Griffith and the Fenian leaders John O’Leary and Mark Ryan, when they expressed scepticism of the Hungarian policy, not because of its reliance on the Constitution of 1782, but because of its stress on abstentionism and passive resistance; they were reassured when Griffith satisfied them that the country would rise when the time came.¹⁴⁰ Like James Stephens in *Studies*, *Sean-Ghall* invoked the 1916 leaders, saying, ‘The O’Rahilly, Sean MacDermott, James Connolly, Padraic Pearse, and other heroes of Easter Week found no more congenial topic of conversation, for many years, with me than the laudation of the Master.’¹⁴¹ Another friend of Griffith’s younger days, George Lyons, published a book in 1923 which again dealt with their friendship, and Griffith’s activities, in the years 1899–1916, and in which again monarchy or monarchism failed to appear.¹⁴²

Two books appeared in 1923 by two very different authors, both of whom were outside of the events of the revolutionary period, though neither was by any means neutral. The unionist Alison Phillips was ‘the first professional historian to assess the rising in a comprehensive way’, and remained the only one up until the 1960s.¹⁴³ In *The Revolution in Ireland*, Phillips portrayed Sinn Féin as the successor of the separatist ’98 clubs. Griffith, though he was not, ‘openly at least a Republican, but advanced the restoration of the Constitution of 1782 as the legal foundation of the Irish claim to nationhood’, nevertheless wrote as a republican. Far from seeing an ideological difference between Sinn Féin and the *Irish Freedom* group, Phillips apparently thought they were one and the same, saying that members of the Sinn Féin organisation ‘gloried in upholding the tradition of Wolfe Tone and Robert Emmet, and openly avowed their intention of establishing an independent Irish Republic, an ideal first proclaimed in their organ *Irish*

¹³⁹ Máire de Bhuitléir, ‘When the Sinn Féin Policy Launched’, in *ibid.*, pp. 105–9.

¹⁴⁰ *Sean-Ghall*, ‘Arthur Griffith’, in Anon. (ed.), *Arthur Griffith, Michael Collins* (Dublin, [1922]), p. 10.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁴² Geo. A. Lyons, *Some Recollections of Griffith & His Times* (Dublin, 1923).

¹⁴³ F.X. Martin, ‘1916 – Myth, Fact and Mystery’, *Studia Hibernica* 7 (1967), p. 29.

Freedom in 1910’, while at the same time saying that they were working to carry out the policy developed by Griffith in ‘The Regeneration [*sic*] of Hungary’.¹⁴⁴

Shaw Desmond (Charles Nathaniel Lowe Shaw) was a journalist, novelist and dramatist of a southern unionist background but republican sympathies living and working in London. His work, *The Drama of Sinn Féin*, was, as the title suggests, a highly dramatised account of the revolution which romanticised Sinn Féin – or rather, the post-1917 Sinn Féin. It is in this work that the idea of early Sinn Féin as an organisation whose *raison d'être* was the advocacy of monarchy first appears. He said of Henry Grattan’s ‘King, Lords and Commons’ that it was ‘the thing which in the 20th century was to dominate Arthur Griffith and Sinn Féin.’¹⁴⁵ Sinn Féin, he said,

stood neither for the British Empire nor for complete separation from England...It stood for some curious “Dual Monarchy” which none understood save the elect, under which Ireland would have the same king as England, yet a separate king! It stood for “metaphysics”.¹⁴⁶

Even after 1916,

Arthur Griffith as a matter of record detested the idea of a Republic...he wanted an Irish monarchy, of course, after the Rising, a separate monarch and not that mystical personage of the “Two in One and One in Two” of the earlier days of Sinn Fein.’¹⁴⁷

Shaw Desmond, as one contemporary reviewer pointed out, was ‘merely one journalist among many, and his authority is not greater than that of the many competent news gatherers who followed events in Ireland from 1920 to 1921.’ The same reviewer described Desmond’s writing style as ‘lurid’.¹⁴⁸ His assertions seem to have no basis in any of the documentary evidence available at the time (nobody had ever said that Griffith ‘detested’ the idea of a republic, so it could not have been a matter of record), though it may be significant that he claimed to have had a lengthy interview with Cathal Brugha just before his death.¹⁴⁹ At any rate, as F.X. Martin noted in 1967, ‘Desmond has had several successors, Professor Alison Phillips none.’¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁴ W. Alison Phillips, *The Revolution in Ireland 1906-1923*, 2nd ed. (London, 1926), pp. 52-3.

¹⁴⁵ Shaw Desmond, *The Drama of Sinn Fein* (London, 1923), p. 82.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

¹⁴⁸ Ernest Boyd, ‘Review: Recent Irish History’, *Foreign Affairs*, 2: 2 (15 December 1923), p. 322.

¹⁴⁹ Desmond, *Drama of Sinn Fein*, pp. 332-3.

¹⁵⁰ Martin, ‘1916’, p. 32.

The American writer Hayden Talbot, in *Michael Collins' Own Story*, included an interview he said he had had with Griffith just before the outbreak of the Civil War. In it, Griffith said that 'too much stress has been laid on two phases of Sinn Féin – neither of which was its chief characteristic.' The first was that it was opposed to violence, the second that it was 'a purely political machine', both of which he denied. The question of whether it had a monarchist element, or had begun as a monarchist party, did not arise.¹⁵¹ Collins's biographer Piaras Béaslaí, a member of the IRB 'practically from boyhood', noted that Griffith had been an IRB member at the time that Sinn Féin was started, and that 'the reasons why he left some years later were not any objections to the aims or objects of the association.'¹⁵² Of the 1917 Sinn Féin constitution he said that 'except for...two items, it was simply Arthur Griffith's old policy.' The two items were the maintenance of the Volunteers and an appeal to the peace conference; the addition of the word 'Republic' seems not to have been worthy of mention.¹⁵³

Several histories and biographies were published in the following years, both by people involved in the period and by others, including non-nationals. Some made reference to dual monarchy; many did not. Former Irish Party MP, Stephen Gwynn, said that Griffith set the dual monarchy before Ireland as an 'attainable end'.¹⁵⁴ William O'Brien, late of the All-for-Ireland League, said only that Sinn Féin were 'to the full as "constitutional" in their aims as the Parliamentary Party'.¹⁵⁵ Sir James O'Connor, a former Attorney-General from a nationalist background, was scornful of both Griffith's economic policy and his political policy, but of the latter said only that its main plank was the abstention of Irish members from Westminster.¹⁵⁶ The Fenian John Devoy and the IRA man Tom Barry both made fleeting references to Griffith and Sinn Féin, but as part of the revolutionary movement, not as monarchists.¹⁵⁷ Louis Le Roux described Sinn Féin as 'separatist' in his biography of Patrick Pearse; in his biography of Tom Clarke he said that it fell 'half-way between the complete union of Ireland and England and the absolute separation of the two countries', but he also noted that the IRB gave its support to Sinn Féin as 'the best policy

¹⁵¹ Hayden Talbot, *Michael Collins' Own Story* (London, 1923), p. 50.

¹⁵² Piaras Béaslaí, *Michael Collins and the Making of a New Ireland*, volume 1 (Dublin, 1926), p. 18.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

¹⁵⁴ Stephen Gwynn, *The History of Ireland* (London, 1923), p. 495.

¹⁵⁵ William O'Brien, *The Irish Revolution and How It Came About* (Dublin, 1923), p. 13.

¹⁵⁶ James O'Connor, *History of Ireland, 1798–1924*, volume 1 (London, 1925), pp. 245-8.

¹⁵⁷ John Devoy, *Recollections of an Irish Rebel: The Fenian Movement, its Origins and Progress* (New York, 1929), pp. 394, 443; Tom Barry, *Guerilla Days in Ireland* (Dublin, 1949), p. 192.

available’, and that Clarke was an enthusiastic member and chairman of the North Dock Ward branch.¹⁵⁸ Dorothy Macardle, describing Sinn Féin in the years 1905 to 1910, said that it advocated a dual monarchy.¹⁵⁹ Writing about the 1917 dispute with Brugha, however, she said only that ‘Arthur Griffith would not bind himself to contend for a Republican form of government’, and she also said that de Valera ‘did not wish to commit the movement to any specified form of government, once independence should have been achieved.’¹⁶⁰

So far, those books that referenced dual monarchy stated either that it was a policy of early Sinn Féin or that it was a point of contention between Griffith and Hobson and/or Brugha. A new argument appears in R.M. Fox’s 1938 book *Green Banners*. Fox, a leftist historian, said that Griffith ‘was quite ready to recognise the King of England provided a separate Parliament was set up, but then added, ‘This should be borne in mind when his acceptance of the Treaty of 1921 is considered. To expect Griffith to make a stand for a Republic against the threat of “immediate and terrible war”...when he himself had never considered the Republic as an essential part of the National demand, is to ask too much.’¹⁶¹ Despite Mary MacSwiney’s 1921 Dáil speech, the idea of a direct link between Griffith’s ‘monarchism’ and the signing of the Treaty had not appeared in print before. Ten years later John Horgan, a former home ruler, took this argument further:

Now in the enforced association of British prisons a new Sinn Fein movement took shape in which the extreme element, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, made common cause with Griffith and his more moderate supporters. It was a coalition more apparent than real, for both parties had different aims and purposes, as was made clear in 1922 when we paid in Civil War the inevitable price of concealed political differences.¹⁶²

This was an image, not only of Sinn Féin but also the IRA, that had not been seen in the histories written over the previous twenty-five years, an image of a ‘coalition’ composed of two irreconcilable ‘parties’ – extremists and moderates – who had been forced together in the aftermath of the 1916 Rising and who ‘inevitably’ took up arms against each other when the Treaty was signed. Here, dual monarchy, for the first time, was portrayed as the

¹⁵⁸ Louis N. Le Roux, *Patrick H. Pearse* (Dublin, 1932), p. 237; idem., *Tom Clarke and the Irish Freedom Movement* (Dublin, 1936), pp. 76, 84.

¹⁵⁹ Dorothy Macardle, *The Irish Republic* (Corgi edition, London, 1968; first edition 1937), pp. 61, 64, 68.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 216–7.

¹⁶¹ R.M. Fox, *Green Banners: The Story of the Irish Struggle* (London, 1938), pp. 69–70.

¹⁶² John J. Horgan, *Parnell to Pearse: Some Recollections and Reflections* (Dublin, 1948), p. 296.

proximate cause of the Civil War. As will be seen, the assertion has subsequently been reiterated by a number of authors.

Meanwhile, in 1942 W.T. Cosgrave, Michael Hayes and Desmond FitzGerald, three senior members of the former Cumann na nGaedheal government, decided to commission a biography of Griffith. It was to be funded by Joe McGrath, a former colleague. The work was undertaken initially by Seán Milroy, another former colleague, and then, after Milroy's death in 1946, by Padraic Colum.¹⁶³ The men behind the venture were clear about what they wanted. Hayes told Colum it was necessary 'to make Griffith's position as a force and an influence clear and to show how right he was on the Treaty issue in 1921.'¹⁶⁴ The 'all important' thing was that 'his place as an Irish leader, teacher, writer, politician and statesman should be brought out. Quite frankly that is my interest in the book and I think it is Joe McGrath's also.'¹⁶⁵ There had been 'a persistent effort by various anti-Treaty writers in the *Irish Press*, in books and otherwise to belittle the part that Griffith played pre-Truce and also to prove that he and Collins were opposed in that period.'¹⁶⁶ McGrath's interest was 'that Griffith's name would be vindicated and that his actions in 1916–22 would be shown in their proper light.'¹⁶⁷ Colum was advised against relying on Frank Pakenham's *Peace by Ordeal*, which was 'written entirely from the point of view of those who were against the Treaty and who desire to use the evidence to further their own propaganda.'¹⁶⁸ Hayes impressed upon Colum that 'it was Griffith who preached a coherent doctrine of Irish nationality and who also indicated a line of action.'¹⁶⁹ Yet in the many letters and copious notes written over a fourteen-year period, there was not a single mention of dual monarchy or 'King, Lords and Commons', either to stress that it was the policy of Griffith and early Sinn Féin, or to urge that it not be mentioned. Its absence is striking. These letters and notes were not intended to be seen by anybody outside that small circle. If his attachment to the monarchy was the defining characteristic of Griffith's life before 1917, why would it go completely unremarked on by the people involved in writing his life, when corresponding privately with each other,

¹⁶³ Anne Dolan, *Commemorating the Irish Civil War: History and Memory, 1923-2000* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 107–8.

¹⁶⁴ Michael Hayes to Padraic Colum, 5 August 1950, Michael Hayes papers, UCD Archives, P53/222(8).

¹⁶⁵ Hayes to Colum, 18 February 1952, *ibid.*, P53/222(62).

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ Hayes to Colum, 20 February 1953, *ibid.* P53/222(97).

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ Hayes to Colum, 18 February 1952, *ibid.*, P53/222(62).

or when jotting down their thoughts, even – or especially – if it was to say that it should be left out of the book? In his notes on one of Milroy’s drafts, for instance, Hayes made a note of things worth emphasising, such as ‘he formulated the policy as a whole’, ‘his writings helped to train and educate the leaders’, and ‘he did not preach physical force but he did not reject it or its adherents’, but none of them was even tangentially related to dual monarchy, and it is clear that it was not on his mind at all.¹⁷⁰ Similarly, he stressed to Milroy that the 1917 Ard Fheis was an important event, not because of the embracing of the Republic, but because Griffith stepped down as president in favour of de Valera. Hayes did not even mention the change in the constitution.¹⁷¹

Colum’s biography was a disappointment. Hayes noted that ‘Colum was more interested in Arthur Griffith’s writings and literary connections than his political writings and role.’¹⁷² One reader’s report said it was ‘the most murderous job I have undertaken. Not until I got down to it did I realise its full horrors.’¹⁷³ The book did say that Griffith stood for a dual monarchy, though the fact was not remarked upon by its sponsors or reviewers.¹⁷⁴ Milroy’s draft chapters, with which Hayes was very pleased and which Colum ignored, depicted Griffith as an out-and-out separatist.¹⁷⁵

By the time Colum’s biography was published, a biography in Irish had already appeared, written by Seán Ó Lúing. As stated earlier, Ó Lúing completely rejected the idea that Griffith had ever had any attachment to a dual monarchy. This was confirmed to him by Pádraig Ó Caoimh, an early member of the Sinn Féin executive and a close friend of Griffith, who told him, ‘that was all bloody eyewash.’¹⁷⁶ In a similar vein, Brian O’Higgins, a 1916 veteran who was president of Sinn Féin in the early 1930s, said in his *Wolfe Tone Annual* of 1949 that the idea that the Sinn Féin of 1905 was not republican ‘in form or in spirit’ was wrong:

Anyone who goes to the trouble of reading its brief constitution will see that its object was “the re-establishment of the independence of Ireland.” He will see also that it did

¹⁷⁰ Hayes notes on Milroy draft chapter, c. 1944, *ibid.*, P53/217(14).

¹⁷¹ Hayes to Seán Milroy, 20 April 1942, *ibid.*, P53/217(4).

¹⁷² Hayes note on letter from W.T. Cosgrave, 28 October 1955, *ibid.*, P53/222(176).

¹⁷³ Frank Keane to Hayes, 9 October 1956, *ibid.*, P53/222(179).

¹⁷⁴ Padraic Colum, *Arthur Griffith* (Dublin, 1959), p. 82.

¹⁷⁵ ‘Chapter 13: The Sinn Fein Policy’, typescript of Milroy biography, c. 1944, Michael Hayes papers, UCDA, P53/219, pp. 143-150.

¹⁷⁶ Ó Lúing, *Art Ó Gríofa*, p. 128.

not take its stand behind the Renunciation Act of 1783, but said quite plainly that until Great Britain herself was prepared to keep her own compact as made in that Act, no voluntary agreement of any kind could be or would be made with her, and that, I hold, was not a call for legislation by the King, Lords and Commons of Ireland. The Constitution of Sinn Féin in 1905, and certainly the spirit of it, was at least as clearly separatist as was the constitution of Sinn Féin in and after 1917.

As a nod to the contemporary image of the man who had signed the Treaty, he added, ‘no matter what private opinion regarding the British Crown may have been held by Arthur Griffith.’¹⁷⁷ This ignored the fact that the Sinn Féin of 1905 was based on the opinion of Arthur Griffith. O’Higgins went on to say that ‘the spirit of the Sinn Fein organisation established in 1905 was the spirit of all the resisting, unyielding generations, and was probably at heart more Republican than the big organisation of 1917, into which came “safe” groups like the Irish Nation League’.¹⁷⁸

During the 1950s and 1960s there continued to be published books that stated the dual monarchy as the core of early Sinn Féin policy, and books that did not mention it. Diarmuid Lynch in *The I.R.B. and the 1916 Insurrection* (1957) and Terence de Vere White in *The Shaping of Modern Ireland* (1960) wrote of it; Patricia Lavelle and Moirin Chavasse, in their respective biographies of James O’Mara and Terence MacSwiney (both 1961), did not; Desmond Greaves in his biography of James Connolly (1961), Max Caulfield in *The Easter Rebellion* (1964) and Clifford King in *The Orange and the Green* (1965) did; Tim Pat Coogan in *Ireland Since the Rising* (1966) did not.

The 1960s saw the rediscovery of Bulmer Hobson, who had been written out of history for nearly fifty years after the Rising.¹⁷⁹ Hobson had written 16 witness statements for the Bureau of Military History from 1947, which he made available to the National Library of Ireland shortly afterwards. He was interviewed on both Irish and British media before and during the commemoration of the Rising in 1966, and published *Ireland Yesterday and Tomorrow* in 1968. The 1960s also saw the beginnings of the revisionist period in the historiography of the revolutionary period with a number of works by F.X. Martin, and Martin made extensive use of Hobson’s material in his books and articles.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ Brian O’Higgins, ‘My songs and Myself’, *Wolfe Tone Annual*, 1949, pp. 104-5.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

¹⁷⁹ Hay, *Bulmer Hobson*, p. 242.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 243.

Table 1: Representative selection of publications: whether they refer to Sinn Féin and monarchy.

Author	Work	Year	Monarchy
The Outlook	<i>National Organisations in Ireland</i>	1907	no
William Eleroy Curtis	<i>One Irish Summer</i>	1909	no
W.P. Ryan	<i>The Pope's Green Island</i>	1912	no
Diarmuid Coffey	<i>Douglas Hyde: An Craoibhín Aoibhinn</i>	1917	no
Francis P. Jones	<i>History of the Sinn Fein Movement</i>	1917	no
Mitchell Henry	<i>Evolution of Sinn Fein</i>	1918	yes
'Vigilant'	'Sinn Féin and Germany'	1918	no
P.S. O'Hegarty	<i>Sinn Fein: An Illumination</i>	1919	yes
Aodh de Blácam	<i>What Sinn Fein Stands For</i>	1921	no
Hayden Talbot	<i>Michael Collins' Own Story</i>	1922	no
Alice Stopford Green	<i>Studies</i>	1922	no
James Stephens	<i>Studies</i>	1922	no
Mitchell Henry	<i>Studies</i>	1922	yes
P.S. O'Hegarty	<i>Studies</i>	1922	no
P.S. O'Hegarty	<i>A Short Memoir of Terence MacSwiney</i>	1922	yes
Michael Collins	<i>The Path to Freedom</i>	1922	no
George Lyons	<i>Some Recollections of Griffith and his Times</i>	1923	no
Stephen Gwynn	<i>The History of Ireland</i>	1923	yes
William O'Brien	<i>The Irish Revolution and How it Came About</i>	1923	no
Alison Phillips	<i>The Revolution in Ireland</i>	1923	no
Shaw Desmond	<i>Drama of Sinn Fein</i>	1924	yes
Sean-Ghall	<i>The Voice of Ireland</i>	1924	no
Liam Ó Briain	<i>The Voice of Ireland</i>	1924	no
Mary Ellen Butler	<i>The Voice of Ireland</i>	1924	no
P.S. O'Hegarty	<i>The Victory of Sinn Fein</i>	1924	yes
Sir James O'Connor	<i>History of Ireland, 1798-1924</i>	1925	no
Piaras Béaslal	<i>Michael Collins</i>	1926	no
John Devoy	<i>Recollections of an Irish rebel</i>	1929	no
Louis Le Roux	<i>Patrick H. Pearse</i>	1932	no
Louis Le Roux	<i>Tom Clarke and the Irish Freedom Movement</i>	1936	no
James Carty	<i>Bibliography of Irish History</i>	1936	yes
Dorothy Macardle	<i>The Irish Republic</i>	1937	yes
R.M. Fox	<i>Green Banners</i>	1938	yes
J.J. Horgan	<i>Parnell to Pearse</i>	1948	yes
Tom Barry	<i>Guerrilla days in Ireland</i>	1949	no
Brian O'Higgins	<i>Wolfe Tone Annual</i>	1949	no
P.S. O'Hegarty	<i>Ireland under the Union</i>	1952	no
Seán Ó Lúing	<i>Art Ó Gríofa</i>	1953	no
Diarmuid Lynch	<i>The I.R.B. and the 1916 Insurrection</i>	1957	yes
Padraic Colum	<i>Arthur Griffith</i>	1959	yes
Terence de Vere White	<i>Shaping of Modern Ireland</i>	1960	yes
Patricia Lavelle	<i>James O'Mara: A Staunch Sinn Féiner</i>	1961	no
Moirin Chavasse	<i>Terence MacSwiney</i>	1961	no
C. Desmond Greaves	<i>Life and Times of James Connolly</i>	1961	yes
Max Caulfield	<i>The Easter Rebellion</i>	1964	yes
Clifford King	<i>The Orange and the Green</i>	1965	yes
Tim Pat Coogan	<i>Ireland since the Rising</i>	1966	no

The year 1972 saw the publication of two seminal works of revisionist history: Francis Shaw's article, 'The Canon of Irish History – A Challenge', in *Studies*, and Conor Cruise O'Brien's book, *States of Ireland*.¹⁸¹ While Shaw had written his article in 1966, Cruise O'Brien's book was a direct response to the outbreak of IRA violence in Northern Ireland in 1969, which he believed was facilitated by the glorification of the violence of 1916.¹⁸² Richard Davis's history of early Sinn Féin, although based on a 1959 M.Litt. thesis, was published in 1974, two years after the Shaw and Cruise O'Brien works. Its very title – *Arthur Griffith and Non-Violent Sinn Féin* – would have well suited the revisionist thesis that in 1917 the 'men of violence', be they the IRB or the Volunteers, took over a non-violent political party and subverted it to their own ends. If they had subverted it to such a degree as to change it from a monarchist party into a republican party, that would fit the narrative even better. The book was the first definitive history of early Sinn Féin. Like F.X Martin, Davis gave considerable weight to Hobson's material, as well as to P.S. O'Hegarty's personal papers (now no longer available)¹⁸³, his early books, and his contemporary correspondence with people such as George Gavan Duffy. Davis's book, and its source material, in turn influenced later key histories such as Michael Laffan's *The Resurrection of Ireland* and Patrick Maume's *The Long Gestation*.

Thus, there was an abundance of material showing Hobson and O'Hegarty's 'struggle' with Griffith and the '82 men' during the 1900s. The absence of sources showing that advanced nationalists engaged in this 'struggle' on the opposing side, or even that they were aware of it, went unnoticed, showing the difficulty of proving a negative. There was also the pleasing symmetry of the idea that the divisions of 1922 reflected the divisions of 1917, which in turn reflected the divisions of 1905–7. Thus Richard Davis: 'The difficulties preventing the co-operation of 1782 constitutionalist and physical force man in the years before 1914, helped at a later date to bring about the Irish Civil War'; Michael Laffan: 'The Treaty conceded all that the constitutional Sinn Féiners has sought before 1916'; F.S.L. Lyons: 'it was only at the eleventh hour that de Valera [in 1917] produced the formula that finally gained general assent...nevertheless, there was an ambiguity about the formula that was to exact a terrible penalty in the not so distant

¹⁸¹ Seán Farrell Moran, *Patrick Pearse and the Politics of Redemption: The Mind of the Easter Rising, 1916* (Washington, 1994), p. 8.

¹⁸² Declan Kiberd, 'The Elephant of Revolutionary Forgetfulness', in Máirín Ní Dhonnchadha, Theo Dorgan (eds.), *Revising the Rising* (Derry, 1991), p. 8.

¹⁸³ Conversation with Cian Ó hÉigeartaigh, grandson of P.S. O'Hegarty.

future'; and Thomas Hennessey: 'there existed deep divisions regarding the final relationship that a self-governing Ireland should have with the British Empire and Crown, divisions so deep that ultimately, it can be argued, they provided the foundations for the Anglo-Irish Treaty split in 1921 and the subsequent Irish Civil War of 1922–23.'¹⁸⁴

To this can be added the factor of confirmation bias. A writer who takes it for granted that Sinn Féin advocated a dual monarchy will see it everywhere. Thus, when P.S. O'Hegarty, in a 1912 *Irish Freedom* article on a possible Irish constitution, says that a monarchy is not an option 'unless it was a dual monarchy to sugar the pill', Virginia Glandon reports that O'Hegarty attacked the Sinn Féin dual monarchy policy as 'sugar-coating the pill'; when de Valera, in a dispatch from Lewes Prison, speaks of 'some irrelevant items from the old Sinn Féin policy which...tend to alienate a number of Irishmen', Michael Laffan adds, 'Griffith's ideas concerning a dual monarchy...must have been prominent among these items'; when an American journalist (quite reasonably) asks de Valera in 1921 whether 'Ireland might be erected into an independent constitutional monarchy with the same personal sovereign as Great Britain', Shaw Desmond reports it as 'When pressed as to whether Ireland would not accept Griffith's old "Dual Monarchy" position...'.¹⁸⁵ None of the original statements had explicitly or implicitly associated Griffith or Sinn Féin with dual monarchy.

For all these reasons, the assertion that Griffith or Sinn Féin advocated a dual monarchy, which did not have a consensus before the 1960s, has gone unchallenged since. And this despite the fact that nobody has ever been able to cite a single document in which he or his organisation said simply, 'we believe in an Ireland independent of Britain but sharing a monarch.'

Therefore, in the chapters that follow, it will be assumed that the Sinn Féin organisation from the outset was essentially republican in character, but for tactical reasons declined to explicitly declare itself republican. This assumption will have a major bearing on the discussion of the interrelationship between the organisations in the 1910-1917 period.

¹⁸⁴ Davis, *Arthur Griffith*, p. 150; Laffan, *Resurrection of Ireland*, p. 351; F.S.L. Lyons, 'The new nationalism, 1916–18', in W.E. Vaughn (ed.), *A New History of Ireland*, Volume VI (Oxford, 1989), p. 233; Thomas Hennessey, *Dividing Ireland: World War I and Partition* (London, 1998), p. 166.

¹⁸⁵ Virginia E. Glandon, *Arthur Griffith and the Advanced-Nationalist Press, Ireland, 1900-1922* (New York, 1985), p. 77; Laffan, *Resurrection of Ireland*, p. 96; Desmond, *Drama*, p. 382.

2. Movements within advanced nationalism, 1910-12

In July 1910 a small group of people who were members of both Sinn Féin and the IRB launched a new republican newspaper, *Irish Freedom*. The group included P.S. O’Hegarty, Bulmer Hobson and Patrick McCartan – all of whom at different times edited the paper – and Seán MacDermott, who was its manager. Closely associated with these four were Denis McCullough and Tom Clarke. Between the beginning of 1910 and the beginning of 1912 the six pushed for a more militant policy both in Sinn Féin and in the Supreme Council of the IRB, leading to dissention in both bodies. As a result of these upheavals they disengaged from Sinn Féin, began publication of *Irish Freedom*, and subsequently took effective control of the IRB Supreme Council. During that same period the vice-president and leading light of Sinn Féin, Arthur Griffith, and its general secretary, Aindrias Ó Broin, left the IRB. An understanding of what happened in the upper echelons of these organisations at this time is key to understanding how advanced nationalist political activity evolved later on, between the introduction of the Home Rule Bill in 1912 and the 1916 Rising.

The simplistic view – that around 1910 the IRB was revived as an actively ‘physical force’ organisation and left behind it the discredited ‘passive resistance’ or anti-Parliamentary policy of Sinn Féin – presents a scenario in which advanced nationalism was severely fragmented during these critical years.¹⁸⁶ This fragmentation is held to explain the ‘failure’ of the Easter Rising. But if that is so, then the extraordinary resurgence of advanced nationalism – in the form of Sinn Féin – after the Rising can only be explained as the result of public outrage at the actions of the British government in executing fourteen men over a period of ten days.¹⁸⁷ This argument is difficult to sustain: the execution of the same number of men over a similar period in 1803, far from leading to a surge of support for the rebels, left the country pacified for nearly 50 years. Likewise, the executions during the Civil War of 1922-23 were more arbitrary, more numerous, and carried out over a longer period of time, but they did not lead to a surge of support for anti-treaty republicans, and the government responsible for them comfortably won the general election of 1923.

¹⁸⁶ Michael Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland: The Sinn Féin Party, 1916-1923* (Cambridge, 1999), pp 31-2.

¹⁸⁷ See, for instance, Charles Townshend, *Easter 1916: the Irish rebellion* (London, 2005), p. 307.

An alternative view, explored here, is that, pivotal though the events of 1910-11 were, they did not in the short term impact either on the IRB as a whole, or on Sinn Féin, or on relations between the two. In this scenario, advanced nationalism continued as before as a larger movement, with considerable fluidity but with a common outlook and a common goal – that of Irish independence. Within that larger movement was a small but determined group of people who sought to direct it towards insurrection, but it was precisely the coherence of the movement as a whole that provided both a milieu within which the insurrection could be planned and a programme with which to mobilise the country after it had taken place.¹⁸⁸ A later chapter will discuss the aftermath of the Rising. This chapter will look at the events of 1910-11 and attempt to put them into context.

Because of the divisions within the Supreme Council, it is not reasonable to refer to a rift between ‘the IRB’ and Sinn Féin in 1910. It is necessary to look at the events of that year in terms of who, within the IRB, were opposing the Sinn Féin leadership, and what effect their eventual defection had in terms of Sinn Féin’s subsequent history and of the overall relationship between Sinn Féin and the IRB.

Sinn Féin

In the first half of 1910 some senior Sinn Féin members – notably P.S. O’Hegarty – openly challenged Arthur Griffith and the Sinn Féin general secretary Aindrias Ó Broin. A detailed account of this episode is given in Richard Davis’s 1974 book, *Arthur Griffith and Non-violent Sinn Féin*.¹⁸⁹ Davis’s book is frequently referenced by later works, for instance Laffan’s *Resurrection of Ireland* and Hay’s *Bulmer Hobson. Non-violent Sinn Féin* was based on an M.Litt. thesis that Davis submitted to Trinity College Dublin in 1959.¹⁹⁰ The book often uses a summary style where the thesis used block quotes with appropriate commentary. Because of this, the thesis sometimes gives a clearer rationale for Davis’s arguments, and both works will be cited in what follows.

The conflict within Sinn Féin began with a stormy meeting of the full executive on 20 December 1909, at which a proposal by a Dublin solicitor, James Brady, to support candidates of William O’Brien’s embryonic All-for-Ireland League (AFIL) in the forth-

¹⁸⁸ See Seumas MacManus, *The Story of the Irish Race: A Popular History of Ireland* (New York, 1921), p. 688.

¹⁸⁹ Richard P. Davis, *Arthur Griffith and Non-Violent Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1974), pp. 61-7.

¹⁹⁰ Idem. ‘The Rise of Sinn Féin, 1891-1910’ (M.Litt. thesis, 1959, Trinity College Dublin).

coming general election was apparently supported by Arthur Griffith. The proposal was vehemently opposed by, among others, Bulmer Hobson, Constance Markievicz, Hugh Holahan (chairman of the *Aonach na Nollag* committee), John Sweetman (the Sinn Féin president) and W.L. Cole. It was eventually rejected, but Holahan resigned in protest against the matter being discussed at all. Another row broke out when a detailed report of the meeting was published in the *Irish Nation*, an advanced nationalist publication independent of the different sections in the movement. Aindrias Ó Broin disclaimed the story in strong terms, calling it ‘a tissue of inaccuracies and mis-statements’, and *Sinn Féin*, Griffith’s newspaper, published its own version of the meeting.¹⁹¹ P.S. O’Hegarty then wrote several pieces in the *Irish Nation* critical of Griffith and, particularly, of *Sinn Féin*, which, in his opinion, was watering down the national ideal and pandering to unionists. During the summer of 1910 he circulated draft resolutions for the annual congress aimed at reducing Griffith’s power and dissociating the organisation from the newspaper. Meanwhile he, together with Hobson and Patrick McCartan, and with the backing of Tom Clarke, started a new paper, *Irish Freedom*, which took an unambiguous republican line. At the Sinn Féin annual congress in October, according to Davis, ‘several of O’Hegarty’s allies either walked out in disgust or failed to attend.’¹⁹²

Davis sees the events of 1909-10 as the climax of several years of struggle between ‘hard-line’ republicans and ‘moderate’ Griffithites. Of the December 1909 meeting he says:

This meeting is of great importance for it shows clearly the rift in Sinn Féin ranks which the convention of 1907 had done nothing to close. For the first time the ex-members of the Sinn Fein League – by 1909 powerful in the Supreme Council of the IRB – came to grips with Griffith on a major issue.¹⁹³

He names Hobson, Denis McCullough and P.T. Daly as the ‘ex-members of the Sinn Fein League’. This reasoning contains several flaws, however. For one thing, Daly’s part in the 1910 controversy began and ended with a motion that he framed at the meeting of 20 December 1909, which, far from being ‘uncompromising’, as Davis calls it, was a compromise between total acceptance and total rejection of the Brady proposals, being positive on the question of a ‘national council’, while stating that the organisation could not compromise on abstention.¹⁹⁴ Similarly, McCullough, though an ally of Hobson’s,

¹⁹¹ ‘The Election to the English Parliament: The Sinn Fein Attitude’, *Sinn Féin*, 30 December 1909.

¹⁹² Davis, *Non-Violent Sinn Fein*, p. 66.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.* p. 87.

¹⁹⁴ ‘The Sinn Fein Attitude’, *Sinn Féin*, 30 December 1909.

was not prominent in the ensuing quarrel. The idea that the Sinn Féin League ‘triumvirate’ was foremost in this debate is also inconsistent with a letter written by William Sears to George Gavan Duffy on 21 December. In regard to the discussion he said, ‘The debate was very similar to the last one; arguments on both sides the same.’¹⁹⁵ The previous time the question had been debated was at a meeting of the executive on 29 November, but on that occasion none of the three – Hobson, McCullough or Daly – had been present.¹⁹⁶

The argument also disregards the fact that in 1906-7 Hobson, McCullough and Daly were prominent in the National Council as well as in their own organisations, the Dungannon Clubs and Cumann na nGaedheal, which amalgamated in early 1907 as the Sinn Féin League. Hobson and Daly were both members of the executive of the National Council during that year.¹⁹⁷ Most importantly, perhaps, it was those three, rather than Griffith, who had brought about the amalgamation. Hobson, writing to Joseph McGarrity about the amalgamation of the Dungannon Clubs and Cumann na nGaedheal in April 1907, had said, ‘The National Council stood out as before. At their convention in Aug[ust] they will have to come in.’¹⁹⁸

Seán Milroy proposed an amendment to Daly’s motion, to insert after the words ‘a National Council’ the clause ‘and if such a Council be formed in the future Sinn Fein will be prepared to send deputies to it.’ The amendment was defeated.¹⁹⁹ The vote on the amendment is, however, at variance with Davis’s portrayal of it as militants versus moderates. Davis says that Milroy was supported by Jennie Wyse Power, Griffith, M.D. Clare and T.S. Cuffe, but that John Sweetman, Constance Markievicz, Miss Murphy, W.L. Cole and Bulmer Hobson ‘spoke out strongly against the amendment and the notion of compromise.’²⁰⁰ These are two odd groupings. Of the former, Cuffe and (at that time) Griffith were IRB members; both had been members of the Teeling Circle since at least 1905.²⁰¹ Milroy was closely associated with Seán MacDermott and would fight in the GPO in 1916, and Wyse Power was described in a Bureau of Military History witness

¹⁹⁵ William Sears to George Gavan Duffy, 21 December 1909. Gavan Duffy Papers, NLI, Ms 5581.

¹⁹⁶ ‘The election to the English Parliament: The Sinn Fein Attitude’, *Sinn Féin*, 30 December 1909.

¹⁹⁷ Davis, *Non-Violent Sinn Fein*, p. 173.

¹⁹⁸ Hobson to McGarrity, 30 April 1907. Joseph McGarrity Papers, NLI, Ms 17,453.

¹⁹⁹ ‘The Election to the English Parliament: The Sinn Fein Attitude’, *Sinn Féin*, 30 December 1909.

²⁰⁰ Davis, ‘Rise of Sinn Féin’, p. 89.

²⁰¹ Bureau of Military History, WS 766 (Patrick McCartan); WS 1765 (Seán T. O’Kelly).

statement as ‘a prominent member of the advanced nationalist group’; her three children, and possibly she herself, were members of the radical Keating Branch of the Gaelic League.²⁰² It was in her house that the Proclamation of the Republic was signed in 1916. Of those opposed, only Hobson was an IRB member, although Markievicz was equally extreme in her views, while Sweetman and Cole were regarded as conservatives. Very little is known of Mary Murphy, but she could safely be called a ‘Griffithite’, having represented Sinn Féin on the board of the North Dublin Union since 1905. Sweetman, Murphy, Cole and Hobson had all been members of the executive of the National Council prior to the amalgamation with the Sinn Féin League in 1907.²⁰³ Davis suggests – and here he follows the *Irish Nation*’s line – that Sweetman objected less to the substance of the proposal than to the secrecy surrounding the talks with Brady and/or O’Brien, but the *Irish Nation*, in the same issue in which it broke the story, said ‘that the letters had been submitted beforehand to Mr. Sweetman, who there and then emphatically opposed the whole project, while he was still more outspoken in the course of the proceedings.’²⁰⁴ Sweetman was unwilling to be nominated for the presidency in September 1910 partly because he was unable to attend meetings regularly but also because of his strong opposition to the principle of contesting parliamentary elections.²⁰⁵ He was persuaded to remain, but resigned in 1911.

In the ensuing flurry of correspondence in the *Irish Nation*, it seems less like ‘hard-line’ versus ‘moderate’ than P.S. O’Hegarty against the rest of the movement. Initially Constance Markievicz was accused of leaking the story of the meeting to the *Nation*, but she successfully refuted the accusation.²⁰⁶ According to William O’Brien’s biographer, Joseph V. O’Brien, and P.S. O’Hegarty’s biographer, Keiron Curtis, O’Hegarty was in fact the person responsible for the story’s publication.²⁰⁷ The story, published in a special edition on 23 December and reprinted and expanded on 1 January, was followed by signed articles or letters by six different people over a six-week period. Of the six, only O’Hegarty was critical of Griffith: Liam de Róiste, Robert Lynd, Éamonn Ceannt, George

²⁰² BMH, WS 889 (James Kavanagh).

²⁰³ Davis, *Non-Violent Sinn Féin*, p. 173.

²⁰⁴ Davis, ‘Rise of Sinn Féin’, p. 89; ‘The Political Position’, *Irish Nation*, 1 January 1910.

²⁰⁵ Sweetman to Walter Cole, 3 September 1910. NLI, Sweetman Papers, Ms 47,587/3.

²⁰⁶ Patrick McCartan to John Devoy, 31 March 1910, in William O’Brien and Desmond Ryan, *Devoy’s Post Bag*, Volume 2 (1953), p. 390.

²⁰⁷ Joseph V. O’Brien, *William O’Brien and the Course of Irish Politics, 1881-1918* (London, 1976), p. 193; Keiron Curtis, *P.S. O’Hegarty (1879-1955): Sinn Féin Fenian* (London, 2012), p. 87.

Gavan Duffy and Peter Macken, while declaring themselves abstentionists, defended Griffith's right to allow discussion of an electoral alliance with O'Brien.²⁰⁸ O'Hegarty, as Davis puts it, 'energetically attacked these views'.²⁰⁹ In doing so, he was attacking perceived 'moderates' and perceived 'hard-liners' alike.

The tone of O'Hegarty's contributions was similar to the original story. He speaks, for instance, of 'the proceedings which culminated in the Sinn Fein Executive being asked to support a Parliamentary faction.'²¹⁰ There is another interesting similarity. The 23 December *Irish Nation* story claimed that 'The manifest change in the policy of the evening "Sinn Fein," its drifting in the direction of Parliamentarianism, disconcerted or amazed [Sinn Féiners].' However, this was neither clarified nor amplified elsewhere in that issue.²¹¹ O'Hegarty in his 15 January article took up the theme with gusto. He claimed to have information from the unionist Lindsay Crawford, who had also been (unsuccessfully) approached by O'Brien to stand for his new grouping in the election, that O'Brien had agreed 'to put money into the Sinn Fein daily in return for Sinn Fein support at the elections.' This gave him the opportunity to expand at length on what he viewed as the anxiety of Sinn Féiners over the paper.

The whole business, however, brings to a crisis the necessity which many of us have increasingly felt of a readjustment of the relations between the Sinn Fein paper and the organisation...the daily, in its attempt to get a circulation, slurs over essential political truths, and gets off on all sorts of side issues...The paper's criticism of the Party has given away the pivot of the Sinn Fein case, for it has been a criticism of their honesty and efficiency; whereas the Sinn Fein case is that, be they ever so honest, they cannot be efficient save in Ireland ...Of the good work and the excellence of the Sinn Fein daily in many directions there is no question. It is the best daily paper in Ireland. But I have felt from the beginning that the confusion it would bring to the Sinn Fein policy would counterbalance its otherwise good work, and the event has justified that. The only solution is that the paper shall stand quite independent of the organisation whose name it bears.²¹²

O'Hegarty thus put the paper at the centre of the argument for the first time, and the paper would be central to O'Hegarty's confrontation of Griffith at the annual congress in

²⁰⁸ *Irish Nation* 8, 15, 22 January, 5, 12 February 1910; Davis, *Non-Violent Sinn Fein*, pp. 64-5.

²⁰⁹ Davis, 'Rise of Sinn Féin', p. 98.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹¹ 'The Political Sensation', *Irish Nation*, 1 January 1910.

²¹² P.S. O'Hegarty, 'More light on the O'Brien – Sinn Fein Scheme', *Irish Nation*, 15 January 1910.

September, and would continue to be the object of debate, in the Cork branch at least, into the following year. But O’Hegarty’s view of the paper seems to have been shared by very few people. In subsequent contributions to the *Irish Nation*, Ceannt, Gavan Duffy and Macken concerned themselves with principles and tactics, with abstention and cooperation with home rulers, but never mentioned the paper at all.

As Davis correctly shows, a number of people, including John Sweetman and Griffith himself, were dubious about the viability of the daily as a financial venture. The required capital of £8,000 seemed an impossible goal. Sweetman, having initially decided not to take the risk, eventually subscribed £200, Michael O’Rahilly subscribed £100 and William Bulfin collected \$685 from members of the Sinn Féin branch in Argentina, but the daily folded in early 1910 with only half of the £8,000 realised.²¹³ When it comes to the editorial policy of the paper, however, Davis refers to ‘the separatists’ who ‘thought it entirely inadequate as an expression of nationalist opinion’, and to ‘Griffith’s critics’ who ‘accused him of evasion on the position of the paper’, without naming any names except O’Hegarty and Hobson, and without quoting anybody except O’Hegarty.²¹⁴ In fact there is no documentary evidence of anybody else holding such a view at the time. Any daily paper, if it wished to sell, could not be nakedly propagandist; even the most extreme Sinn Féiner must have seen that. And Griffith believed there was a need for a popular daily paper if the organisation were to spread. Thomas MacDonagh, who was not a member of Sinn Féin, wrote to a friend in the aftermath of the 1908 North Leitrim by-election that ‘Sinn Féin grows wonderfully, but rather silently, as there is no daily paper to acclaim it.’²¹⁵ Robert Lynd ‘thought it a great paper’.²¹⁶ Even O’Hegarty, as quoted above, thought it was ‘the best daily paper in Ireland.’ Indeed, writing only a few years later, O’Hegarty said that ‘From 1899 to 1911 the “United Irishman” and its successor, “Sinn Fein”, were the chief inspiration of all extreme propaganda and extreme discussion in Ireland’, and again, that

In the years to come...the historian...will dwell perhaps most lovingly on the work of Arthur Griffith from 1899 to 1911, upon the brain that took the several strands of the Irish Ireland movement, took every constructive and quickening national idea

²¹³ Davis, *Non-Violent Sinn Féin*, pp. 60-1.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

²¹⁵ Thomas MacDonagh to Dominick Hackett, 5 May 1908. NLI, MacDonagh Papers, Ms 22,934.

²¹⁶ Davis, *Non-Violent Sinn Féin*, p. 61.

there was, and wove them all into the most complete and comprehensive national philosophy that has been given to Ireland.

Here there is no mention of ‘slurring over of essential political truths’ or ‘getting off on all sorts of side issues’.²¹⁷ Patrick McCartan, writing to John Devoy at the end of March 1910, said, ‘The other night I was speaking to one of the men who worked hard on the business end of the S. F. daily & still works on the weekly & said it could hardly last more than three months.’²¹⁸ Even for one of O’Hegarty’s group, the focus at that time was on finance, not content.

It was in this letter, however, that the suggestion of a new newspaper was first made in writing. McCartan said

It has been suggested, and most of the men who take an interest in the whole thing support the idea that a monthly paper should be started & sustained by monthly subscription when some crisis turns up. Whether such a paper would do much or not is a question but it would likely be better than nothing. Hobson was thinking of such a paper any time now but the rest of us said anything done now might put weapons in Griffith’s hands as he might pose as the injured man & that the others were a faction & retarding the movement... Tom [Clarke] & I were thinking that perhaps you could see things more clearly being at a distance & that’s why I’m writing to you now.²¹⁹

A monthly paper was also a ‘cherished project’ of O’Hegarty, according to an unpublished memoir written in 1917. He had never proposed it to the Supreme Council, because he did not think the proposal would be adopted, but when Clarke proposed it, sometime in 1910, the proposal was passed. It was agreed that McCartan should be editor and Fred Allan manager.²²⁰ McCartan, writing to Joseph McGarrity at the end of August or the beginning of September 1910, reported that ‘A monthly paper is to be started to preach our own creed as the G.A. [*Gaelic American*] does there [in the US]. A committee of Hobson, Hegarty [*sic*], myself and Allan are to have full charge.’²²¹ Clarke, writing to John Daly in October, said that the paper would be

a monthly on the same lines as the *United Irishman* or rather on a higher level. Pat McCartan will be editor – Hobson, O’Hegarty, Lynd and all the good writers of the

²¹⁷ P.S.O’Hegarty, *Sinn Fein: An Illumination* (Dublin, 1919), pp. 29, 33.

²¹⁸ Patrick McCartan to John Devoy, 31 March 1910, in William O’Brien and Desmond Ryan, *Devoy’s Post Bag*, Volume 2 (1953), p. 390.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²²⁰ P.S. O’Hegarty, ‘Recollections of the I.R.B.’ Manuscript, November 1917. NLI, Casement Papers, Ms 36,210.

²²¹ McCartan to McGarrity, n.d. (August/September 1910). NLI, McGarrity Papers, Ms 17,457/8.

Republic, the *United Irishman* (Griffith excepted) and the *Irish Student* will be contributors...Shawn McDermott is employed on the business end to look after advertising, etc.²²²

The launch of *Irish Freedom* was here being directly linked to the campaign of this small but important group of people against Griffith and *Sinn Féin*. It is in this context that O’Hegarty’s resolutions for the September congress need to be considered.

In August 1910, at precisely the same time as the *Irish Freedom* committee was being chosen, P.S. O’Hegarty circulated around the London committee a set of draft resolutions for the annual congress scheduled for the following month. There were seven resolutions in all. The first four concerned organisational matters: membership subscriptions, the constitution of the executive, holding the executive meetings on Sundays, and sub-committees. The fifth, sixth and seventh were aimed at the resident executive, at Griffith, and at *Sinn Féin*.

5. That the National Council shall not waste its time in discussing or considering any local question e.g. Dublin Municipal questions, save when requested to give a decision on some point by a County Committee, or by a branch where there is not a County Committee.

6. That this convention is of opinion that the principal business of the Organisation should be to push its political principles and policy in opposition to all others, whether Unionist, Redmondite or O’Brienite, and that it be an instruction to the National Council to act accordingly.

7. That this convention wishes to dissociate the *Sinn Féin* Organisation from the general policy of the *Sinn Féin* paper in its recent developments, and that, in view of the fact that the Organisation has no control whatever over the paper which bears its name, the editor be requested to cease advertising the paper as the official organ of the movement.

George Gavan Duffy typed up the resolutions, together with the responses of the five people who had previously read them, and his own. Robert Lynd had written, ‘Agreed to by R Ua Fhloinn with exception of (6) and certain amendments.’ His wife, Sylvia Lynd, wrote, ‘Agreed to on same conditions as R Ua Fhloinn.’ Mabel McConnell (the future wife of Desmond Fitzgerald) wrote, ‘Agreed to by Méadbh Nic Conaill with the exception of 3, 5 and 7 where amendment by R Mac F agreed to.’ Sinéad Nic Pháidín

²²² Quoted in Gerard MacAtasney, *Tom Clarke: Life, Liberty, Revolution* (Sallins, 2013), p. 260.

wrote, 'Agreed to by Sinéad Nic Pháidín with suggested amendments to 3 and 5. Gavan Duffy wrote, 'I oppose all the above resolutions except Lynd's amendment to no. 7 to which I agree.'²²³

Lynd's amendment to no. 3 was simply to change the starting time of the Sunday executive meetings from 11am to 2.30pm. His amendment to no. 5 kept the essence but tempered the language:

That matters of local politics—the Municipal politics of Dublin for example—should be left to the County Committees, or, where County Committees do not exist, to local branches, and that the National Council should only take cognizance of them if requested to give a decision on some point by a County Committee or a branch.²²⁴

There is no record of his amendment to no. 7 but it appears to have significantly changed its import – O'Hegarty referred to it as 'Lynd's emasculated edition'. Resolution 6 was in effect a re-run of the argument of the previous December. Lynd – who was one of the people who defended Griffith in the *Irish Nation* – probably considered that a dead letter. Apparently, then, Lynd agreed with O'Hegarty that time was being wasted by the resident executive on the discussion of municipal politics, but opposed the two resolutions intended to confront Griffith and his paper. His wife took the same view. Mabel McConnell agreed to Lynch's amendment to no. 7 but was apparently happy with no. 6, while Sinéad Nic Pháidín approved of both 6 and 7 as originally drafted. Nevertheless, O'Hegarty saw which way the wind was blowing, and he correctly predicted that 'as things stand now 6 and 7 are lost and the others are incomplete without them.' Resolution 4 was dropped altogether, nos. 1, 2, 3 and the amended no. 5 were proposed by the London Central Branch.²²⁵ They were referred back to the resident executive for consideration.²²⁶ The three dealing with organisation seem never to have been acted on. As for the fourth, the minute book for the first half of 1913 shows that, indeed, local politics were not once touched upon. On the other hand, that may have had more to do with the rapidly changing national situation, and the decline in the number of Sinn Féin

²²³ O'Hegarty to Gavan Duffy, 5 August 1910 (typescript copy by Gavan Duffy). NLI, Gavan Duffy Papers, Ms 5581.

²²⁴ Notices of motion and nominations to executive, 1910 Sinn Féin Annual Congress. In possession of the author.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ 'The Annual Congress', *Sinn Féin*, 9 October 1910.

representatives on Dublin Corporation, than with the O’Hegarty/Lynd resolution of 1910.²²⁷

Gavan Duffy’s response is puzzling. Returning the resolutions to O’Hegarty – with his rejection of six and a half out of the seven, he wrote,

In all the circumstances, it seems to me that it is a pious farce solemnly to propose amendments year after year to the constitution of Sinn Féin, and to allow the organisation to do nothing for its talk beyond holding annual conventions, and if the movement is to live much more radical motions are necessary for the next convention.

I am utterly disgusted at the incompetency of the present executive, and I see no immediate prospect of improvement. I clung to the belief that something would be done, as long as it was possible to believe it, but there is a limit to one’s patience, and we have now seen opportunity after opportunity thrown away without the shadow of an excuse.²²⁸

He was representing himself here as even more radical than O’Hegarty, although he does not seem to have said, written or done anything – either then or at any time before the Rising – that would have marked him as an out-and-out republican. He rejected O’Hegarty’s proposals only because he was ‘not on for a row with the powers that be until I see at least a fair prospect of achieving something by making a row.’ Two days later, in reply to O’Hegarty’s understandable retort that ‘I am hanged if I can follow your logic’, he expanded:

It seems to me that that is the crux, and that we are in this dilemma, that the movement can’t go on at present, without Griffith, who will certainly not agree to being reformed on your lines, while, on the other hand, it can go on with Griffith, on its present ineffectual lines, pending the more satisfactory developments which the future is bound to bring some time.²²⁹

The problem, Gavan Duffy seems to have been saying, was not that Griffith exerted total control over the organisation – he did not – but rather that he was the one person who could keep the movement going. For an organisation already in decline to overthrow its *fons et origo* would be suicide, unless it could replace him with somebody with sufficient charisma to carry the whole organisation in Ireland and Britain on a more radical

²²⁷ Minute books of Sinn Féin, 1912-13. UCD Archives, P163/1.

²²⁸ Gavan Duffy to O’Hegarty, 6 August 1910. NLI, Gavan Duffy Papers, MS 5581.

²²⁹ O’Hegarty to Gavan Duffy, 8 August 1910; Gavan Duffy to O’Hegarty, 10 August 1910. NLI, Gavan Duffy Papers, MS 5581.

platform. Perhaps Gavan Duffy also foresaw that when future events gave an opportunity for radicalisation, Griffith would be in the van. As will be seen in future chapters, that turned out to be the case.

O'Hegarty's resolutions nos. 6 and 7 were proposed at the congress by the Cork branch, of which his brother, Seán O'Hegarty, was chairman. They received no mention whatever in the report of the congress in *Sinn Féin* or any other paper, but the minute book of the Cork branch reveals that they were defeated by twenty-nine votes to nine.²³⁰ Assuming that the two Cork delegates and P.S. O'Hegarty supported their own motion, only six other delegates were found to support it. Traditionally, the congress was where the Dublin executive was at its most vulnerable, so the heavy defeat of O'Hegarty's motions suggest that he had no significant support country-wide. The sequel in the Cork branch is also illuminating. Seán O'Hegarty and Thomas Curtain proposed that the branch dissociate itself from Sinn Féin, because of its position on the paper. The motion was defeated by the narrowest of margins, but only O'Hegarty resigned as a result. If only one member was lost in the 'Rebel County' following the defeat of the motions, it is unlikely that there was any significant loss in the movement in general on the issue.²³¹

In fact, it appears that even the rift between the few dissidents and the leadership lasted only a very short time. The County Wexford republican Robert Brennan, in his book *Allegiance*, recalls a chance meeting between Seán MacDermott and Arthur Griffith in the summer of 1910. It is worth reprinting it in full:

[Griffith] brought me to tea in the DBC where he was to meet some friends... We were joined by Alderman Walter Cole and O'Leary Curtis. After a while I heard a shout from the doorway and looked up to see the pale bright face of Sean MacDermott... Laughing gaily and dragging his crippled leg, he came towards us saying:

"Well, Bob, so you have joined the Green Hungarian Band."

The moment he said it, I knew he was sorry. The mocking name had been bestowed on Sinn Fein by D.P. Moran of "The Leader", the reference being to Griffith's book "The Resurrection of Hungary – a Parallel for Ireland".

Cole and Curtis stiffened and Griffith looked surprised.

"I'm sorry," said Sean, "you know Griffith, I didn't mean that."

²³⁰ Minutes of 16 February 1911. Minute book of Sinn Féin Cork Branch. In possession of the author.

²³¹ Minutes of 23 February, 2 March 1911, *ibid*.

"That's all right, Sean", said Griffith relaxing with a smile, "won't you join us?"

"I'm sorry. I can't. I have an appointment."

I was sorry he could not join us because one of the objects of this visit was to try and close a widening breach between Sean's group and that of Griffith... I thought I saw a way of bringing the two groups together. I failed on this occasion, but a few months later there was an amicable settlement.²³²

The wealth of detail in the above account shows how profound an impression the encounter had on Brennan. There is no reason to doubt his statement that 'a few months later there was an amicable settlement', especially given the obvious warmth between MacDermott and Griffith on that occasion. The close relationship between the *Irish Freedom* group and Sinn Féin on the occasion of the visit of King George V in 1911 will be considered in the following chapter.

Immediately following the publication of the Home Rule Bill in 1912, Sinn Féin held a delegate conference to discuss it. P.S. O'Hegarty and Denis McCullough were both present at the second meeting, and both spoke.²³³ It appears that, eighteen months after Seán O'Hegarty resigned his membership of Sinn Féin, P.S. was still a member, and still willing to contribute to discussion. It must be asked, then, whether any of the small O'Hegarty/Hobson group ever actually 'split' with Sinn Féin, in the sense of walking out.

The IRB

At the same time as the conflict in Sinn Féin, the same small group of people – including O'Hegarty, Hobson, Clarke, MacDermott and McCartan – were involved in an internal struggle in the IRB. Their adversaries were Fred Allan, Seán O'Hanlon and P.T. Daly, the effective leaders of the organisation, whom they would replace in the period 1910-12.

O'Hegarty wrote the manuscript of a memoir, 'Recollections of the IRB', which is preserved in the Casement Papers in the National Library of Ireland. In it he relates how he first joined the Supreme Council as representative of South England in 1907. He says that at that time he believed that a successful rising could be mounted, but that he

soon found that nothing was to be expected from the Supreme Council. They were all impregnated with just one idea about the Organisation, and that just to "keep the

²³² Robert Brennan, *Allegiance* (Dublin, 1950), pp. 13-14.

²³³ 'Sinn Fein and the Bill, *Irish Independent*, 17 April 1912.

spirit alive” as O’Hanlon put it. They never dreamed of arming, or of laying any military plans, or of studying military science at all: all they could vision was a secret society meeting month after month, collecting subscriptions, which were used in organising and expenses, and just keeping together. My first proposals to build military science were met by the objection that we were too few to begin on that: and my efforts to get arms were met by the statement from O’Hanlon that it would “only be getting chaps into trouble”.

The only person to support him was John MacBride, ‘who was always on the side of the young men.’²³⁴ O’Hegarty says that at that time the Supreme Council was effectively controlled by Allan, O’Hanlon and Daly, and he draws an unflattering sketch of each of them. Allan had been present at the reception of Queen Victoria into Dublin in 1900, when he was secretary to the lord mayor of Dublin, Thomas Pile, but O’Hegarty says, without elaborating, that ‘there were other charges against him also’ (there is no hint of what these charges might have been in Owen McGee’s 2003 article on Allan).²³⁵ Of O’Hanlon he says that ‘his vision was limited, and he had an inordinate admiration for Allan’. Daly, he says, gave the impression of a ‘professional politician’: he spoke and acted for effect, and changed his position if he thought it was unpopular.²³⁶

The biennial elections in 1909 were followed by the cooption of Denis McCullough and Tom Clarke to the Supreme Council. This gave the ‘younger men’ a solid voting bloc of four: McCullough, Clarke, O’Hegarty and MacBride (MacBride would step down in 1911 in favour of Seán MacDermott).²³⁷ Early in 1910, following an investigation by Clan na Gael, P.T. Daly confessed to mishandling £300 of Clan money, and was forced to resign from the Supreme Council. Allan temporarily took on Daly’s job of secretary, and he and O’Hanlon continued to dominate the Supreme Council, as they had ‘some sort of pull’ over Daly’s replacement, John Mulholland of Glasgow.²³⁸ This, then, was the situation when the scheme for a monthly paper was brought forward in the summer of 1910. Who was the prime mover of the scheme depends on who is telling the story. Hobson, in his witness statement, says

²³⁴ O’Hegarty, ‘Recollections of the IRB’.

²³⁵ Owen McGee, ‘Fred Allan (1861-1937): Republican, Methodist and Dubliner’, *Dublin Historical Record*, 56:2 (Autumn 2003), *passim*.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

²³⁷ O’Hegarty, ‘Recollections of the IRB’.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

...in order to infuse life into the Organisation, I proposed that the I.R.B. should publish a paper, but was opposed by Allan, O'Hanlon and other conservative leaders in the Organisation. On my stating that if they would not start a paper I would start out myself they gave way, the result was that in November, 1910, the first issue of "Irish Freedom", a monthly, appeared.²³⁹

O'Hegarty, in his 1917 memoir, says

A monthly paper was, of course, a cherished project of mine, and of all the younger man, but we never proposed it because we didn't think it would get through. Tom Clarke, however, at one of his early meetings proposed it, and as O'Hanlon at the time had a great respect for Tom he didn't oppose it, and we carried it.²⁴⁰

McCartan, writing to John Devoy in March 1910, said

It has been suggested, and most of the men who take an interest in the whole thing support the idea that a monthly paper should be started & sustained by monthly subscription when some crisis turns up. Whether such a paper would do much or not is a question but it would likely be better than nothing. Hobson was thinking of such a paper any time now...²⁴¹

Pat McCartan was chosen as editor because Allan and O'Hanlon would not accept either Hobson or O'Hegarty, whom they did not trust.²⁴² McCartan, who was approaching his final medical exam, told Joe McGarrity that he was reluctant to take the job, but did so because 'otherwise it would have fallen into hands into which we did not wish to fall'.²⁴³ Allan included himself on the editorial committee so that he could keep the others under control.

Relations seem to have remained stable until the announcement of the impending visit of King George V to Dublin. In February 1911, McCartan told *Irish Freedom* readers of a forthcoming public meeting of the Wolfe Tone Memorial Committee to celebrate the anniversary of the birth of Robert Emmet. It would, he said, be an opportunity for nationalists to make their views felt on 'the probable display of flunkeyism' that would attend the king's visit the following July.²⁴⁴ McCartan's friend Tom Clarke, a member of the Supreme Council of the IRB, told him quietly that no such resolution would be proposed, because it would be regarded by the IRB leaders as 'politics'. McCartan had

²³⁹ BMH, WS 30 (Bulmer Hobson), p. 5.

²⁴⁰ O'Hegarty, 'Recollections of the IRB'.

²⁴¹ William O'Brien and Desmond Ryan, *Devoy's Post Bag* (Dublin, 1953), volume 2, p. 391.

²⁴² BMH, WS 30 (Bulmer Hobson); O'Hegarty, 'Recollections of the IRB'.

²⁴³ McCartan to McGarrity, 6 September 1910, NLI, McGarrity Papers, Ms 17,457/113.

²⁴⁴ 'The Emmet Anniversary', *Irish Freedom*, February 1911, p. 4.

the impression that Clarke was not in agreement with the leadership. Years later he remembered:

During the meeting I was sitting near Countess Markievicz. Pdraig Pearse was the orator. I remember the part of the speech that caught me was when he said: “Dublin will have to do some great act to atone for the disgrace in not producing a man that would dash his head against a stone wall in an attempt to rescue Robert Emmet”. I thought to myself, “Well now! Here I am sitting and afraid to propose a resolution”. I wrote out my resolution on the back of an envelope protesting against loyal addresses to the King of England.

Tom Clarke was sitting in the front seat with a man named Corbett from San Francisco. I went down to him. The St. James Band was playing a selection at this time. I read the resolution to Tom and he said, “Pat, I can’t give you any advice. You know what the decision on this matter was”...Just as Tom said he could give me no advice the band was clearing off the stage having finished its recital. I threw my leg over the footlights, got up on the stage and proposed the resolution. Tom jumped up after me and seconded it, and the thing went with a whoop. The resolution was passed with enthusiasm.²⁴⁵

McCartan followed this up with an editorial in the following month’s *Irish Freedom* calling for the formation of an all-party committee to oppose an address. Allan and O’Hanlon reacted angrily. McCartan and Clarke were called to account for their action, and there was a threat to ‘take it to another place’ i.e. an IRB court-martial.²⁴⁶ In fact, nothing more happened for several months, possibly because of the success of the anti-address movement. Then, in November, the editorial committee was suspended. The December issue of *Irish Freedom* was published by ‘the executive of the Wolfe Tone Clubs’. Undaunted, McCartan found the money, and found an alternative printer, and published his own edition. There was a confrontation in December 1911 or January 1912. Resignations were demanded, but it became clear that McCartan and his committee had the support of the Clan na Gael leaders, who had failed to communicate with Allan and O’Hanlon during the whole year, and supplied the money necessary to bring out a rival edition of the paper. In the end, it was Allan and O’Hanlon who resigned from the Supreme Council of the IRB, along with two other older members.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁵ ‘Extracts from the Papers of the Late Dr. Patrick McCartan’, *Clogher Record* 5:1 (1963), pp. 43-4.

²⁴⁶ McCartan to Joseph McGarrity, 14 March 1911, McGarrity Papers, NLI, Ms17,457/9.

²⁴⁷ Owen McGee, *The IRB*, p. 352.

What is striking about the correspondence between McCartan and McGarrity in this period is the intensity of the antipathy towards Allan and, to a lesser extent, O'Hanlon. Neither is ever referred to by name. McCartan refers to Allan as 'our friend with the glasses', and later as 'our friend with the windows', while O'Hanlon is 'his man Friday'. Thus, in a letter dated 18 March 1911, he told McGarrity:

I am engaged or about to be engaged in a hand to hand fight with our friend with the glasses. All over my resolution about which I wrote in last letter. I may have to go to extremes as I suspect underhand treatment. Every effort has so far been [made] to misrepresent me.²⁴⁸

In a following letter he said that there had been 'the devil of a fuss kicked up' and that there had been a special meeting of the Executive of the Wolfe Tone Memorial Committee which resolved that McCartan should be '*expelled* from all National Organisations.' He adds, 'You know what that means.' That was not the end of it. There was to be a meeting of 'another body' to consider his case. McCartan said

I hope to be able to turn the tables on him before it is all over. I am preparing for all kinds of doggery and underhand work... I may get him into a corner by a fight & at worst they can only expel me and face a prolonged fight and period of discontent which will dispel all the dreams of harmless happiness and inactivity. If any monkey business is tried on I'll issue a stop press edition of the paper and give the whole history of the trouble with the sketch of our friend and a photo of him receiving the Queen. I'll also get interviews with some of his old colleagues who would touch nothing with which he is associated... He has taken shelter behind Jack [O'Hanlon] all the time & it was Jack I offended & Jack said & this & that & what not. I am now on the straight road with a clear issue and I feel game for the fray.²⁴⁹

By the beginning of April the issue had been parked, but McCartan confessed that he 'would have preferred he had fought for I think he would have had to clear out entirely if [he] had'.²⁵⁰ The feud continued to simmer, however, and in June he said of Allan, 'I don't think he can escape & if he does I'll keep it up & up till he is forced to his knees. I have letters enough to convict him of *breaches* of discipline.'²⁵¹ And later, 'Though I

²⁴⁸ McCartan to McGarrity, 18 March 1911. Joseph McGarrity Papers, NLI, Ms 17,457/9.

²⁴⁹ McCartan to McGarrity, undated [March 1911]. *Ibid.*

²⁵⁰ McCartan to McGarrity, 1 April 1911. *Ibid.*

²⁵¹ McCartan to McGarrity, 2 June 1911. *Ibid.*

have no direct proof I am confident he is a crook of the first water. But I believe he is on the run & if possible will keep him on it.²⁵²

This was the situation between them when in December 1911 the entire editorial committee was suspended by the executive of the Wolfe Tone Clubs. Next day, according to McCartan, ‘the office was raided on the orders of “Windows”’, and the printer was threatened with legal action if he printed anything for the suspended committee. The committee somehow found £100 to indemnify the printers (McCartan asked McGarrity to cable that amount, as it had to be repaid in a few days), and meanwhile looked for an alternative printers. Then

When our friends saw we were determined to keep the paper going they decided to issue another & it has appeared this evening but the agents won’t handle it as they know us & don’t know them. Ours will be ready tomorrow morning per usual... I am fully convinced of the part our friend is playing in the piece. A row suits his purpose just at the present moment. Business was too good or becoming so...²⁵³

The concern for McCartan and his friends was more than merely their position in the movement: it was the future of the movement itself. McCartan said,

I have worried more over it than anything for years. The whole business is thrown on B[ulmer], myself & Father Tom [Clarke]. We may not secure the desired reform but at least we did our part in trying. If we lose there is no hope for years...²⁵⁴

McCartan said throughout that he would be quite content to lose his own position if only Allan were taken out of the picture. This is precisely what happened at a meeting of the committee on Sunday, 31 December 1911. Both McCartan and Allan were removed, and Seán MacDermott was brought onto the committee, meaning that it was now totally controlled by the militants. McCartan wrote

The combination has been practically smashed. Windows needs just another kick but apparently he’ll not wait for it as he is running away & his man Friday is running with him as they do not accept defeat.

That McGarrity was fully in sympathy with McCartan, and fully in accord with his assessment of Allan and O’Hanlon, is clear from a draft letter from McGarrity to McCartan dated 10 April 1912. Opening with ‘My dear brother’– which marks it out as IRB correspondence rather than just a friendly letter – it said,

²⁵² McCartan to McGarrity, 23 June 1911. Ibid.

²⁵³ McCartan to McGarrity, 12 December 1911. Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

Windows and his man Friday I was glad to hear have stepped down. That should be good for the crop this year. Perhaps they intend to start business on their own account. I think even that would be much better than remaining with the old company. I trust there is no other very objectionable people in the way of progress now. It would not surprise me to see Windows propose himself to get placed with or by Mr Redmond.²⁵⁵

This, of course, was a very insulting thing to say about Irish republicans. The level of invective directed at Allan and O'Hanlon makes the criticism of Griffith two years previously look very tame by comparison. The fact that it was Joseph McGarrity talking, apparently officially, in such terms shows the deep mistrust and dislike of those two at the highest level of American Fenianism, in contrast with the more intellectual criticism of Griffith, however passionate, by people who at that stage were not at the top rung of Irish republicanism. Moreover, while Griffith quickly regained the respect of the radical IRB men, Allan and O'Hanlon never did, although Allan would make an important contribution at the latter end of the decade, ironically within Sinn Féin.²⁵⁶

As Owen McGee has remarked, gaining control of the IRB Supreme Council did not mean very much at that time, because the organisation was small and ineffective. Seán T. O'Kelly, who was a section leader in the Teeling circle in the 1900s, said in his autobiography that he was often asked 'what did you do at an IRB meeting?' His answer was as follows. First, there was a roll call. Then there was a list of names read out that had been submitted by other circles as candidates for admission to the organisation, and members were asked if they knew the people, and whether they were suitable. There was a discussion of things related to nationalism, such as current plays, newspapers and journals, and whether they were good or bad from a national point of view. Finally, there was a discussion of national organisations such as the GAA and the Gaelic League: the importance of being involved in them and advancing their aims, their potential as a recruiting ground for the IRB, and, if there was an election coming up, which candidates ought to be supported.²⁵⁷ Ernest Blythe said that 'little else transpired at the meetings apart from the collection of subscriptions and a talk from a visiting Centre on behalf of

²⁵⁵ McGarrity to McCartan, 16 April 1912. *Ibid.*

²⁵⁶ McGee, 'Fred Allan', p. 212.

²⁵⁷ Seán T. Ó Ceallaigh, *Seán T.* (Galway, 1963), pp. 49-50.

the Dublin Centre's Board.²⁵⁸ In other words, the IRB at ground level was little more than a talking shop by the beginning of 1912. There is no evidence, however, that the resignation of Allan and O'Hanlon was followed by a root and branch re-organisation of the IRB; in fact, there is no evidence that it impacted on the rank and file at all. Recruitment was not a priority during 1912 and 1913. It was the formation of the Irish Volunteers at the end of the latter year that provided both an incentive and an opportunity for recruitment. It was by means of this recruitment, and by bringing the Volunteer leaders Pearse, Plunkett, MacDonagh and Ceannt into the family that Clarke and MacDermott were able to use the infrastructure of the IRB to plan and execute the Rising. Even then, old-time IRB members could not be relied on to show the new revolutionary spirit. Ernest Blythe recalled visiting three old Fenians in Ennis, Co. Clare, while organising the Irish Volunteers in 1915, and being reprimanded for bringing them to the attention of the RIC with the words, 'I would be very glad if you would clear off immediately.'²⁵⁹

Arthur Griffith

It is true that, in Davis's words, 'the interesting fact emerges that Griffith was voted down in his own organisation',²⁶⁰ but this was nothing new. As far back as the first congress of the National Council on 28 November 1905, Griffith was among those who did not favour the formation of branches in the country, but the motion to form them was passed. In 1907, as has been seen, Griffith held out against amalgamation of the three Sinn Féin organisations, but the amalgamation was effected at the annual congress.

Davis goes on to say, 'the only certain fact is that Griffith – whose control of the paper and the movement generally, rendered him secure – was due to face considerable opposition in the future.'²⁶¹ He makes the same point about control elsewhere. In the chapter on organisation, he says that 'at the apex of the pyramid was Arthur Griffith and his paper', and again, 'the solid basis of Sinn Féin was Griffith and the paper which was not in any way controlled by the organisation.'²⁶² If that were so, the departure of his

²⁵⁸ Ó Broin, Leon, *Revolutionary Underground: The Story of the Irish Republican Brotherhood 1858-1924* (Dublin, 1976), p. 148.

²⁵⁹ Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p. 115.

²⁶⁰ Davis, 'Rise of Sinn Féin', p. 93.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 93-4.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 116.

opponents should have allowed ‘Griffith and his paper’ to re-assert their hegemony over the following years. An examination of the minute book of the executive for the first six and a half months of 1913 does not bear out that assumption. Griffith attended only ten of twenty-one meetings, and chaired only five. This can be compared with Jennie Wyse Power, who attended eleven and chaired six, Pádraig Ó Caoimh, who attended nineteen, James Whelan, who attended eighteen and chaired one, Patrick Morgan, who attended sixteen and chaired two, and Constance Markievicz and Éamonn Ceannt, who attended fourteen each, Markievicz chairing twice and Ceannt once.²⁶³ At a special delegate congress held in March 1913 to discuss the political situation, Griffith put forward a suggestion for a monster meeting in April 1914 to commemorate the Battle of Clontarf. The matter was referred back to the resident executive. The executive set aside the meeting of 10 April to discuss the proposal, but it was not in fact raised, either on that date or later.²⁶⁴ Griffith had in effect been told to do the work himself, or let it go. At the same special congress, the Central Branch, in a multi-part motion, called on *Sinn Féin* to cease its coverage of the Home Rule Bill and to deal with certain named matters instead. Griffith defended the paper, saying that ‘he had carried out the exact instructions recommended by the last congress re the Home Rule Bill.’ He promised to deal with the matters referred to in future editions of the paper.²⁶⁵ Far from Griffith and his paper controlling the organisation, therefore, it would seem that both were answerable *to* the organisation.

Griffith’s relationship with the IRB was a complex one. His resignation from the organisation in 1910 came at the height of the Sinn Féin debate between himself and Hobson and O’Hegarty, and appears to have been directly connected with it. But it would not be true to say, as Michael Laffan has said, that after his resignation ‘it seemed as if events had passed him by and that he was out of tune with the new mood of the times.’²⁶⁶ Rather, as will be seen, in the years leading up to the Rising Griffith’s stock rose, and he was apparently more in tune with ‘the new mood of the times’ than either Hobson or O’Hegarty.

²⁶³ Minute book of Sinn Féin executive, 1913. UCD Archives, P163.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 22 March, 27 March, 10 April 1913.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 22 March 1913.

²⁶⁶ Laffan, *Resurrection of Ireland*, p. 33.

Griffith's early involvement with the IRB was dealt with in some depth by Leon Ó Broin in his 1976 study of the IRB, *Revolutionary Underground*. It has received scant attention since, so it is worth outlining here. Griffith's first involvement with militant republicanism, when he was twenty, was in fact with a breakaway faction which Ó Broin calls the Irish *National* Brotherhood or INB.²⁶⁷ The IRB split of the 1890s was the result of a split in its American sister organisation, Clan na Gael. What happened there was that a group known as the Triangle – a mixture of Mafia-type gang and political machine – went to war with the main body of the organisation under John Devoy.²⁶⁸ In Ireland and Britain, however, the breakaway group, which became known as the Irish *National* Brotherhood or INB and was led by Dr. Mark Ryan of London, did not share the criminal or political tendencies of the Triangle, and was quite possibly unaware of them.²⁶⁹ Their differences with the IRB leadership were a mixture of personal and doctrinal. They differed personally with Fred Allan, the IRB leader, whom they perceived as having gone soft on insurrection and being too close with Parnellite parliamentarians and their leader, John Redmond, and they attacked the doctrine of abstaining from military action until they had the support of the whole Irish people. As one circular put it:

Away with men who would fain postpone the battle; they are cowards. Ignore them; they are like snakes in the grass. The time is now to hit, not tomorrow. Each day but adds a galling link to the chain that already binds our land.²⁷⁰

It was this militant group, not the more cautious IRB, that Griffith joined in the early 1890s, along with his friend, William Rooney. They made an immediate impact; Griffith was appointed by Dr Mark Ryan as chief organiser in Ireland and Rooney as chief secretary in Ireland.²⁷¹ John MacBride, who became a life-long friend of Griffith, was considered an important figure in the 'new movement', while another well-known member was the less extreme W.B. Yeats, also a personal friend of Griffith.²⁷² Maud Gonne claimed in her autobiography that she had been sworn into this exclusively male organisation by Mark Ryan.²⁷³

²⁶⁷ Leon Ó Broin, *Revolutionary Underground: The story of the Irish Republican Brotherhood 1858-1924* (Dublin, 1976), p. 108.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 60-1.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 63-4.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.* p. 66.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.* p. 109.

²⁷² Ó Broin, *Revolutionary Underground*, pp. 92-5.

²⁷³ Maud Gonne MacBride, *A Servant of the Queen* (Gerrards Cross, 1994), pp. 293-4.

The approaching centenary of the 1798 Rising and the healing of the rift in America led to the absorption of the dissident faction into the IRB. By this time Griffith had moved to South Africa. When he returned to Ireland in 1899 he was invited to re-join the IRB but hesitated. 'He suspected persons had influence in the organisation about whom he had grave apprehensions and who were mystery-mongers and mischief-makers.'²⁷⁴ In the end, he remained in the organisation and resumed his role as an activist. He was a founding member of the Transvaal Committee, which had heavy IRB involvement; John MacBride was another founding member. The following year, 1900, Griffith campaigned for MacBride in his unsuccessful bid to win a parliamentary seat in South Mayo.²⁷⁵ That same year he was a founding member of Cumann na nGaedheal, an umbrella organisation for advanced societies which Michael Laffan has described as 'little more than a front for the IRB.'²⁷⁶ Cumann na nGaedheal was the first of three organisations that would amalgamate in 1907 to form Sinn Féin.

What was Griffith's position in the IRB? He was a member of the Bartholomew Teeling circle, arguably the most active circle in the country, and one whose members included many men who would become prominent in the revolutionary period, but he never held any position of seniority, such as centre or secretary, and indeed he rarely attended meetings. His section leader, Seán T. O'Kelly, was dispatched on several occasions to try to get Griffith to attend, but still never saw him at a meeting.²⁷⁷ Presumably, such indiscipline would have led to the expulsion of an ordinary member. For that matter, it is most unlikely that Griffith would have remained in any organisation that held no interest for him. It is not unreasonable to conclude that his continued membership was of mutual benefit to him and the IRB, and that he served the organisation, not as a rank-and-file member, but through his newspaper and his leadership of several advanced organisations in which the IRB had an interest, including Sinn Féin. Within Sinn Féin there was ongoing tension between Griffith and some of the more militant members, particularly Bulmer Hobson and P.S. O'Hegarty, but those people were not at the time in senior positions within the IRB, while on the other hand Griffith's friend John MacBride was a member of the Supreme Council.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 93-5.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 110-11.

²⁷⁶ Laffan, *The Reurrection of Ireland*, p. 21.

²⁷⁷ Prionsias Ó Conluain (ed), *Seán T.: Scéal a Bheatha á Insint ag Seán T. Ó Ceallaigh* (Galway, 1963), p. 47.

The tension increased, however, as Hobson and O’Hegarty became ascendant within the IRB. During 1910, while O’Hegarty was criticising *Sinn Féin* in the columns of the *Irish Nation*, the Dublin Centres Board of the IRB, of which Bulmer Hobson was chairman, held a meeting with Griffith at which it offered to subsidise the *Sinn Féin* paper, which was in financial difficulties, if he would agree to submit its content to them in advance of publication. Griffith refused, at which point the board discussed a motion to expel him from the organisation for insubordination, but the motion failed.²⁷⁸ In the summer of 1910, as P.S. O’Hegarty was drawing up a list of proposed motions for the Sinn Féin annual congress in September, including motions aimed directly at Griffith and at his paper, and *Irish Freedom* was being launched, with Patrick McCartan as editor, O’Hegarty and Hobson on the editorial board, and Seán MacDermott as manager, Griffith resigned from the IRB and Aindrias Ó Broin was expelled.

Griffith’s resignation was explained by O’Hegarty in an article in the *Sunday Independent* in 1947 to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of his death. In 1910, he said, Griffith

asked to be allowed to resign from the IRB. Not because of any disagreement with its thought or principles, but because he thought that the right exercised by the Supreme Council of the IRB, of directing the actions of its members in outside organisations...might possibly prove irksome to him in connection with the Sinn Féin organisation...he felt that his position in that organisation demanded that his actions in it should not have even the appearance of even an indirect direction from outside.²⁷⁹

This was the explanation given in two biographies of Griffith that came out shortly afterwards, by Pádraic Colum and Seán Ó Lúing. A letter sent by Patrick McCartan to Joseph McGarrity in the summer of 1910 tells the story somewhat differently, however:

Griffith resigned from the family because he would not confer with his brothers to discuss the course to be taken on certain things as they turned up publicly. The Secretary of Sinn Féin was expelled for refusing to obey his superiors.²⁸⁰

It is hard to escape the conclusion that Griffith’s resignation was directly related to the controversy in Sinn Féin. A behind-the-scenes story was eventually told by George Lyons, a close acquaintance of Griffith, in a magazine article in 1950. Lyons in 1910 was centre of the Emerald circle of the IRB in Dublin. Aindrias Ó Broin, general secretary of

²⁷⁸ George Lyons, manuscript draft article. NLI, Ms 33,675/L/2.

²⁷⁹ P.S. O’Hegarty, 'What Was Arthur Griffith?', *Sunday Independent*, 24 August 1947.

²⁸⁰ McCartan to McGarrity, n.d. (August/September 1910). NLI, McGarrity Papers, Ms 17457/8.

Sinn Féin, was his immediate subordinate. When Lyons moved to the north of Ireland, his position became vacant. A message was received from the Dublin Centres Board instructing members not to vote for any man who had outside political responsibilities. The members duly ignored this and elected Ó Broin as centre. The board demanded his immediate resignation, and when he refused he was suspended. Griffith resigned from the IRB in protest.²⁸¹ Lyons's take on this was that it was Fred Allan, an old adversary of Griffith, who had been responsible for this. Nowhere does Lyons allude to the conflict between Griffith and Hobson, who was head of the Dublin Centres Board. But in fact, since relations between Hobson and Allan were not yet at a particular low in 1910, it is not impossible that they combined against Griffith, whom both saw as an irritant.

By the beginning of 1912 the spheres of influence might have seemed to have been sharply drawn: the militants to confine themselves to the IRB and Griffith to confine himself to Sinn Féin. But as has been seen, within a short time relations between them were warmer than they had been before the rift. By 1913 Tom Clarke, writing to John Devoy about the Wolfe Tone memorial project (another IRB front), said enthusiastically, 'I saw A. Griffith the other day and he was pleased to stand in with us on the General Purposes Committee and also to give us whatever space we need for reports of meetings, etc.'²⁸² In early 1915, after *Sinn Féin* was suppressed by the authorities, Clarke, on behalf of the IRB, funded a new newspaper to be edited by Griffith, called *Nationality*.²⁸³ Its premises were the old *Irish Freedom* premises in D'Olier Street, and its manager was Seán MacDermott. Griffith maintained a particularly close relationship with MacDermott. When James Connolly went missing in January 1916, his friend and colleague William O'Brien, believing he might have been abducted by the IRB, went in search of Seán MacDermott, and met him on O'Connell Street walking with Griffith – the two were coming from Tom Clarke's shop. O'Brien was cautious about mentioning Connolly's disappearance, but MacDermott told him that Griffith was aware of the situation and that he could speak freely in front of him.²⁸⁴

²⁸¹ George Lyons, 'Griffith's Association with the IRB', *Forum*, January 1950, p. 7.

²⁸² Clake to Devoy, 18 June 1913, in William O'Brien and Desmond Ryan, *Devoy's Post Bag*, Volume 2 (Dublin, 1953), p. 410.

²⁸³ Gerard MacAtasney, *Seán MacDiarmada: The Mind of the Revolution* (Manorhamilton, 2004), p. 155.

²⁸⁴ BMH WS 1766 (William O'Brien), p. 67.

But the best indicator of Griffith's strong links to the new IRB leadership is the fact that, when a meeting was arranged between senior IRB men and James Connolly in September 1914 to discuss plans for a rising before the war's end, Griffith was present. Bulmer Hobson, still head of the Dublin Centres Board, was not.²⁸⁵ Griffith agreed to the rising but insisted that he be kept informed of the plans.²⁸⁶ He was asked to join the Supreme Council of the IRB at that time but declined, as he wanted to remain independent.²⁸⁷ According to a memoir by Seán T. O'Kelly, he, William O'Brien and Griffith were all intended to be part of a civil government during the Rising, along with Tom Kelly and Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington.²⁸⁸ This part of the plan was not put into operation.

Unfortunately for Griffith, the man he relied on to keep him informed of preparations for the rising was Seán MacDermott, and MacDermott was careful to inform nobody, not even the president of the IRB, of any of the plans. As a result, when Griffith found out late in Holy Week that a rising was imminent he joined those people who tried to prevent it. When the Rising went ahead, however, he sent word to the GPO, asking to be allowed to join it. The response was that he was more useful to them outside as a propagandist. Griffith himself told this to Liam Ó Briain, and also in a speech he made at a small dinner given by Ó Briain in 1917. It was confirmed by Gearóid O'Sullivan who said that MacDermott had told him, 'we have got a very nice letter from Griffith.'²⁸⁹ Griffith's role as propagandist – essentially as propagandist for the IRB – was integral to the plan for the Rising. In Ó Briain's words, 'they wanted his pen to survive to carry on his own work and some day to defend and justify them.'²⁹⁰ According to Maud Griffith, MacDermott before his execution had a message sent to her husband apologising for not keeping him informed of the plans; the leaders had felt, he said, that 'it would be better not, so that Arthur might live on after themselves to keep the National Movement alive.'²⁹¹ Despite this, Griffith went to meet Eoin MacNeill on Thursday of Easter week, and persuaded him that they should draw up a joint proclamation calling for a general rising in the country.

²⁸⁵ Seán T. Ó Ceallaigh, 'Arthur Griffith', *Capuchin Annual*, 1966, pp. 140-1; William O'Brien, Introduction to Desmond Ryan (ed.), *Labour and Easter Week: A Selection from the Writings of James Connolly* (Dublin, 1949), p. 3.

²⁸⁶ Ó Ceallaigh, 'Arthur Griffith', pp. 140-1.

²⁸⁷ BMH WS 3 (Liam Ó Briain), pp. 1-2.

²⁸⁸ Seán T. O'Kelly, '1916 Before and After', NLI, Seán T. Ó Ceallaigh Papers, Ms 27,692.

²⁸⁹ BMH WS 3 (Liam Ó Briain), pp. 3-4; WS 707 (Michael Noyk), p. 10.

²⁹⁰ BMH WS 3 (Liam Ó Briain), p. 4.

²⁹¹ BMH WS 202 (Maud Griffith), p. 2.

Only the imminent collapse of the Rising in Dublin prevented him from issuing the proclamation, which would certainly have resulted in his execution.²⁹²

After the Rising, both the nature and the function of the IRB are less clear. A number of people left the organisation at that time: they believed that secret societies had had their day, and that this was the time for open action. Cathal Brugha, for instance, left the IRB having been an active member since his youth, and the animosity that developed between him and Michael Collins was at least partly due to Brugha's resentment at the continuing attempts by the IRB to run the show; Collins was by then president of the IRB. In 1917 some of the newer IRB men, like Collins and Harry Boland, had attempted – unsuccessfully – to take over the Sinn Féin party and overthrow the old Sinn Féin leaders. But unlike Brugha, Griffith was able to work in close harmony with Collins within the Dáil cabinet. The very fact that it was Griffith who described Collins in the Treaty debates as 'the man who won the war' shows not only how much he admired and respected the IRB president, but also that Griffith's appetite for war had not diminished in thirty years. Griffith subsequently told the American reporter Hayden Talbot: 'It has been repeatedly said that the Sinn Fein movement was not militant, and that I was wedded to the theory of non-resistance...But Sinn Fein was not pacifistic. The militant movement existed within it, and by its side.'²⁹³

The takeover of the Supreme Council by the six, and the foundation of *Irish Freedom*, were pivotal. For the first time the Supreme Council was dominated by men who believed in physical force in the short term. Even those, such as O'Hegarty and Hobson, who later opposed the Rising, frankly declared – both then and later – that that was their aim at the time. The upheavals in Sinn Féin were of far less consequence. All that happened, in essence, is that Sinn Féin – as a movement, not just Arthur Griffith – declined to become merely a physical force party. It did not reject physical force, but simply left it to the physical force men, who in many cases were also senior Sinn Féin members, at local as well as national level, for instance Tom Kenny of Craughwell and Tomás Ó Lochlainn in

²⁹² BMH WS 3 (Liam Ó Briain), pp. 4-7.

²⁹³ Hayden Talbot, *Michael Collins' Own Story* (London, 1923), pp. 49-50.

Carron, County Clare.²⁹⁴ The same thing happened in the War of Independence: Sinn Féin did politics, the IRA did barracks.

What was the net effect of the upheavals?

1. On Sinn Féin, virtually none. It continued to conduct its business as before. Membership fell off as a result of the pending Home Rule Bill, but there is no reason to think that there was any action, extreme or otherwise, that it could have taken to halt or reverse that trend.
2. On the IRB at grassroots level, apparently none. Police reports do not suggest any increase or change in direction of activity. In the Bureau of Military History's witness statements, there is no reference to a change or increase of activity at the level of circle or county after January 1912. Even the writings of O'Hegarty, Hobson, McCartan or McCullough do not make any references to reorganisation or scaling up of activity at grassroots level. There is simply no evidence that the changes on the Supreme Council had any immediate impact on individual circles, even in Dublin.
3. On relations between the extremists and Arthur Griffith, a brief cooling followed by renewal of strong bonds. Griffith was invited to the meeting at which a rising was decided on, and was asked to edit the IRB newspaper *Nationality*. Although he formally resigned membership of the IRB, he continued in close relation with it. Leon Ó Broin said that the IRB continued, as always, to work with him, recognising him for what he was, the greatest separatist force in the country'.²⁹⁵

The founding of *Irish Freedom* can be seen as a first step in the process that would lead to the Rising, as was the founding of *The Nation* in 1848 or the *Irish People* in 1867, but it cannot be seen as revealing a fault line between extremists and moderates, between physical force and passive resistance, or between the IRB and Sinn Féin.

²⁹⁴ Fergus Campbell, *Land and Revolution: Nationalist Politics in the West of Ireland 1891-1921* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 172-3; David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life, 1913-1921: Provincial Experience of War and Revolution* (Dublin, 1977), pp. 113, 114.

²⁹⁵ Ó Broin, *Revolutionary Underground*, p. 136.

3. The Royal Visit of 1911

The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate that, despite the disputes within advanced nationalism described in the previous chapter, advanced nationalist organisations worked cordially together to defeat what was seen as an act symbolic of the conquest of Ireland by Britain: the presentation of an address of welcome (referred to by advanced nationalists as a 'loyal address') by Dublin Corporation to King George V on the occasion of his state visit to Ireland in 1911. It will build on Senia Pašeta's 1999 article on the 1900 visit of Queen Victoria and the 1903 visit of Edward VII,¹ and show how, in 1913, the issue brought together Sinn Féin, the IRB radicals, labour and women's groups in solidarity.

In May 1910, following the death of King Edward VII, Sinn Féin held a meeting at Beresford Place to protest against the actions of public bodies in sending messages of sympathy to the royal family. Henry Dixon, a veteran Fenian and a founding member of the National Council, presided, and speakers included Arthur Griffith, Francis Sheehy Skeffington, W.T. Cosgrave, Seán Milroy, John MacBride and Alderman Tom Kelly. The Chief Commissioner of the Dublin Metropolitan Police commented that 'from the general tone of the speakers it would appear that those people are about to enter on a campaign similar to that of 1901-03 to prevent Public Boards presenting addresses to The King in the event of His Majesty visiting this country.'²

The royal entry was utilised by the Tudor monarchs not only as a display of pageantry for the entertainment of the masses but also as an occasion for those masses to acknowledge the power and authority of the monarch.³ Beginning with the entry of Catherine of Aragon into London, a new custom was introduced whereby the monarch was met by the lord mayor and the recorder at Cheapside. The recorder presented her with a loyal address on behalf of the lord mayor and commonalty of the city, after which she proceeded past the aldermen and into the city.⁴ The custom of the royal entry was discontinued in

¹ Senia Pašeta, 'Nationalist responses to two royal visits to Ireland, 1900 and 1903', *Irish Historical Studies*, xxxi: 124 (Nov. 1999).

² Nationalist Organisations: Secret Societies: Précis Of Information And Reports Relating To The D.M.P. District June 1910, The National Archive, London (NAUK), CO 904/12.

³ Sydney Anglo, *Spectacle, Pageantry and Early Tudor Policy* (Oxford, 1997), *passim*.

⁴ Laurence Manley, *Literature and Culture in Early Modern London* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 247.

England in the succeeding centuries. It persisted, however, through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in the choreography of royal visits to Scotland and Ireland. The entry of a monarch into Dublin contained all the essential elements of the Tudor royal entry. Michael McCarthy, an Irish writer sympathetic to the British government, and especially to Queen Victoria, described her entry into Dublin in 1901 at considerable length:

At the magnificent structure at Leeson Street Bridge, designed for the occasion, on the model of old Baggotrath Castle, which stood somewhere in the locality, entrance for the Queen was demanded by the Athlone Pursuivant-at-Arms. Advancing to the Lord Mayor, Athlone, mounted on a sorry nag, said: – “Mr Lord Mayor of Dublin, I seek admission to the city of Dublin for her most gracious Majesty the Queen.” The Lord Mayor replied – on behalf of the city of Dublin I desire to tender to the Queen the most hearty welcome to her Majesty’s ancient city, and on the arrival of her Majesty the city gates shall be thrown open on the instant.” This was followed by loud cheers from the expectant crowds.

... The Lord Mayor and Corporation stood on the Queen’s side of the roadway, facing Adelaide Road, the City Marshal...with the keys on a cushion at the Lord Mayor’s left hand and the *deputy* sword bearer, with the civic sword at his right hand...When the Queen’s carriage stopped, the Lord Mayor was presented to the Queen by the Home Secretary, and advanced with the keys of the city on a cushion saying: “I humbly tender to your Majesty the keys of the ancient city of Dublin” (Cheers). The Queen directed the Lord Mayor to resume charge of them, and they were returned to the city Marshall. The same ceremony was observed with the civic sword.... The town clerk then read the address, which was enclosed in a golden casket of ancient Celtic design, and rested on a cushion of green silk, trimmed with gold border and tassels.⁵

The address began, ‘We, the Aldermen and councillors of the Corporation of the city of Dublin, beg to offer to your Majesty on behalf of ourselves and our fellow citizens a hearty welcome on your arrival in the capital city of your Kingdom in Ireland.’⁶ It was not a simple welcome, but an acknowledgement of her overlordship, and every detail of the choreography was important. McCarthy’s stress on the word ‘deputy’ draws attention

⁵ Michael J.F. McCarthy, *Five Years in Ireland: 1895 to 1900* (London, 1901), pp. 475–6.

⁶ ‘Dublin Corporation: Address Adopted’, *Irish Times*, 15 March 1900.

to the fact that the sword bearer, James Egan, an IRB member, had, at Arthur Griffith's prompting, refused to attend the ceremony.⁷

The presentation of a 'loyal address' in 1900 was a controversial issue even among home rulers. The motion in Dublin Corporation to present the address, proposed by the nationalist lord mayor of Dublin, Thomas Pile, was passed by only 30 votes to 22.⁸ Among those opposed were Tim Harrington MP, who would be lord mayor in 1903, and James J. Farrell, who would be lord mayor in 1911.⁹ Pile received a knighthood as a reward for his performance at the 'city gates'.¹⁰ He also got a mention in Percy French's satirical poem 'The Queen's After-Dinner Speech':

"An' was welcomed in style," sez she,
"By the beautiful smile," sez she,
"Of me Lord Mayor Pile," sez she.
"(Faith, if I done right," sez she,
"I'd make him a knight," sez she).¹¹

The conferring of a knighthood underlines just how important the presentation of an address was to the establishment.

Advanced nationalist opposition to the address was led by the pro-Boer Transvaal Committee, led by Arthur Griffith and Maud Gonne.¹² They vilified Pile, Gonne referring to him as a 'grovelling unionist fishmonger'.¹³ Gonne formed a group of women to organise a 'patriotic children's treat', a nationalist response to the children's treat organised to honour Queen Victoria; the group would become Inghinidhe na hÉireann.¹⁴ The lack of a coherent advanced nationalist movement led Griffith, in the *United Irishman*, to recommend the amalgamation of the many different societies into a single organisation, and Cumann na nGaedheal, one of the forerunners of Sinn Féin, was formed

⁷ Owen McGee and Desmond McCabe, 'Egan, James', *Dictionary of Irish Biography*.
<https://www.dib.ie/biography/egan-james-francis-a2899>.

⁸ Pašeta, 'Nationalist responses', p. 492.

⁹ *Irish Times*, 15 March 1900.

¹⁰ McCarthy, *Five Years in Ireland*, p. 350.

¹¹ Emily Lucy French Daly (ed.), *Chronicles and Poems of Percy French* (Dublin, 1922), p. 55.

¹² Pašeta, 'Nationalist responses', pp. 489, 491.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 492.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 493; Marnie Hay, 'What did advanced nationalists tell Irish children in the early twentieth century?' in Ciara Ní Bhroin and Patricia Kennon (eds), *What do we tell the children? Critical essays on children's literature* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2012), pp 148-9; Janette Condon, 'The Patriotic Children's Treat: Irish Nationalism and Children's Culture at the Twilight of Empire', *Irish Studies Review*, 8:2 (2000), p. 168.

in September 1900, with John O’Leary as its first president. Griffith and Gonne created the structure of the new body, working with others to ‘link up all the existing Nationalist Societies into an open Separatist movement.’¹⁵

The visit of Edward VII to Dublin in 1903 found advanced nationalists better prepared. Opposition to the visit has been described by Senia Pašeta as ‘vocal, decisive and well-organised’, compared with the ‘*ad hoc*’ nature of the 1900 protests.¹⁶ Tim Harrington, as lord mayor, might have been expected to oppose an address, but Griffith claimed in the *United Irishman* that a plot had been hatched whereby Harrington would be away from the city on the day the vote was taken, so as to allow the motion to be passed. A new group, the People’s Protection Committee (PPC), which included Griffith, Gonne and Edward Martyn, went to a fundraising meeting of the UIL in the Rotunda, where Gonne demanded that Harrington state whether he would attend the Corporation meeting and vote against an address. Harrington prevaricated, and a row broke out in which punches, and chairs, were thrown.¹⁷ In the event, after the PPC, renamed the National Council, held ‘one of the largest public meetings to take place in Dublin for many years’, Harrington did attend and voted against the resolution, which was defeated by three votes.¹⁸

When the visit of George V was announced in 1911, it was the *Irish Freedom* group who made the first public move. In February, Patrick McCartan told readers of *Irish Freedom* that the forthcoming public meeting of the Wolfe Tone Memorial Committee to celebrate the anniversary of the birth of Robert Emmet would be an opportunity for nationalists to make their views felt on ‘the probable display of flunkeyism’ that would attend the visit of the king to Ireland in July.¹⁹ As seen in the previous chapter, it was McCartan himself who proposed the resolution, and Tom Clarke who seconded it. McCartan reported the success of the motion in the March issue of *Irish Freedom*, and outlined the next steps to be taken. ‘The first essential’, he said, ‘is a committee representing all sections of Nationalists—Separatists, United Irish Leaguers, Sinn Feiners, Hibernians, All-for-Irelanders, and any others in existence’. He himself offered to do the work necessary to form such a committee, but said that ‘if in the meantime any existing organization

¹⁵ Pašeta, ‘Nationalist responses’, p. 496.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 498.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 498.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 499-500; Lyons, *Ireland*, p. 255.

¹⁹ ‘The Emmet Anniversary’, *Irish Freedom*, February 1911.

undertakes the work we can all join it and give a helping hand.’²⁰ Within days the national council of Sinn Féin issued an invitation to nationalist societies of every kind to come together and form a joint committee to oppose the presentation of addresses of welcome. The executive of the Wolfe Tone Clubs immediately met, ‘and it was unanimously decided that the entire support of the clubs should be given to whatever action was considered best by the central committee of the various societies.’ It also voted a £5 subscription to the committee.²¹

The meeting took place on 24 March at the Sinn Féin headquarters at 6 Harcourt Street, Arthur Griffith presiding. Alderman Tom Kelly proposed the formation of a committee; The O’Rahilly seconded. William Cosgrave, Constance Markievicz and John MacBride (all members of Sinn Féin) spoke. The Wolfe Tone Clubs were represented by P. O’Loughlin (possibly Pat O’Loughlin, an old Fenian who was centre of the Lord Edward Fitzgerald circle in Dublin),²² who also spoke in support of the motion, and suggested that, if Coronation Day (22 June) were declared a national holiday, nationalists ought to proclaim it as Irish Independence Declaration Day.²³

Advanced nationalist women were also organising. Lady Aberdeen, wife of the lord lieutenant, had proposed an address of welcome to Queen Mary from all the women of Ireland. This would be organised by the wives of deputy lieutenants in each county, and every woman signing the address would be asked for a contribution, ‘ranging from a halfpenny to a shilling’, to defray expenses.²⁴ There was a concern among nationalists that women, particularly working women, who refused to sign would be victimised. Accordingly, a meeting of nationalist women was held at the end of March at 6 Harcourt Street. Jennie Wyse Power was in the chair. Helena Molony moved, and Constance Markievicz seconded, a resolution opposing any address of welcome to the queen. Molony said ‘that the Unionist women were trying to get Irish women of all classes to give their signatures as a token of their loyalty.’²⁵ The previous month, a meeting of Inghinidhe na hÉireann had resolved that they recognised only Cathleen ní Houlihan as

²⁰ ‘Royal Visit and Dublin’s Pledge’, *Irish Freedom*, March 1911.

²¹ ‘Wolfe Tone Clubs’, *Irish Freedom*, April 1911.

²² BMH, WS 167 (Christopher Byrne), WS 307 (Thomas MacCarthy), WS 386 (Frank Gaskin).

²³ ‘Sinn Fein and the Royal Visit’, *Freeman’s Journal*, 25 March 1911.

²⁴ ‘Queen Mary and the Women of Ireland’, *Irish Times*, 9 February 1911.

²⁵ ‘“Nationalist Women” and Loyal Addresses’, *Irish Times*, 31 March 1911.

their queen, and that, 'considering the millions of money that England has robbed from Ireland, they consider Lady Aberdeen's attempt to beg money for the English Queen a piece of impudent audacity, and they hope their fellow-countrywomen who have shillings or halfpence to spare will keep them for some Irish object.'²⁶ Sidney Gifford later recalled that 'the Inghinidhe had a committee which they called the Nationalist Women's Association. It consisted mostly of themselves and a few of the I.R.B.'s relatives. The physical force young men were assembled upstairs in the Sinn Féin premises in Harcourt St. while our committee were downstairs.'²⁷ It is interesting that Gifford's account, written from the viewpoint of 1953, characterised Sinn Féin and IRB members alike as 'physical force men', and the women, though physically separate, as equally radical.

McCartan's vision of the coming together of 'a committee representing all sections of nationalists' was, as it turned out, a realistic one. A large majority of home rulers in the Corporation was opposed to an address; it was one of the very rare issues on which home rulers and advanced nationalists could unite. Approaches were apparently made, because by the time the United National Societies' Committee held their first weekly meeting on 31 March, also at 6 Harcourt Street, it comprised not only Sinn Féiners and IRB men, but members of the United Irish League and the Ancient Order of Hibernians as well. A resolution was passed congratulating the Royal Exchange and Young Ireland branches of the United Irish League on passing resolutions opposing any address of welcome. The committee sent a circular to the members of the Corporation asking them to attend the forthcoming meeting and vote against the motion for an address. It was signed by Lorcan Sherlock of the Mountjoy branch of the UIL, Arthur Griffith, John D. Nugent, secretary of the AOH, and Jennie Wyse Power on behalf of the women.²⁸ The fact that Sherlock's signature appeared above that of Griffith, who was chairman of the committee, was presumably intended to highlight the fact that the committee was truly representative of nationalists of all shades. The absence of a separate signature of a representative of the Wolfe Tone Clubs may have been intended to play down the radical nature of the committee, but it also suggests that, unlike the relationship with the UIL and the AOH, their relationship with Sinn Féin was more than just a marriage of convenience, and that they were quite content to let Griffith speak for them. Pat McCartan, at a public meeting

²⁶ *Bean na hÉireann*, March 1911.

²⁷ Bureau of Military History (BMH), Witness Statement 909 (Sidney Czira).

²⁸ 'The Defeated Address', *Sinn Féin*, 8 April 1911.

in Ringsend chaired by UIL councillor Christopher Hanlon, congratulated the UIL 'on having united with the Sinn Féiners and Hibernians to oppose the presentation of an address to England's king.'²⁹ He appears to be using 'Sinn Féiners' here as a blanket term including the Sinn Féin organisation and the IRB/Wolfe Tone Clubs, since he was not speaking as a Sinn Féin member.

Michael O'Rahilly, a member of the Sinn Féin executive, said in a letter to the *Freeman's Journal* that the visit was 'an incident in that war of conquest that England has waged against Ireland for seven centuries and which, thank God, is not completed yet.'³⁰ John MacBride, lecturing to the Central Branch of Sinn Féin, said that he 'was not a disloyal man and never uttered a disloyal sentence. Every word of his speech in Belfast spoke of his loyalty to his country and to his people...England was not his country, and England's King was not his King.'³¹ The speech was extreme enough for James Craig to raise it in parliament.³² Other political activists held meetings in parallel with the United Nationalist Societies' Committee. A meeting of Dublin workers at Foster Place in late March passed a resolution against a loyal address which was proposed by James Connolly, 'National Organiser of the Socialist Party of Ireland', and seconded by Helena Molony.³³ Still others, whose names did not appear in the papers, were involved in the committee. Markievicz remembered that

It was on the National Societies Committee that I first got to know Padraig Pierce [*sic*] as something more than a vague acquaintance...He usually came to the meetings with Thomas McDonagh [*sic*], and they were full of schemes and hopes. Another man who fixed one's attention was Eamon [*sic*] Ceannt, who also brought forward many suggestions.³⁴

Áine Ceannt, in her witness statement to the Bureau of Military History, confirmed that Ceannt, Pearse and MacDonagh were members of the committee.³⁵

On 3 April, the date of the Corporation meeting, leaflets were handed out urging Dubliners to meet at City Hall at 1 o'clock. By that time, when the Corporation meeting

²⁹ 'Meeting of Ringsend Nationalists', *Freeman's Journal*, 10 April 1911.

³⁰ Ua Rathghaille, letter to the *Freeman's Journal*, 3 April 1911.

³¹ 'Lecture by Major John MacBride', *Freeman's Journal*, 30 March 1911.

³² 'Questions in Parliament: Major MacBride', *Freeman's Journal*, 7 April 1911.

³³ 'Meeting in Foster Place', *Freeman's Journal*, 1 April 1911.

³⁴ Constance Markievicz, 'The King's Visit', *Éire*, 14 July 1923.

³⁵ Bureau of Military History, WS 264 (Áine Ceannt), p. 5.

began, ‘there was a large attendance of the general public, including a number of members of the Society for the Daughters of Erin [Inghinidhe na hÉireann]’.³⁶ When the unionist councillor William Ireland proposed the presentation of an address of welcome, Coghlan Briscoe, a nationalist councillor, moved as an amendment ‘that as Ireland is still deprived of her parliament this council proceeds to the next business.’ The amendment was carried by 42 votes to nine, meaning that the resolution fell without even a debate.³⁷ The *Belfast Newsletter* noted that ‘the result was received with loud cheers in the gallery, the ladies being most demonstrative.’³⁸

O’Rahilly’s remark in the *Freeman*, that the visit was part of ‘war of conquest that...is not completed yet’, was echoed in the slogan adopted by the United National Societies’ Committee: ‘Thou art not conquered yet, dear land’. Like O’Rahilly’s letter to the *Freeman*, the slogan equated the royal visit with the Norman Conquest, and the visit of Henry II to Dublin. It was a declaration that the issue at stake was more than one of courtesy, or even loyalty. To recognise King George would be an acknowledgement of the finality of the conquest, an acknowledgement that Ireland would only ever have as much freedom as England condescended to give her. The slogan appeared in articles and editorials not only in *Irish Freedom* but also in the newly-founded *Irish Worker*.³⁹ It was worn on badges; and most famously it was inscribed on a banner erected on Grafton Street in June. The banner, strung across the width of the street on two tall poles, announced the ‘Independence Demonstration’ to be held at Beresford Place on the evening of 22 June, the day of the coronation, and carried the slogans ‘Múscail do mhísneach, a Bhanba’ (‘Arouse your courage, Ireland’) and ‘Thou art not conquered yet, dear land’.⁴⁰ Permission for its erection had been obtained from the paving committee of the corporation; Éamonn Ceannt and Seán Fitzgibbon, who were both employed in the corporation, used their connections to get the poles erected on Grafton Street.⁴¹ Constance Markievicz later recalled O’Rahilly, ‘one of the neatest and best dressed men in Ireland, yet there he was down on his knees on a dusty floor, pencilling out the gigantic letters on the calico for us to fill in with printing ink.’ The poles were planted and the banner fixed

³⁶ ‘Proposal to present an address rejected’, *Belfast Newsletter*, 4 April 1911.

³⁷ Minutes of the Municipal Council of the City of Dublin, 3 April 1911, p. 243.

³⁸ ‘Proposal to present an address rejected’, *Belfast Newsletter*, 4 April 1911.

³⁹ ‘Thou Art Not Conquered Yet, Dear Land’, *Irish Freedom*, July 1911; O.F., ‘Loyal—to Whom?’, *Irish Worker*, 15 July 1911.

⁴⁰ ‘The Stolen Advertisement’, *Irish Freedom*, July 1911.

⁴¹ Bureau of Military History, WS 264 (Áine Ceannt), p. 5.

late that night. The following day it was removed by the police, 'but not till quite late next morning, and it had done its work. Half Dublin had seen it, and the papers had howled.'⁴² The illegal removal of the poles meant further bad publicity for the police. A cartoon appeared in *Irish Freedom* showing a large body of police carrying away the poles, with the caption 'Deeds that won the Empire: The capture of the poles.' It was reprinted in postcard form and sold at nine pence per dozen, available from *Irish Freedom*, *Sinn Féin* or the Sinn Féin offices in Harcourt Street.⁴³

The public meeting was held at Beresford Place on 22 June, the day of the coronation of King George. Henry Dixon presided, and contributors included MacBride, McCartan, James Mark Sullivan (a 'returned American'), Markievicz, Griffith, Cathal Brugha, James Connolly ('Socialist'), Tom Kelly and Laurence Ginnell. The police report stated that 'the general tenor of the speeches was to demand separation and complete independence for Ireland, and denying the right of His Majesty to govern the Irish people.'⁴⁴ Ginnell was a maverick within the UIL; he had been expelled from the Parliamentary Party, and would join Sinn Féin in 1917. There is no record of any other UIL member taking part, despite the League's membership of the United National Societies' Committee, which had called the meeting. The motion, proposed by MacBride and seconded by McCartan, was, 'that the right of Ireland to be governed by the whole people of Ireland is inalienable, and that no man can fix a boundary to the progress of Ireland's nationhood.' It was passed unanimously.⁴⁵ McCartan wrote to Joe McGarrity, 'The meeting on the 22nd to assert Ireland's right to independence was a great success. I never saw so large a meeting. There were at least 20,000 people at it.'⁴⁶

Other meetings and protests in connection with the visit took place around the country. A Sinn Féin meeting in Monasteroris (Edenderry) on 18 June was addressed by Seán Milroy. One in Newry on 10 June was addressed by Bulmer Hobson. The AOH (Irish-American Alliance), the separatist rival of Joseph Devlin's AOH (Board of Erin), held a

⁴² Constance Markievicz, 'The King's Visit—Continued', *Éire*, 14 July 1923.

⁴³ 'The Stolen Advertisement', *Irish Freedom*, July 1911.

⁴⁴ Irish Government. Police Reports, 1914-1921. Public Records Office, London, England. January-March 1910; June-November 1911; November 1913 CO 904/119; Reports: Police Reports: Précis of Information Received By the Special Branch, R.I.C., p. 94, 22 June 1911.

⁴⁵ 'The Independence Demonstration', *Sinn Féin*, 1 July 1911.

⁴⁶ McCartan to McGarrity, 28 June 1911. NLI, McGarrity Papers, Ms 17,457/9.

meeting in Strabane on 30 May, where the presentation of addresses was criticised, as well as a board meeting of delegates from Armagh and Tyrone on 18 June, which passed a resolution condemning addresses of welcome, which it forwarded to the United National Societies.⁴⁷ On the day of the coronation, a large number of posters appeared on the streets of Wexford and in nearby villages saying, 'Proclamation: Whereas an English King is being crowned today, we, the people of Ireland, hereby proclaim that we deny England's right to rule Ireland.' Black flags were flown by the New Ross Boat Club, and the 1798 memorial there was draped in black.⁴⁸ Following a Sinn Féin meeting on 3 May, leaflets were 'extensively posted at Dundalk and suburbs...calling on Irishwomen not to sign an address to the Queen.'⁴⁹ On 8 June, in Cork, the windows and door of a shop belonging to the lord mayor, who had (unsuccessfully) proposed an address of welcome, were smeared with tar. The police report on the incident stated that 'police also observed that the figure of Erin on the monument referred to [on Grand Parade] was partly covered by a black canvas bag, this being at once removed. Probably this was the work of the Sinn Feiners in Cork.'⁵⁰ Here is an early example of radical nationalists being referred to by the police as 'Sinn Féiners' – the report made no mention of the Sinn Féin organisation.

The police report on the 22 June meeting in Dublin also noted, under the heading 'I.R.B. Annual Pilgrimage to Bodenstown' that 'the Wolfe Tone Association and Sinn Fein League, in conjunction with kindred societies, are arranging a big demonstration in connection with the above to be held at Bodenstown churchyard on Saturday, 8th July next.'⁵¹ The event was put back from the usual date of late June to coincide with the entry of the royal couple into Dublin. But before that occasion, events took an unexpected turn.

As early as April, *Sinn Féin* had referred to statements in the press 'quoted from an English source in which the Lord Mayor of Dublin [J.J. Farrell] is represented as having expressed himself in favour of the presentation by the Corporation of an address of welcome', as well as 'the slanderous statement also attributed to his Lordship that nine

⁴⁷ CO 904/119; Reports: Police Reports: Precis Of Information Received By The Special Branch, R.I.C., Dublin Castle Records, pp. 82-4.

⁴⁸ "'A Proclamation" in Wexford', *Enniscorthy Echo*, 24 June 1911.

⁴⁹ CO 904/13; Nationalist Organisations: Secret Societies: Precis Of Information And Reports Relating To The D.M.P. District, p. 155, May 1911.

⁵⁰ District Inspector's report, Cork South, 12 June 1911, CSORP/1911/10955.

⁵¹ Irish Government. Police Reports, 1914-1921. Public Records Office, London, England. January-March 1910; June-November 1911; November 1913 CO 904/119; Reports: Police Reports: Précis of Information Received By the Special Branch, R.I.C.

out of every ten Nationalists would favour the presentation of such an address'. This despite the fact that he had reportedly said, when asked how he would vote on an address, that 'he trusted we will never witness a repetition of Sir Thomas Pile's flunkeyism in Dublin'.⁵² Farrell had voted for Briscoe's amendment in April, but on 3 July – only days before the king's arrival – Farrell called a special meeting of the council to re-introduce a motion for an address, and pledged that if the Corporation failed to present an address, he would do so personally.⁵³ The United National Societies' Committee called a mass meeting at Foster Place.

The meeting, presided over by John J. O'Kelly, a UIL member, heard from Seán MacDermott, Helena Molony, Seán Milroy and Frank Sheehy-Skeffington. Constance Markievicz got down from the stand, set fire to a flag, fought with a policeman for its possession, and returned to her place, to 'quite an ovation from the crowd'. A procession 'of considerable dimensions' was then formed, which proceeded from Foster Place to Smithfield, where another meeting was chaired by John D. Nugent, secretary of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, and addressed by Henry Dixon, P.T. Daly, MacDermott and Markievicz.⁵⁴ Markievicz later remembered:

Mr. Nugent, of the Hibernians, had agreed to speak with us at this meeting, and no sooner did he appear than the old Sinn Fein crowd began to melt away. They were not Home Rulers, and did not want to be mixed up with them; they did not agree with a party who took an oath of allegiance to a foreign King. I felt very uncomfortable, for it was so discourteous to treat Mr. Nugent thus after agreeing to work together with him and his organisation. It was so obvious that he must have noticed it, but he behaved like a gentleman, made a fine speech, and all passed off well.⁵⁵

Apparently there were limits to how closely advanced nationalists were willing to be associated with home rulers.

In the course of the demonstration, Helena Molony threw a stone through a shop window that carried a picture of the king, and was arrested. She refused to pay a fine of 40

⁵² 'The Defeated Address', *Sinn Féin*, 8 April 1911.

⁵³ 'Dublin and the King: Letter from the Lord Mayor', *Irish Times*, 4 July 1911; 'The Lord Mayor's Attitude', *Freeman's Journal*, 3 July 1911.

⁵⁴ 'Exciting Incidents', *Freeman's Journal*, 5 July 1911.

⁵⁵ Constance Markievicz, 'Memories', *Éire*, 28 July 1923.

shillings, and was jailed for a month; to her annoyance, however, her fine was paid anonymously and she was released.⁵⁶

The response of Lord Mayor Farrell's fellow-councillors was, if anything, more dramatic: they boycotted the meeting of the Corporation he had called. Only twelve members were present in the chamber, far short of a quorum. Neither the calling of the meeting nor its abandonment was recorded in the council's minute book. Four of the twelve used the occasion to protest against the action of the police in assaulting councillors and members of the public alike outside City Hall. Two other members made the same protest, then withdrew before the roll was called. After the announcement that there was no quorum, as soon as the lord mayor had left the chair, council members, both nationalist and unionist, assembled for an unofficial meeting in the council chamber, with William Cosgrave of Sinn Féin in the chair. Alderman Corrigan proposed a resolution protesting against the lord mayor's actions, repudiating 'the ridiculous claim of the Lord Mayor to represent in any capacity the citizens on the entry into the city of King George V', and directing the City Treasurer to take the mace and sword of the Corporation into his custody.⁵⁷ The motion was supported 'in a very extreme speech' by Alderman Vance, a staunch unionist, and passed unanimously.⁵⁸ The *Freeman* commented that 'the Lord Mayor has succeeded in uniting every section of Unionists and every section of Nationalists in unanimous condemnation of his attitude.' It added that if the king wished to please every section of the people of Dublin, there would be no better way than to decline an address from the lord mayor.⁵⁹

But while there is no reason to doubt that the United National Societies' Committee was indeed united, it is difficult to gauge the extent of the involvement of the United Irish League and the Ancient Order of Hibernians in organising protest outside of the council chamber. Lorcan Sherlock, for instance, was not named again in connection with the committee after signing the initial circular of March. *Sinn Féin*, *Irish Freedom* and the *Irish Worker* named and commended the advanced nationalists who organised, spoke and did other work, but the *Freeman* did not similarly highlight the work of UIL members. Sheehy-Skeffington was a member of the young, progressive Young Ireland branch of the

⁵⁶ Ann Matthews, *Renegades: Irish Republican Women 1900-1922* (Cork, 2010), p. 72.

⁵⁷ 'Corporation and the King: Special Meeting Falls Through', *Freeman's Journal*, 6 July 1911.

⁵⁸ 'Summary of News', *Freeman's Journal*, 6 July 1911.

⁵⁹ Editorial, *Freeman's Journal*, 6 July 1911.

League, but was far closer to the advanced men and women than any of his colleagues in that branch, none of whom featured in newspaper reports of anti-address activities. Reports in the *Freeman* of meetings organised by the committee contain the same names—Griffith, MacDermott, O’Rahilly, Kelly, Markievicz, MacBride, McCartan and Seán Milroy—as those of the advanced papers, as indeed do the police reports of those meetings. The leaders of the UIL and the AOH, Redmond, Dillon and Devlin, at no time made any public reference to the committee, either to endorse or to disavow it. In 1900, Redmond, then the newly elected leader of the reunited Irish Parliamentary Party, had made a positive speech in the House of Commons in the build-up to Queen Victoria’s visit. After the Corporation had passed the motion for an address, it was said in the nationalist press that the result had been influenced by Redmond’s speech, causing him to write to the papers, indignantly denying that his statement had been responsible for the decision, and declaring himself to be anti-address.⁶⁰ In 1911, he and his fellow-leaders faced the same quandary: to be seen to encourage an address would alienate nationalists, while to oppose it would provoke the Liberal government. The party settled for a statement which said that the party expected the king to be received with ‘generosity and hospitality’ when he came to Dublin.⁶¹ This indecision at the leadership level allowed advanced nationalists to put themselves at the forefront of the anti-address lobby.

George V’s visit to Dublin duly took place. After the fiasco at the Corporation, the newspapers, if they were to report it as a success, had to focus on the decoration of the streets and cheers of the people who came out to see the king and queen. Thus the *Irish Times* enthusiastically reported that ‘our joy in welcoming the King and Queen was increased by the pleasant conviction that, perhaps, no other city in their vast dominions could have made a braver show. It was in this fair and bright setting that Their Majesties received a greeting which, we think, will long linger in their memories’,⁶² while the *Freeman’s Journal* devoted five full columns to the route of the procession from Kingstown to Dublin Castle, frequently referring to the size of the crowd and the quality of the decorations.⁶³ A hundred years later, this theme was still to be found in histories of the period, one writer saying, ‘The royal visitors were warmly received by the crowds in Dublin. The most vociferous opposition to the visit came from groups of radical

⁶⁰ Pašeta, ‘Two Royal Visits’, pp. 488-9, 492.

⁶¹ ‘Coronation: Important Announcement’, *Freeman’s Journal*, 22 February 1911.

⁶² Editorial, *Irish Times*, 10 July 1911.

⁶³ ‘The Royal Visit’, *Freeman’s Journal*, 10 July 1911.

nationalist women...largely of Anglo-Irish background.⁶⁴ In 1911 the *Irish Worker* took a different tone:

The crowds who stood open mouthed on our streets last week when the English king was here cared nothing for himself or the British Empire. It was the novelty of the thing that attracted them. They would stand and cheer as long and loudly, nay even louder, at a dog fight in a back lane.⁶⁵

Cheering a visiting dignitary was not an act of fealty in the way an address of welcome would be, and it must be borne in mind that the citizens that cheered the king were the same citizens that elected the city councillors who denied that same king an address of welcome.

As the royal party entered Dublin, advanced nationalists took themselves away from the city to the Wolfe Tone commemoration in Bodenstown graveyard in County Kildare. The crowd was estimated at 2,000. The *Freeman* reported that 'Mr. Clarke, as an old Fenian, proposed Major MacBride as chairman.'⁶⁶ Thus six of the seven signatories of the 1916 Proclamation – Clarke, MacDermott, Pearse, MacDonagh, Ceannt and Connolly – were directly involved in the campaign against the royal visit, as well as MacBride, O'Rahilly and Markievicz, who died or were sentenced to death during or after the Rising.

Even when the king had returned to England, the protests were not done. On 6 August, the Socialist Party and Inghinidhe na hÉireann held a joint meeting to celebrate the release of Helena Molony and James McArdle, a socialist who had taken part in the flag-burning at the 4 July meeting and had served a month in prison. Constance Markievicz was in the chair, and said that they were there 'to express our respect and admiration for Miss Maloney [*sic*] and Mr. McArdle, both gaol-birds from an English gaol.' Tom Kennedy, acting secretary of the Socialist Party (the secretary, Walter Carpenter, had been jailed for saying that the king was descended from 'one of the vilest scoundrels that ever entered our country'), proposed a resolution of welcome to the pair. It was seconded by Frank Sheehy-Skeffington, who said, 'I hope we all feel thoroughly ashamed of ourselves today, because we have not been in jail.' Seán Milroy, Seán MacDermott – described in the *Irish Worker* as 'secretary of the Wolfe Tone Club' – and Tom Lyng also

⁶⁴ James H. Murphy, *Abject loyalty: Nationalism and Monarchy in Ireland during the Reign of Queen Victoria* (Cork, 2001), pp. 299-300.

⁶⁵ 'Loyal—to Whom?' *Irish Worker*, 15 July 1911.

⁶⁶ 'Pilgrimage to Wolfe Tone's Grave', *Freeman's Journal*, 10 July 1911.

addressed the meeting.⁶⁷ When Molony spoke, she paid tribute to Walter Carpenter, and added, 'I will go further than that. Not only was King George the descendant of a scoundrel, but he himself was one of the worst scoundrels in Europe'. At this point the police moved in; there was an altercation, and both Molony and Markievicz were arrested.⁶⁸ Molony was charged with using language calculated to lead to a breach of the peace; Markievicz with assault on two policemen. Molony said that her remark was intended politically, not personally, and that she had said, 'I don't believe in making personal attacks on any man or woman, king or queen, but it is not...' when the police intervened. In Markievicz's case, one policeman stated that, as he was trying to arrest Molony, who was standing on a lorry, Markievicz had kicked him twice in the chest. Markievicz said that he had grabbed her by the legs, and pulled her off the lorry, which caused her to strike him in the chest. The other policeman said that when she was on the ground, she had thrown gravel in his face, which she denied. Sheehy-Skeffington gave evidence in Molony's defence, while Paul Gregan, a former Sinn Féin councillor, gave evidence for both women.⁶⁹ Both were found guilty of a breach of the peace, but the judge did not impose any sentence 'as they were ladies'.⁷⁰

Senia Pašeta remarked that the royal visits of 1900 and 1903, when mentioned at all, 'have typically been dismissed as amusing and largely insignificant events.'⁷¹ The same is true of the 1911 visit. Yet, while those earlier visits saw the beginnings of an organised advanced nationalist movement, the 1911 visit showed not only the high level of popular support of the various organisations at that point in time, but also the extraordinary degree of unity between them. That unity was such that they were able to draw in the home rule organisations.

A caveat must be entered here: with a single emotive issue at play, it is not surprising to find several groups working together; it does not necessarily show a convergence of views on other matters. What is argued here is that the response to the visit showed that the rifts of the previous year had been healed. With a new home rule bill in the offing, and the Irish Party in the ascendant, the visit provided an opportunity for advanced

⁶⁷ 'King George's Visit: Workers Honour Ex-Prisoners', *Irish Worker*, 12 August 1911.

⁶⁸ 'Dublin Meeting Broken Up: Two Ladies Arrested', *Freeman's Journal*, 7 August 1911.

⁶⁹ 'Charges against Miss Moloney and Countess Markievicz', *Freeman's Journal*, 12 August, 1911.

⁷⁰ Matthews, *Renegades*, p. 77.

⁷¹ Pašeta, 'Nationalist Responses', p. 504.

nationalists to come together, and unity did persist. The convergence of opinion on the subject of the home rule bill will be the subject of the following chapter.

4. Advanced nationalists and the Third Home Rule Bill

In 1977, Ruth Dudley Edwards, referring to Patrick Pearse's philosophy that Home Rule could be a weapon in the fight for freedom, wrote, 'But for the senior men among the republicans...such a philosophy was dangerous. They wanted revolution, and they realized that Home Rule would kill such a prospect.'¹ The same idea, that the passage of a home rule act would be fatal to the separatist cause, was expressed as recently as January 2014, when Roy Foster, in a review of a biography of John Redmond, wrote, 'He brought a Home Rule bill into being in 1912-14. The revolutionaries' enduring vindictiveness towards Redmond stemmed from their fear that he might, even then, pull the chestnuts from the fire.'² The idea was not new even in 1977. R.M Henry wrote in 1920

But Ulster Unionists were not the only people in Ireland who disliked Home Rule. It was just as little to the taste of Sinn Fein and the Republicans and the Labor Party as it was to them...The Sinn Fein party and the Republicans were well aware that Home Rule was a setback to their own program. Little as it conferred in comparison with what they wished to have, it was certain to allay for many years the sting of Irish discontent and to prolong the period during which Ireland would seek its satisfaction in the shadow of its coming fortunes.³

The effect of this on the historiography of the 1912-14 period is to cause the attitude of advanced nationalists towards the Home Rule Bill to be ignored. David Fitzpatrick, in *The Two Irelands*, makes reference to the challenge of William O'Brien and the All-for-Ireland League to the Irish Parliamentary Party's position on the 1912 Home Rule Bill, but not that of Sinn Féin. His pen portrait of 'Republicans and Gaels' puts them completely outside the context of home rule.⁴ Similarly, Paul Bew, in *Ideology and the Irish Question*, devotes a full chapter to the nationalist response to the bill, without any mention of advanced nationalists, who only appear in the following chapter with the formation of the Irish Volunteers.⁵ Brian P. Murphy, in *Patrick Pearse and the Lost Republican Ideal*, devotes some paragraphs to Pearse's attitude towards the bill, but not

¹ Ruth Dudley Edwards, *Patrick Pearse: The Triumph of Failure* (London, 1977), p. 160.

² Roy Foster, 'Revisiting the Ireland of John Redmond', *Irish Times*, 25 January 2014.

³ Robert Mitchell Henry, *The Evolution of Sinn Fein* (London, 1920), p. 145.

⁴ David Fitzpatrick, *The Two Irelands, 1912-1939* (Oxford 1998), pp. 10, 15-18.

⁵ Paul Bew, *Ideology and the Irish Question: Ulster Unionism and Irish Nationalism, 1912-1916* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 71-90, 112.

that of Sinn Féin or the IRB, or the advanced movement in general.⁶ Michael Laffan, in *The Resurrection of Ireland*, devotes a single, short paragraph to the bill, saying only that as a result of it the Parliamentary Party regained its ‘lost aura’ and the ‘more militant alternatives’ declined.⁷ Owen McGee’s *The IRB*, also in a single paragraph, says only that Clan na Gael and *Irish Freedom*, while they did not ‘object to the Irish people making whatever use they can’ of the measure, took the line that Ireland in the long run would take a nationalist stand and reject “home rule”.⁸

The relationship between advanced nationalists and the bill is dealt with in greater detail by Patrick Maume in *The Long Gestation* and M.J. Kelly in *The Fenian Ideal*, but in such a way as to suggest – rather than openly state – that they were opposed to it. Maume says that ‘O’Brien and Sinn Féin continued to act as gadflies, attacking the specific terms of the Home Rule Bill and the failure of the Irish Party to use the balance of power to secure concessions for Ireland’. He sees the Sinn Féin stance as posturing, with a view to gaining a strong position in the future Irish parliament.⁹ Kelly notes that while *Irish Freedom* viewed the bill with a jaundiced eye, it did take a pragmatic view of the likely creation of an Irish Parliament. Once this body was created, the paper said in July 1912, it would be necessary to establish a new nationalist party to combat the imperialist policies of the Redmondites. Kelly contrasts this ‘profound departure’, allowing for the participation of republicans in a legislature subordinate to the crown, with Fianna Fáil’s initial failure to engage with the Free State.¹⁰

The assumption that home rule was inimical to separatism is reasonable on the face of it. Because advanced nationalists were opposed to ‘home rulers’, there is a natural tendency to think they were opposed to home rule, and it is probably partly for this reason that the assumption has never been challenged, or even seriously examined. Another reason, of course, is the outcome of the 1918 general election, when Sinn Féin, now committed to an independent Irish Republic, inflicted a heavy defeat on the Parliamentary Party. The black-and-white nature of that contest undoubtedly reflected back on the politics of 1912-

⁶ Brian P. Murphy, *Patrick Pearse and the Lost Republican Ideal* (Dublin, 1991), pp. 42-3.

⁷ Michael Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland: The Sinn Féin Party, 1916-1923* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 32.

⁸ Owen McGee, *The IRB: The Irish Republican Brotherhood from the Land League to Sinn Féin* (Dublin, 2005), p. 353

⁹ Patrick Maume, *The Long Gestation: Irish Nationalist Life 1891-1918* (Dublin, 1999), p. 120.

¹⁰ M.J. Kelly, *The Fenian Ideal and Irish Nationalism, 1882-1916* (Woodbridge, 2006), pp. 200-2.

14, and no veteran of the revolution was likely to have advertised the fact that at one time he or she had wanted to see a home rule bill pass. However, an examination of the writings – public and private – and speeches of key figures in the period shows that this was, in fact, the case.

The position of the Sinn Féin organisation during 1911 and early 1912 was that, since the Irish Party was in a stronger position than it had ever attained under Parnell, both in terms of the balance of power and in consequence of the curtailment of the power of the Lords, and was therefore in principle in a position to achieve the fullest possible measure of self-government for Ireland, Sinn Féin had ‘stood aside’ from national politics for two years to allow the Party a free hand. If, as they expected, the measure of home rule offered in the forthcoming bill was less than nationalist Ireland hoped for, the Party would be unable to claim that Sinn Féin ‘factionism’ had hampered their efforts, but would have to accept the responsibility themselves.¹¹ Sinn Féin had suffered a decline as a result; the Dublin branches had amalgamated under the Central Branch after the latter had purchased the premises at 6 Harcourt Street, and it was found necessary to draw up a scheme of associate membership for members in the provinces and in London, where branches had lapsed.¹² Seán Milroy admitted that the policy of non-intervention in home rule politics had caused many to believe that the organisation was dead or dying.¹³

If the bill failed to live up to nationalist expectations, Sinn Féin would take up the fight again. The other side of the coin was that if, contrary to expectations, the bill proved to be satisfactory, Sinn Féin would recommend its acceptance – indeed, Arthur Griffith went so far as to claim, at a public meeting in Maryborough, that by securing the rejection of the 1907 Councils Bill, Sinn Féin had ‘compelled the production of a measure of Home Rule’¹⁴ – but it would accept it, ‘not as a National settlement...but as a stepping-stone to national independence.’ Sinn Féin acknowledged that home rule by definition meant that any Irish legislature would not have control of the army or the navy or, to a large extent, of fiscal policy; it would judge the bill, when it was introduced, as a home rule measure, and recommend acceptance or rejection based only on whether it was satisfactory as a

¹¹ ‘Sinn Fein’, *Sinn Féin*, 7 October 1911.

¹² ‘Sinn Fein’, *Sinn Féin*, 4 November 1911.

¹³ ‘Sinn Fein and Home Rule’, *Sinn Féin*, 14 October 1911.

¹⁴ ‘Meeting in Port Leix’, *Sinn Féin*, 18 February 1911.

home rule measure.¹⁵ Additionally, as will be seen, in judging whether it was satisfactory as a home rule measure, it set the bar high.

John Redmond and three party colleagues had undertaken a tour of the United States between September and November 1910, and a dinner in their honour at the Mansion House on 18 January 1911 gave Redmond an opportunity to announce that the Parliament Bill would be passed within the year, and followed by a home rule bill which would be, ‘in contradistinction to a Councils Bill or Devolution, a measure of full self-government for Ireland, granting thereby an Irish Parliament, with an Executive responsible to it.’¹⁶ *Sinn Féin* responded:

An Irish Parliament with an Executive responsible to it might exist in Ireland and Ireland be little the better. It depends on the powers of such a Parliament whether it is a toyshop or a legislature. If an Irish Parliament controlling an Irish Executive possesses full powers of self-government, that is indeed Home Rule. But that is not Mr. Redmond’s statement. He has translated Full Self-government as a Parliament with an Executive responsible to it, which is no more a definition of full self-government than brick-and-mortar is a definition of Kildare Street Club.¹⁷

Sinn Féin’s next opportunity for comment came a month later when, during the debate on the King’s Speech, Ian Malcolm, Conservative MP for Croydon, moved an amendment expressing disapproval of home rule, which was defeated. H.H. Asquith, during the debate, said that the only solution to Ireland’s case was ‘an Irish Parliament, and an Irish Executive responsible to that Parliament, to deal with purely Irish affairs, subject to the indefeasible supremacy of the Imperial Parliament’, to which Redmond replied, ‘We accept the Prime Minister’s definition absolutely.’¹⁸ Asquith’s formulation, incorporating the phrases ‘indefeasible supremacy of the Imperial Parliament’ and ‘purely Irish affairs’, had already been used by him in his Albert Hall speech of December 1909, but originated in a (failed) resolution of March 1908 moved by Redmond.¹⁹ *Sinn Féin*, in its next issue, offered a critical analysis of these two phrases:

Does the Indefeasible Supremacy of the Imperial Parliament mean that it will rest within that Parliament’s power to annul or reverse any action of the Irish legislature which the Imperial Parliament disapproves? Mr. Asquith’s words can be thus

¹⁵ ‘Sinn Fein and Home Rule’, *Sinn Féin*, 14 October 1911.

¹⁶ ‘Mr. John Redmond’s Pronouncement’, *Irish Times*, 19 January 1911.

¹⁷ ‘Mr. Redmond’s Speech’, *Sinn Féin*, 28 January 1911.

¹⁸ ‘Premier’s Definite Pledge to Ireland’, *Sunday Independent*, 19 February 1911.

¹⁹ John J. Horgan, *Home Rule: A Critical Consideration* (Dublin, 1911), p. 2.

interpreted. On the other hand, they may be argued to mean that the Irish legislature shall be supreme in purely Irish affairs, and that it is only in the event of its attempting to deal with affairs that are not in that category that the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament can be asserted.

As for ‘purely Irish affairs’,

Mr. Redmond has left the definition to the British Parliament. That is, Englishmen and Scotsmen are to decide for us what are our own affairs—we must accept the definition. If the British Parliament decrees that Customs, Excise, Judiciary, and Police in Ireland are not purely Irish affairs, then the Irish legislature will be deemed incompetent to deal with them, and Mr. Redmond “will accept such a settlement as final.”

The paper stated its belief that the prime minister did not consider Irish customs and excise as ‘purely Irish affairs’. Its conclusion was that

If in the days of an Irish legislature the Judiciary and the Police continue to be responsible to England, the collection of Customs and Excise continues to be carried out by Imperial officials, responsible in their accounts to England alone, and if the English Parliament retains the right to review all the legislation of the Irish body, then “the Irish legislature” will be a debating club and a patronage bureau, but it will be no Parliament.²⁰

These themes were explored not only by the *Sinn Féin* newspaper but also by members of the Sinn Féin organisation. Seán Milroy, for instance, said at the Maryborough meeting that ‘it would be unsatisfactory, and probably unworkable, if the customs and excise were outside the scope of [an Irish parliamentary assembly’s] control.’ The Sinn Féin member who thanked the speakers on behalf of the local branch said that he agreed with the policy as laid out by them.²¹

Another line pursued by *Sinn Féin* was the accusation that the IPP was breaking the first rule of political negotiation by opening with its minimum demand. The paper responded to politicians’ St. Patrick’s Day speeches in 1911 by saying,

The burden of their speeches was—“Give us anything at all and we shall lick your boots and be thankful.” It should be clear to the most convinced Parliamentarian who takes the trouble to think, that this kind of thing is an inducement to the British

²⁰ ‘Home Rule’, *Sinn Féin*, 25 February 1911.

²¹ ‘Meeting in Port Leix’, *Sinn Féin*, 18 February 1911.

Government to whittle down its proposals. It is not patriotism, it is not politics—it is not even sanity.²²

But what of *Sinn Féin*'s republican counterpart? *Irish Freedom*, the genesis of which was discussed in the previous chapter, was of a different nature to *Sinn Féin*. While the latter commented extensively on current events, *Irish Freedom* was very much a propaganda newspaper, dedicated to presenting the Republican point of view. The editorial in the first issue of November 1910 boldly stated the newspaper's separatist stance, quoting the dictum of Thomas Devin Reilly that freedom 'can take but one form amongst us – a Republic.'²³ This uncompromising stance did not, however, mean that the paper could not countenance home rule. In February 1911 it said, 'if England passes an Act that we can use to make Ireland better and stronger, let us use it – but let us be under no delusions about it.'²⁴ While more strident than the *Sinn Féin* editorial of November 1911 quoted above, it makes exactly the same points: one, that there is no use in imagining that a home rule measure will mean independence; and two, that once this fact is acknowledged, the bill can be judged on its merits. Both papers qualified these arguments by reaffirming their own commitment to complete independence. *Irish Freedom* also echoed *Sinn Féin*'s belief that the Irish Party ought not to be so eager to accept whatever Britain offered when it said in a November 1910 piece:

We want badly at the present moment a leader with a touch of Parnell's icy aloofness, to whom all "concessions", however loud the chorus of good will that accompanies them may be, are to be received with the same suspicion that attaches to gifts that come from the Greeks.²⁵

This reaction to the anticipated bill can be interpreted as 'acting as gadflies' – indeed, there was very little more that either *Sinn Féin* or the IRB could do, given that *Sinn Féin* had foresworn parliamentary elections and the time was not ripe for physical force – but the phrase implies a purely negative attitude, which is at odds with the stated policy of both papers that the bill would be accepted if it was strong enough that it could be used as a 'stepping-stone', or 'to make Ireland better and stronger'. It is notable, too, that *Irish Freedom*'s conditional acceptance of the bill came more than a year before the coup that

²² 'Much Politics', *Sinn Féin*, 25 March 1911.

²³ Virginia Glandon, *Arthur Griffith and the Advanced Nationalist Press* (New York, 1985), p. 76.

²⁴ 'The Coming Danger', *Irish Freedom*, February 1911.

²⁵ 'The "Federal" Rumours', *Irish Freedom*, November 1910.

overthrew Fred Allen and Seán O’Hanlon from the Supreme Council, and suggests that they were receptive to a home rule bill long before they began to talk of forming a new nationalist party. Just how receptive both organisations were can be seen in their reactions to the bill when its contents finally became known.

The Home Rule Bill was introduced on Thursday 11 April 1912. Sinn Féin responded by holding two meetings: on Saturday 13 April it held a delegate congress, as provided for by the 1911 annual congress, and on Sunday a ‘conference of Sinn Féin supporters’.²⁶ At the delegate congress the following resolution was adopted:

That, as the object of Sinn Fein is the independence of Ireland, we refuse to accept as a final settlement of the dispute between Ireland and Great Britain any arrangement which leaves a single vestige of British rule in Ireland. For this reason we decline to regard as liberty the arrangement which has come to be known as Home Rule, but we have always reserved the right to consider any such measure on its merits as a workable scheme of political reform. Judged from this point of view alone, the measure recently introduced by Mr Asquith falls far short of being a complete measure of Home Rule...

The resolution went on to list seven specific objections to the bill, including provisions relating to collection of taxes, mineral rights, the composition of the senate, and the right of appeal to the Privy Council, but the strongest language is reserved for its objection to the Westminster ‘veto’:

The power retained by the British Parliament to alter or amend the Acts of the Irish Parliament is a revival of the Acts 10 Henry VII and 6 George I, or Poyning’s [*sic*] Law. It renders all powers whatsoever conferred on the Irish legislature illusory, and makes such a body contemptible and impotent. No such veto is possible of acceptance under any condition.²⁷

The great achievement of the eighteenth-century Volunteers had been the removal of 10 Henry VII and 6 George I. By its reference to these laws the resolution suggested that, while repeal of the Act of Union was a step too far for the home rulers, the bill now proposed went further still by undoing both that act and the act of 1782, bringing the status of Ireland literally back to the middle ages – to the time of Henry VII and Edward Poynings. But despite its dramatic presentation, the resolution of the congress did not reject the bill; rather, it desired ‘to fix the earnest attention of our countrymen on...highly

²⁶ ‘Sinn Féin and the Home Rule Bill’, *Sinn Féin*, 20 April 1911.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

objectionable features of the measure, with a view to their amendment.’ It was, in fact, recommending the amendment of the bill to make it acceptable as a home rule measure. An earnest intention to work with home rule is suggested by the adoption of a second resolution, proposed by Jennie Wyse Power, ‘that in any Irish Legislature Irish women will be accorded the rights of citizens’.²⁸ Since the unilateral formation of an Irish legislature was not an option at that moment, the resolution must be taken as a reference to, and a presumption of, a future home rule legislature.

The conference on the following day showed a similar mix of condemnation of the bill as proposed and desire to see it amended. Seán Milroy, for instance, said that ‘if the Bill were passed with the amendments indicated, it could be worked for the development of mineral resources, the creation of a national civil service, the control of transit, the development of our fisheries, and the nationalising of education.’ Remarkably, senior IRB members took a similar line. Henry Dixon, a prominent IRB man since the 1880s, showed his preference for amending rather than killing the bill when he said that ‘if the measure were not drastically amended it should be rejected on the third reading.’ P.S. O’Hegarty, echoing a sentiment expressed by Patrick Pearse in regard to the 1907 Councils Bill, said he ‘believed that if the Bill were passed Ireland could make use of its control of the educational system to nationalise her youth.’ Denis McCullough spoke of the bill in terms of its shortcomings rather than its undesirability in principle.²⁹ That O’Hegarty and McCullough were present at the meeting is remarkable in itself, given that they had fallen out with the organisation two years previously. What exactly was meant by ‘a conference of Sinn Fein supporters’ is open to conjecture, but it clearly was more than just a meeting of interested parties. Griffith, in opening the meeting, said that the conference would ‘suggest lines of action and development for their organisation in the immediate future’, and indeed, at the conclusion of the debate, ‘a vigorous line of action was recommended to the Executive to be considered at its next meeting on Thursday, and a large sum was subscribed to defray the expenses of the media propaganda.’ While paid-up membership of the organisation may not have been a prerequisite for attendance at the conference, the attendees did have both the power to direct the executive in its future actions, and sufficient commitment to dip into their pockets for the purposes of advancing the organisation’s aims.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ ‘Conference of Sinn Fein delegates’, *Irish Independent*, 17 April 1912.

The position that the bill should be amended, rather than rejected, was not just for public consumption, either. John Sweetman, who had retired as Sinn Féin president the previous year, wrote to Griffith on 12 April urging that Sinn Féin not attempt to prevent the passing of the bill, as its constitution committed it ‘to make use of any powers we have, or may have in the future, to work for our own advancement’. Griffith replied, ‘The Bill is bad, but there is a general disposition to accept it as a starting point, and if some amendments in the financial section and a modification of the veto power were inserted, it might well evolve into legislative independence in the course of time.’³⁰

Irish Freedom, in its editorial of April 1912, after the bill had had its first reading, predictably and vehemently rejected it. This is a typical piece of separatist propaganda, peppered with references to ‘the long centuries of struggle and sacrifice’ and ‘battlefields where [our fathers] fought’. The Fenians, Mitchel, Tone and Emmet are all invoked. Parliamentarians are dismissed as ‘Irishmen [who] have turned their backs on the National traditions of the people’. The editorial defiantly declares that ‘We are not for sale, and our country is not for sale.’ In the midst of all this, however, there are a few paragraphs dealing with specific provisions of the bill. These focus on two aspects. One is ‘the over-riding force of the Imperial Parliament which can at any time nullify, amend, or alter any Act of the Irish Government’; the other is the fact that the collection of taxes was to be left in the hands of the British government, and ‘the produce of all taxes, whether Imperial or Irish, will be paid into the Imperial Exchequer.’ On the basis of these two provisions, the editorial concludes,

The Bill is not a Bill to confer Home Rule on Ireland, it is a bill to consolidate the English Empire, and to purchase Ireland’s adhesion to the Empire at the cheapest price at which ever a nation was asked to sell itself body and soul.

The editorial notes that John Redmond is ‘prepared to recommend Ireland to accept [the bill] as a final settlement of the National demand.’ It goes on to say that Irish Nationalists ‘stand for the complete independence of Ireland, and they stand for nothing less.’³¹

³⁰ Sweetman to Griffith, 12 April 1912; Griffith to Sweetman, 18 May 1912. NLI, Sweetman papers, Ms 47,587/7.

³¹ ‘The Home Rule Bill’, *Irish Freedom*, April 1912.

Behind all the rhetoric, however, the position of *Irish Freedom* is exactly the position taken at the Sinn Féin conference of 14 April, which was attended by O’Hegarty and McCullough. The Home Rule Bill had been examined – as a home rule bill – and found wanting, the Westminster veto and the control of taxes being the point at which it fell down. Redmond had no right to accept it as a final settlement, because the only possible final settlement was independence. What is worth noting about the editorial is that, having said that they stood for ‘nothing less’ than complete independence, it does not follow up, as might be expected, by saying that it stands for something more: an Irish Republic. Remarkably, in a piece of over 1,000 words, the word ‘republic’ does not appear once.

The Irish Republic did make an appearance in the issue of June 1912. Commenting on a speech by John Dillon in which he said that once the bill was passed he was ‘perfectly willing and ready to be a loyal citizen... and to do his best to serve the Empire’, it said that ‘we are not going to be loyal citizens of anything short of an Irish Republic.’ Yet in that same paragraph the paper said,

The Bill will probably pass into law, and it is as well that it should. Miserable fiasco as it is, regarded in the light of a measure of Home Rule, it must of necessity be an improvement on the present system, and would serve, if nothing else, to open the eyes of considerable section of our people what real self-government would be like. It would enable them the better to feel the weight of their chains.³²

This is a classic republican analysis. In eighteenth-century France the creation of the *Assemblée Nationale* led to the rise of the Jacobins, as people came to understand that the measure of freedom they had won was not enough. In Ireland, at just the same time, the perceived impotence of Grattan’s Parliament – the product of the constitution of 1782 – led to the rise of the United Irishmen.

It would seem, then, that the men behind *Irish Freedom* – who by this time also controlled the IRB Supreme Council – were in favour of the passing of a home rule bill, although it would do nothing to facilitate it, and would continue to pursue its own goals. In this regard it is worth noting a statement in the April editorial, ‘that though we cannot meet [England’s] arms in arms...we can make Ireland a centre of danger and instability in

³² “‘Loyal Citizen’ Dillon’, *Irish Freedom*, June 1912.

her none too stable Empire.’³³ This strongly suggests that in mid-1912, the majority at least of the IRB leadership were still committed to a policy of passive resistance rather than physical force. They apparently thought the limited measure of home rule, far from being detrimental to a policy of passive resistance, could be exploited by it. It is in this context that the paper’s suggestion of the need to form a new nationalist party should be read. It coincided with the formation of the first ‘Freedom Clubs’, whose objects were to work for an independent Irish Republic and to extend the circulation and influence of *Irish Freedom*. The work of nationalists, the paper said, was ‘to quietly prepare to intervene when the opportune time comes.’ The nature of that intervention depended on whether the Home Rule Bill was passed:

...if Home Rule passes our work will be constructive; it will be the utilising of new conditions for the advancement and strengthening of the Irish Nation as a whole. If, on the other hand, it does not pass, our work will be destructive, and will be an attack all along the line on every institution in Ireland.³⁴

In March 1912, Patrick Pearse brought out his own Irish-language weekly newspaper, *An Barr Bua*. It was intended as a vehicle for the launch of a new political movement, initially known simply as ‘An Cumann Nua’, and later as Cumann na Saoirse, which would conduct its business entirely through Irish, but it lasted for only eleven issues, and Cumann na Saoirse was equally short-lived.³⁵ In the issue of 20 April 1912 Pearse gave his assessment of the Home Rule Bill. It was not freedom. It would not be recognised as freedom by Red Hugh O’Donnell, Hugh O’Neill, Theobald Wolfe Tone or Thomas Davis, or by any generation of Irishman prior to the current one. But he went on:

What is to be done with us? What would a captive do if he were given a sharp weapon? He would bear that sharp weapon, he would get accustomed to it...he would rouse his spirit, he would remember the deeds of his forefathers, and he would cut himself a path to freedom. The Irish are in captivity. Here is a sharp weapon for them...This bill is not freedom, but maybe it is the beginning of freedom...maybe it is a tool with which we can gain freedom once and for all.³⁶

³³ *Irish Freedom*, April 1912.

³⁴ *Irish Freedom*, July, September, October 1912; Kelly, *The Fenian Ideal*, pp. 203-4.

³⁵ Martin Maguire, ‘Harry Nicholls & Kathleen Emerson: Protestant Rebels’, *Studia Hibernica* 35 (2008-2009), p. 151; Seán MacGiollarnáth, ‘Patrick H. Pearse: A Sketch of His Life’, *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society*, Vol. 57, (2005), p. 148.

³⁶ ‘Céard a Dhéanfar Linn?’, *An Barr Bua*, 20 April 1912. Translation by the present author.

This was typical of the content of *An Barr Bua* throughout its short existence. It was another such article, in which Pearse said that rejecting the bill because it did not give full freedom was like a prisoner refusing to have one manacle taken off because his jailers would not take off both, that Ruth Dudley Edwards cited as the kind of philosophy that republicans found dangerous.³⁷ It is difficult, however, to see the distinction between *An Barr Bua*'s 'manacle' analogy and *Irish Freedom*'s 'weight of their chains' analogy.

On 31 March, Pearse made a speech at the home rule rally in Dublin. While unequivocally declaring himself a separatist, saying he was one of those 'that never paid, and never will pay, homage to the King of England', he professed his belief that the bill would benefit the country and that 'we shall be stronger with it than without it.' He ended with the now famous peroration:

Let us unite and win a good Act from the British; I think it can be done. But if we are tricked this time, there is a party in Ireland, and I am one of them, that will advise the Gael to have no counsel or dealings with the Gall [the foreigner] for ever again, but to answer them henceforward with the strong hand and the sword's edge. Let the Gall understand that if we are cheated once more there will be red war in Ireland.³⁸

Dudley Edwards construes this speech as one of support for Redmond, and says that by expressing his views in this way Pearse was sure to antagonise Sinn Féiners and republicans.³⁹ But in fact, the strategy he espoused – use the bill to make Ireland stronger, but answer with the 'strong hand' if it is not passed – was identical to that of the *Irish Freedom* editorial of October 1912: constructive work if the bill was passed, destructive work if it was not. Moreover, far from antagonising them, Pearse was at the same time chairing meetings of the fledgling Cumann na Saoirse, made up of such 'Sinn Féiners and republicans' as Éamonn Ceannt, The O'Rahilly, Con Colbert, Cathal Brugha, Peadar Macken and Peadar Kearney.⁴⁰

Ceannt, around this time, wrote an essay, presumably intended for publication, in Irish but with an English heading: 'Sinn Féin after Home Rule'. Ceannt had been a member of both Sinn Féin and the IRB since 1908, and was elected to the Sinn Féin executive in 1911. 'Sinn Féin after Home Rule', like the writings and speeches already discussed,

³⁷ Dudley Edwards, *The Triumph of Failure*, p. 160.

³⁸ Stephen Gwynn, *John Redmond's Last Years* (London, 1919), pp. 63-4.

³⁹ Dudley Edwards, *The Triumph of Failure*, p. 159.

⁴⁰ 'An Cumann Nua', *An Barr Bua*, 12, 20 April 1912.

expressed both the belief and the hope that there would be an Irish government in Ireland before long, but also the belief that it would not be without its faults. It was, however, of a far more practical nature to the others, pointing out that the new government would have to deal with issues such as poverty, the big farmers, the smallholders, the drink problem and tuberculosis – issues for which they were unaccustomed to having responsibility. It dealt, as well, with the question of a likely oath of allegiance to the crown. It asked how Sinn Féin would act, faced with such an oath. This was a question that they would have to tackle, but he added that it would be a mistake to think that the parliamentarians would all be of one mind on the question. There would be those among them who would favour breaking the connection with England altogether, once they had a parliament of their own. Ceannt declared himself committed to breaking the connection, but left open the question of whether it was proper to take an oath of allegiance as part of that process.⁴¹

Evidence that Bulmer Hobson was inclined to accept home rule can be found in a 1911 letter to him from Roger Casement. Casement had taken a keen interest in Hobson's politics since the foundation of the Dungannon Clubs in 1905.⁴² During 1910 Casement had offered a loan to Hobson to buy a farm, but Hobson had suggested instead that Casement buy the farm himself and that Hobson should be his tenant. Casement disagreed with this scheme, and said jokingly, 'I'll make a hard dour landlord and evict you straight on your attempting to vote on Home Rule or anything connected with Ireland.'⁴³ This suggests that Hobson, like his friends and colleagues in the IRB, was amenable to a home rule bill.

The evidence suggests, therefore, that advanced nationalists at every level were engaging with the political process, and that that engagement was not merely a cynical attempt to upstage the Redmondites or win seats in an eventual home rule parliament, but was motivated by a genuine desire to see a measure of home rule passed. The degree of their engagement can be gauged by the attention they devoted to one of the less glamorous aspects of any home rule legislation: the question of money.

Home Rule Finance

⁴¹ Éamonn Ceannt, *Sinn Féin after Home Rule*, National Library of Ireland, Ms 4734.

⁴² Casement to Hobson, 10 August 1905, NLI, Bulmer Hobson Papers, Ms 13,158/2.

⁴³ Casement to Hobson, 28 January 1911, NLI, Bulmer Hobson Papers, Ms 13,158/7.

In March 1911 Thomas MacDonagh wrote to a friend, Dominick Hackett, 'Ireland is all expectancy of Home Rule...It is really hard to know what will happen. The main discussion is on the question of the finances of Home Rule.'⁴⁴ This was true. Several members of the government, including H.H. Asquith, Augustine Birrell, Walter Runciman and John Morley, saw finance as the main obstacle to the passing of a successful home rule act, and William O'Brien said that 'finance will either make or mar the Bill.'⁴⁵ Yet, as Patricia Jalland has noted, home rule finance 'has been overlooked by most historians because it seemed less important [than the Ulster question] and no doubt also because it was immensely complicated.'⁴⁶ The centrality of finance was appreciated by the advanced nationalists, but what is truly striking is the degree to which *Sinn Féin*, and to a lesser extent *Irish Freedom*, engaged in the discourse on the same terms as both nationalists and unionists.

Central to the finance debate were, firstly, the report of the Financial Relations Commission of 1894-6, and, secondly, the treasury returns for the year 1909-10. The Financial Relations Commission was set up by the Gladstone government in 1894 'to enquire into the financial relations between Great Britain and Ireland'. Its chairman, Hugh Childers, died just before the report was finalised in 1896 and was succeeded by the O'Connor Don. It published a lengthy report in 1896 which included a brief joint report, a report by the chairman and five other members, four minority reports, Childers' draft report and the minutes of evidence.⁴⁷ The joint report said

That whilst the actual tax revenue of Ireland is about one eleventh of that of Great Britain, the relative taxable capacity of Ireland is very much smaller, and is not estimated by any of us as exceeding one twentieth.⁴⁸

Applying the figure of one twentieth, the various reports estimated that Ireland had contributed between £2.5m and £3m more in taxes in 1893-4 than she should have.⁴⁹ In the report of Thomas Sexton, MP for North Kerry, and two other Irish nationalist members, it was estimated that over the ninety-four years since the act of union Irish

⁴⁴ MacDonagh to Hackett, 25 March 1911. NLI, Thomas MacDonagh Papers, Ms 22,934.

⁴⁵ Patricia Jalland, 'Irish home rule finance: a neglected dimension of the Irish question', *Irish Historical Studies* 23:91 (1983), pp. 233-4.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 233.

⁴⁷ *Royal Commission on the Financial Relations between Great Britain and Ireland: Final Report* [C 8262], H.C. 1896.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 21, 45, 108, 123, 183.

revenue ought not to have been more than £280m, when in fact it was £570m – an excess of £290m.⁵⁰

On the other hand, Sir David Barbour, in a separate report, while estimating that Ireland was overtaxed by £2.73m in 1893-4, argued that expenditure on Ireland in that year was £5.60m. If expenditure on Ireland had been in proportion to her 'taxable capacity' (i.e. one twentieth that of Britain), it would have amounted to only £1.81m. Excess expenditure on Ireland in that year was therefore £3.79m, so overall Ireland was a 'gainer' by £1.06m.⁵¹

The aftermath of the report was described by Childers' cousin, Erskine, in his 1911 book, *The Framework of Home Rule*: 'For a moment all Ireland, irrespective of class or creed, was alight with patriotic excitement...Home Rulers and Unionists met on friendly platforms to denounce the over-taxation of Ireland...' The implications of the report for home rule, however, meant that unity could not be maintained, and in consequence nothing was done to address the issues raised by the report in the following fifteen years.⁵² That it was still of relevance in 1911 is illustrated by the following quotes:

- The *Irish Times*: 'Mr Redmond has acknowledged at long last that the Childers commission must be the great weapon of Irish financiers...We shall be interested to watch the vigour with which he takes the stand upon the reports of Financial Relations Commission.'⁵³
- T.M. Kettle: 'the only avenue of approach to the financial problems of 1911 is through the Financial Relations Report of 1896.'⁵⁴
- *Irish Freedom*: 'the report of the Childers commission on financial relations... should have been made the textbook of every Irishman from his youth up'.⁵⁵

Arthur Samuels dealt with the Financial Relations Committee report in a paper delivered to the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland in February 1897. He noted that the English papers, while repudiating the findings relating to overtaxation, had embraced the

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 101.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 123.

⁵² Erskine Childers, *The Framework of Home Rule* (London, 1911), pp. 255-6.

⁵³ Editorial, *Irish Times*, 6 June 1911.

⁵⁴ T.M. Kettle, *Home Rule Finance: An Experiment in Justice*, (Dublin, 1911), p. 8.

⁵⁵ 'Home Rule Finance', *Irish Freedom*, June 1911.

idea of Sir David Barbour regarding ‘set off’ of expenditure against revenue.⁵⁶ This was a violation of the first section of the act of 1816, that all revenue would be indiscriminately applied to the service of Great Britain and Ireland.⁵⁷ But, given that it was split in the Treasury returns for 1893-4, it should have been more fairly done. ‘Imperial’ charges included £18m for the Army and £15.5m for the Navy. £14m of the total of £33.5m should, he said, have been charged as local expenditure in Great Britain, since it was expended on offices, arsenals and dockyards in England. Under the ‘Miscellaneous Services’ heading there was a charge of £40,000 against Ireland as ‘Exchequer contribution to Ireland’, but this money was actually retained by the Treasury as an annual contribution to reserve fund of £200,000 established under the Land Purchase Act 1891. All of the interest on that bond was retained by the Treasury, and it was probable that neither the interest nor any of the fund would ever be paid out in Ireland, yet it was a charge against Ireland.⁵⁸ Dealing with the Royal Irish Constabulary, for which £1.34m was charged against Ireland in 1893-4, he said

Now, many of the services which the splendid body perform are distinctly of an imperial character. They are semi-military force; they act as a garrison, and necessary garrison, in Ireland; they volunteered in large numbers for the Crimean War, and served there; they perform Revenue services in preventing illicit distillation.

He went on to quote Sir Edward Hamilton at the Financial Relations Commission that ‘Mr Goschen...did draw the distinction by taking out the Constabulary charge and treating it as an imperial charge.’⁵⁹ Making the point that some things were impossible of estimation because Ireland was unable to see the books, Samuels then produced a series of amendments to the treasury returns figures for 1893-4 which showed that Ireland – even if the whole charge for the RIC was included against her – had contributed almost exactly one twentieth of the British contribution, so there was practically no ‘set off’ against the overtaxation.⁶⁰

Samuels, described by Owen McGee as ‘unofficial finance spokesman for Irish Tories’, continued to oppose British fiscal policy in Ireland until 1910. In that year Edward Carson became leader of the Irish Tories in Westminster and Samuels was required to

⁵⁶ Arthur Samuels, ‘The Financial Relations of Great Britain and Ireland. The Expenditure Account’, *Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland*, 77 (1897), pp. 292-4.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.299.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 302.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 306-7.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 311.

abandon his position, which was not consistent with Carson's change of emphasis away from financial questions and onto religious matters.⁶¹ In Samuels' 1912 book, *Home Rule Finance*, his slant on Irish finances was different, although he did not depart from his basic principles. The treasury returns of 1909-10 still, in his opinion, violated the act of 1816 by dividing expenditure between Imperial, English, Scottish and Irish. However, if home rule came about, the union would be dissolved and those acts would cease to apply. Imaginary numbers would become real, and Ireland would indeed be run at a loss, to the detriment of both the Irish and British people.⁶² For this reason, it is interesting to compare his arguments of 1897, when unionists and nationalists were briefly united on the question of financial relations, with those of nationalists in 1911.

The treasury returns for 1909-10 apparently showed that Irish expenditure had exceeded revenue in the year 1909-10 by nearly 2.5 million pounds:

	Revenue	Expenditure	Surplus/deficit
1907-08	£9.62m	£7.81m	£1.81
1908-09	£9.25m	£8.67m	£0.58
1909-10	£8.35m	£10.71m	-£2.36m

An article in the *Daily Telegraph* in January 1911, reprinted in the *Irish Times*, concluded from these figures that a home rule Ireland 'would start governing herself, and especially the loyal and prosperous North, very badly.'⁶³ In May 1911 Tom Kettle, Professor of National Economics at University College Dublin and a former IPP MP, published a book, *Home Rule Finance: An Experiment in Justice*, which built on newspaper articles and speeches he had been contributing since January. His arguments can be briefly summarised as follows:

1. The figure for revenue in the Treasury accounts for 1909-10 does not take into account the fact that the collection of revenue was held up, due to the failure of the House of Lords to ratify the Finance Bill. If it assumed that the amount collected was

⁶¹ Owen McGee, *Arthur Griffith* (Sallins, 2015), p. 126.

⁶² Arthur Warren Samuels, *Home Rule Finance: An Examination of the Financial bearings of the Government of Ireland Bill* (Dublin, 1912), pp. 7-8.

⁶³ 'Finance and Home Rule', *Irish Times*, 10 January 1911.

about £0.8m less than what ought to have been collected, Ireland's deficit falls to £1.6m, which, while significant, was not shockingly high.⁶⁴

2. The United Kingdom as a whole showed a deficit in six of the previous ten years, its highest being £53m. France and Germany showed similar deficits. Budget deficits had become the norm, and were not an indication of insolvency or an inability of a nation to govern itself.⁶⁵
3. The Irish 'deficit' was a direct result of English misgovernment. Ireland had no control over its own expenditure, but was 'compelled, by what was called "administrative uniformity", to keep house on the English scale.' On top of that was the high cost of coercion, and when coercion failed, the cost of reform, particularly the Land Commission.⁶⁶
4. The very existence of the 'deficit' was challenged. In arguing this, Ireland was at a disadvantage: it was not possible to ascertain correctly the revenue of Ireland because the books were kept by Britain, and were not open to inspection.⁶⁷
5. 'True' revenue – the revenue on goods actually consumed in Ireland as opposed to revenue collected in Ireland – was based on guesses. The adjustment used to calculate the revenue on tobacco in 1909-10 was arrived at 'by proportions ascertained for 1903-4 upon inquiries made of manufacturers and dealers'; that for beer 'on basis of statistics of transit of beer in three kingdoms in the year 1903-4'; and that for tea and sugar 'by proportions ascertained by inquiries as to the quantities interchanged between Great Britain and Ireland in 1903-4.' This despite the fact that annual statistics of Irish imports and exports had been issued by the Department of Agriculture since 1904.⁶⁸
6. On the expenditure side, the very practice of apportioning expenditure between England, Scotland and Ireland was contrary to both the Act of Union and the Consolidated Fund Act 1816, which stipulated that all expenditure should be treated as common. But even allowing that it may be done, it was done unfairly. Expenditure on the Royal Irish Constabulary, totalling £1.35m in 1909-10, was treated as 'local' expenditure, but the RIC, in Kettle's words, 'was devised and has been used as a main weapon of Imperial policy in Ireland.' Robert Peel, its founder, treated it as an

⁶⁴ Kettle, *Home Rule Finance*, p. 10.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 10-11.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 12-14.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* p. 14.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 15-17.

imperial charge, and Sir Edward Hamilton, a treasury official, told the Childers Commission that in his view it ought to be treated as an imperial charge. Similarly, the land purchase bonus that was offered to landlords in the 1903 Land Act in the form of land stock was represented as an imperial grant, but the annual charge on the stock was debited to Ireland under the vote for the Land Commission.⁶⁹

7. The only approach to the finance of home rule lay through the Childers report of 1896. That report had shown that Ireland had been grossly over-taxed every year since 1801. Justice demanded that Britain pay a grant sufficient ‘to assist Ireland in setting up house for herself.’⁷⁰
8. Although it was probably impracticable for a home rule Ireland to levy or collect its own taxes, it should have sufficient autonomy to set excise duties at a lower level than in England, as was the case before the Gladstone government of 1853.⁷¹

In its issue of 15 January 1911 – two weeks before Kettle’s first article was published, *Sinn Féin* devoted the best part of its front page to a long and critical analysis of the figures, making many of the same points that Kettle would subsequently make, and echoing Samuels’ arguments from 1897. Firstly, it noted that the total revenue collected was £1m less than average, due to the action of the Lords, and that the ‘revenue contributed’ was not the same as ‘revenue collected’, and said that the Treasury was adept at making this adjustment so as to significantly reduce ‘true’ Irish revenue, while increasing the ‘true’ revenue of Great Britain by the same amount. Secondly, it noted the effect on Irish expenditure of the Old Age Pensions Act. The figure quoted by the Treasury for expenditure on old-age pensions was £2.34 million, or nearly 30% of total Irish revenue. In England it was only £5.2 million, or 5% of English revenue. Thus, in *Sinn Féin*’s words, the Treasury was able to ‘return Ireland as sixfold more indebted’ than England. Thirdly, the Royal Irish Constabulary was included in Irish expenditure but, in *Sinn Féin*’s view, it was an imperial force. A large proportion of its equipment was purchased in England. The army and navy were listed as imperial, not local, expenditure because, the paper said, if it was listed as local expenditure England would be seen to have expended by far the greatest part, and therefore ‘would be found to be debtor to Ireland and to Scotland.’ There were other items, besides army and navy, that were

⁶⁹ Ibid. pp. 17-20.

⁷⁰ Ibid. pp. 42, 44.

⁷¹ Ibid. p. 78.

included under Imperial expenditure when they should have been included as local expenditure for England. Taken together, these would have the effect of reducing England's contribution to Imperial revenue from the quoted figure of £57 million to £2 million. In *Sinn Féin's* view, the only way to protect Irish interests would be to set up a non-political committee made up of financial experts to examine and report on the financial provisions of any home rule legislation.⁷² Such a committee was also suggested by the bishop of Raphoe, and the suggestion was warmly welcomed by Kettle in his book.⁷³

The points of convergence between *Sinn Féin's* arguments and those of Kettle and Samuels can be tabulated:

	Griffith 1911	Kettle 1911	Samuels 1897
Revenue left uncollected in 1909-10	✓	✓	—
UK and others also showed a deficit	—	✓	—
'True' revenue biased against Ireland	✓	✓	—
All expenditure should be indiscriminate	✓	✓	✓
Much 'imperial' exp. is spent in England	✓	✓	✓
RIC is imperial expenditure	✓	✓	✓
Treasury figures not open to inspection	✓	✓	✓
There should be an Irish advisory committee	✓	✓	—

The difference between them was in their conclusions. Unionists maintained that home rule in any form would be financially disastrous to both Ireland and Britain, Tom Kettle suggested a 'halfway house' that would involve allowing Ireland control of excise duties and the payment, for a number of years, of a fixed grant, and *Sinn Féin* wanted nothing less than full control by the Irish parliament over both revenue and expenditure, and that the parliament should keep the books. *Irish Freedom* ventured less often than *Sinn Féin* into the realms of finance, but when it did, as in the editorials of March 1911 and June 1912, it took very much the same line.⁷⁴

In fact, the *Sinn Féin* demand was not even a revolutionary one. The government set up an advisory committee, made up principally of British financial experts and chaired by Sir Henry Primrose, to examine the question of home rule finance and to make recommendations. In its report, printed for cabinet use in October 1911 but not published as a

⁷² 'Finance and Home Rule', *Sinn Féin*, 15 January 1911.

⁷³ Kettle, *Home Rule Finance*, pp. 2-3.

⁷⁴ 'The Financial Problem', *Irish Freedom*, March 1911; editorial, *Irish Freedom*, June 1912.

parliamentary paper until April 1912, it recommended the very thing that Sinn Féin demanded: full control of the Irish government over income and expenditure.⁷⁵ In the event, however, despite the support of Augustine Birrell, the recommendation was rejected by Herbert Samuel when drafting the financial sections of the bill.⁷⁶

Financial considerations, however, soon became secondary to what would become known as the ‘Ulster question’. Although partition had been under discussion since mid-1912, it did not assume concrete form until the second reading of the bill on its third iteration in March 1914. The remainder of this chapter will examine the advanced nationalist response.

Partition and after

As early as May 1912, Arthur Griffith was aware from ‘a source’ that the exclusion of four Ulster counties from the provisions of the Home Rule Bill had been discussed in cabinet, that Winston Churchill and David Lloyd George were in favour of it and that Asquith was opposed, although Griffith told John Sweetman that ‘Ulster itself won’t have it.’⁷⁷ The possibility was played down in the advanced nationalist press. An *Irish Freedom* editorial on the Agar-Robartes amendment and a *Sinn Féin* article on the Carson amendment both stated the conviction that Ulster unionists would, in the end, come into a home rule Ireland and work politically within the system.⁷⁸ In the course of 1913, however, it must have become clear to the leaders of the IRB, Sinn Féin and, after November 1913, the Volunteers that the partition of Ireland was more likely to occur than not. Nevertheless, the leading men of all three continued to express a preference that the bill should pass. Seán MacDermott, arguably the most extreme man in Ireland, wrote to Joseph McGarrity, arguably the most extreme Irishman in America, in December 1913. He said

It is impossible at the present moment to say what will be the fate of the Home Rule Bill. I believe there will be considerable chopping at it before it goes through but it

⁷⁵ Jalland, ‘Irish Home-Rule Finance’, pp. 234-5, 238.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 238-9.

⁷⁷ Griffith to Sweetman, 18 May 1912. Sweetman papers, NLI, Ms 47,587/7.

⁷⁸ ‘The Basis of Reconstruction’, *Irish Freedom*, July 1912; ‘The Southern Minority’, *Sinn Féin*, 4 January 1913.

will I think pass eventually, at least what is left of it - that won't be much. Even in its rottenest form, I hope it will get through.⁷⁹

Thomas MacDonagh, writing to his friend Dominick Hackett in January 1914, said

We know no more here than you do about the prospect of Home Rule. Some of us are prepared for whatever happens. If it passes, good, we shall be in a better position to stand for the full right. If not, we shall have a splendid opportunity of getting a strong following in the demand for the full right.⁸⁰

And Patrick Pearse, now a member of the IRB and undertaking a tour of the United States with Bulmer Hobson, addressed a staunchly nationalist meeting in New York in almost exactly the same terms as those he had used in Dublin in 1912:

Irish Nationalists find nothing in the measure of [missing word or words] that is offered to Ireland on the Home Rule Bill, though, of course, they will be glad on the whole if that bill passes, because it will mean the end of a serious episode in Irish history.⁸¹

There continued to be some reluctance on the part of the advanced papers to discuss the possibility of partition before it was actually proposed by the government. Even in its issue of March 1914, *Irish Freedom*, reporting the announcement that the government was about to make 'certain proposals of the nature of a compromise', went no further than to speculate whether these proposals would undermine the principle of 'a Parliament in Ireland with an Irish executive responsible to it', or whether it would be 'such as to allow Mr. Redmond to save face.' Ulster was not mentioned at all.⁸² *Sinn Féin* had, on 21 February, reported a 'rumour' that a 'portion of Ireland' was to be excluded, but it did not repeat this rumour in its issues of 28 February or 7 March.⁸³ This meant, of course, that when the prime minister announced the provision of temporary exclusion on a county option basis, the papers were free to give full vent to their outrage. *Sinn Féin* said

Mr. Redmond has agreed with England that Ireland is not one – that Ireland may be divided. If Mr. Redmond be right, every Irish leader since Henry Grattan has been wrong. If Mr. Redmond is right, we have never had an Irish nation to fight for since William III came to Ireland.⁸⁴

Irish Freedom commented in almost identical terms:

⁷⁹ MacDermott to McGarrity, 12 December 1913. NLI, Joseph McGarrity Papers, Ms 17,618.

⁸⁰ MacDonagh to Hackett, 15 January 1914. NLI, Thomas MacDonagh Papers, Ms 22,934.

⁸¹ Pearse speech, New York, March 1914. NLI, Joseph McGarrity Papers, Ms 17,634.

⁸² *Irish Freedom*, March 1914.

⁸³ *Sinn Féin*, 21, 28 February, 7 March 1914.

⁸⁴ 'Redmond on Redmond', *Sinn Féin*, 16 March 1914.

The Irish people were not satisfied; but now comes the proposal that they give up their claim of Ireland a Nation! and banish all hope of future growth. It is intolerable. It went on, however, to call on Redmond to stand aside from future negotiations if they involved partition, ‘even at the cost of the “Home Rule” Bill.’⁸⁵ Even at the moment of what they called ‘betrayal’, the extreme republicans were still calling on Redmond to show leadership. They were urging him to resist partition, and they saw as the consequence of this the risk of *sacrificing* the bill. The bill was apparently still desirable, but partition was too high a price to pay for it.

Sinn Féin held a conference in Dublin on 21 March. It was resolved ‘that the territorial integrity of Ireland and the essential unity of its people are the basis of Irish nationalism, and any proposals antagonistic to them, temporarily or permanently, no matter how or whence put forward, must be condemned and resisted.’ It was decided to hold a convention of nationalists the following month.⁸⁶ But, not content just to hold a convention, the Sinn Féin national council sent copies of the resolution to public bodies throughout Ireland.⁸⁷ The motion met with mixed results: in many councils it was simply marked as read, in some it was literally thrown on the fire, in some it was adopted, and in some it was adopted and its adoption was later rescinded. But in all of them it was discussed. More remarkably, reports of the discussion appeared daily in the *Irish Independent*. The *Independent* was opposed to partition, but it was not friendly towards Sinn Féin. That the organisation received such extensive coverage in a national daily is strong evidence that not only was Sinn Féin engaging with home rule politics, but that it was taken seriously. This, at a time when it had supposedly been ‘dead’ for some years. The following meetings were reported by the *Independent* (the date is the date of publication):

27 March	Galway Urban District Council	Marked as read
	Enniscorthy Board of Guardians	Marked as read
	Lurgan Board of Guardians	‘Should be put in the fire’
28 March	Mitchelstown Board of Guardians	Marked as read
	Youghal Board of Guardians	Marked as read
	Letterkenny Board of Guardians	Marked as read

⁸⁵ ‘Stand Aside!’, *Irish Freedom*, April 1914.

⁸⁶ ‘Sinn Fein’, *Freeman’s Journal*, 23 March 1914.

⁸⁷ *Sinn Féin*, 18 April 1914.

30 March	Gorey Board of Guardians	Adopted
31 March	Ballymena Board of Guardians	Marked as read (by 4 votes to 3)
	Kilmallock Board of Guardians	Marked as read
1 April	Abbeyleix Rural District Council	Made no order, but not in favour of partition.
	Belfast Board of Guardians	Would not discuss it
	Westport Board of Guardians	Made no order
	Tullamore Board of Guardians	Made no order
2 April	Limerick Board of Guardians	In favour of resolution
	Ballinrobe Council	Marked as read
	Oldcastle Board of Guardians	Proposed by Chairman, rejected 7–4
	Ardee Board of Guardians	Adopted
	Dunshaughlin Board of Guardians	Marked as read
	Dungarvan Board of Guardians	Marked as read
	Navan Urban District Council	Marked as read
	Dromore West Board of Guardians	Returned, marked ‘rejected’
	North Dublin Union	Proposed, but not discussed
	Rathdown (No. 1) Council	Marked as read
3 April	Glenamaddy Board of Guardians	Adopted
	Tullamore Board of Guardians	Marked as read
	Kinsale Board of Guardians	Deferred consideration
	Navan Board of Guardians	Marked as read
	Ennis Board of Guardians	Marked as read
	Enniscorthy District Council	Marked as read
4 April	Pembroke Urban District Council	‘Leave it in the hands of the IPP’
	Limerick Borough Council	Rejected
6 April	Clonakilty Rural District Council	Adopted
	Carrick-on-Suir No. 1 RDC	Marked as read
	Baltinglass No. 1 RDC	Marked as read
	Lismore Rural District Council	Marked as read
	Trim Board of Guardians	No action
8 April	Inishowen Board of Guardians	Adopted
	Rathdrum Council	Thrown on the fire

	Clones Urban District Council	Adopted
	Thomastown Board of Guardians	Marked as read
	Carrick-on-Suir No. 2 RDC	Marked as read
	Carrick-on-Suir No. 3 RDC	Marked as read
9 April	Trim Urban District Council	Marked as read
	Coole Rural District Council	Thrown on the fire
	Granard Board of Guardians	Thrown on the fire
	Granard District Council	Thrown on the fire
	Kilkenny Corporation	Thrown in the waste-basket
	Granard Board of Guardians	Marked as read
10 April	Ardee Town Commissioners	Marked as read
	New Ross Rural District Council	No action taken
13 April	Newry No. 2 District Council	Adopted
14 April	Kilkenny Board of Guardians	Marked as read
15 April	Thurles Board of Guardians	Marked as read
	Youghal No. 2 District Council	Marked as read
16 April	Limerick Board of Guardians	Adoption rescinded
	Swinford District Council	Rejected
	Bantry District Council	Adopted
	Inishowen District Council	No action taken
18 April	Kilrush Urban District Council	Marked as read
20 April	Limerick County Council	Thrown in waste-basket
11 May	Gorey District Council	Adoption rescinded ⁸⁸

Dublin Corporation, on 4 May, passed a resolution ‘that the territorial integrity of Ireland and its essential unity are the basis of Irish Nationalism’ – the identical wording to the Sinn Féin resolution. Tom Kelly moved as an amendment that the Sinn Fein resolution be adopted, but the amendment was defeated.⁸⁹

The convention of nationalists decided on at the Sinn Féin conference was held in Dublin on 29 April 1914. The attendees at this meeting are not listed, but a large number of letters of apology were read out. Among those writing were Archdeacon McKenna of

⁸⁸ *Irish Independent*, 27 March – 11 May 1914.

⁸⁹ *Irish Independent*, 5 May 1914.

Armagh, Francis Joseph Bigger, Rev. Mr. Vandeleur of Malahide and several others who appear not to have been Sinn Féiners. The convention adopted the resolution of 21 March, and also approved Sinn Féin proposals to be submitted to unionists, arguing for the adoption of proportional representation in the Home Rule Bill to ensure proper representation of unionists in the Irish parliament.⁹⁰

Both *Sinn Féin* and *Irish Freedom* continued to monitor with disapproval the progress of the Amending Bill and the Buckingham Palace conference throughout the summer of 1914. Then, in August, the European war broke out. Both *Sinn Féin* and *Irish Freedom*, unsurprisingly, commented adversely on John Redmond's offer of the Irish Volunteers to defend Ireland, and the attempts to bring the Volunteers under the control of the British Army. As they saw it, Redmond had missed an opportunity to win a *quid pro quo* from the British. The British, if they wanted the Irish to defend their own country, should give Ireland something to defend – a government of its own. As *Irish Freedom* put it,

In time of war any country would be hopelessly hampered if its control of its resources was limited to the possession of an extended armed force...The country's food supplies, its means of transport for purpose of mobilisation, everything, indeed, that concerns the public service must be under the same control as its fighting men.⁹¹

The necessity of protecting Ireland's food supplies was another matter that was stressed by both papers. They highlighted the danger that food would be taken out of Ireland to provision the army, and that Irish people would starve as a result. Only a strong Volunteer force could prevent that happening if it was attempted.⁹² It was in this context that *Sinn Féin* put forward a programme in August. The act, if signed into law immediately, could lead to the convocation of an Irish parliament by 25 September. Even if it proved impractical to hold early elections, a government could be formed at once: it only required that the king summon Redmond and instruct him to form a ministry. That section of the bill prohibiting Ireland from maintaining an army could be removed by an amending act, which could pass through parliament within hours. The Volunteers could then defend Ireland for the Irish government, and, incidentally, protect Irish food supplies. The paper went so far as to declare, 'We are ready in this crisis to accept John Redmond as Prime Minister of Ireland, responsible to the Irish people'.⁹³ *Sinn Féin* went

⁹⁰ *Irish Times*, *Freeman's Journal*, 30 April 1914; *Sinn Féin*, 9 May 1914.

⁹¹ 'More Hypocrisy', *Irish Freedom*, September 1914.

⁹² 'Hold the Harvest', *Sinn Féin*, 22 August 1914; 'Another Famine?', *Irish Freedom*, September 1914.

⁹³ 'Hold the Harvest', *Sinn Féin*, 22 August 1914.

so far as to say, the following month, ‘If the Home Rule Bill be signed but not brought into immediate operation **by the appointment of a Home Rule Executive Government,** Ireland is sold and betrayed [emphasis in original].’⁹⁴ It is ironic that, at a time when the home rulers were content to see home rule delayed indefinitely, it was the advanced nationalists that called its delay a betrayal.

Thus, from the outset until its enactment, advanced nationalists – including the most hardline republicans – not only did not fear the Home Rule Bill, but were keen to see it implemented, believing it to be a basis from which a revolution could be launched. Even the prospect of partition did not shake that view.

⁹⁴ ‘Carson’s Compact’, *Sinn Féin*, 12 September 1914.

5. The Irish Volunteers

There are two opposing views of the Irish Volunteers: that they were formed in 1913 to protect the Home Rule Bill then going through parliament from the threat posed by the unionist leader Edward Carson and his newly-formed Ulster Volunteers; and alternatively, that they were formed in 1913 by the Irish Republican Brotherhood, using respected constitutionalists as an unwitting front, with the object of establishing an Irish Republic by force of arms. The former view is stated unequivocally by Daithí Ó Corráin,¹ who pointedly rejected the latter view, as expounded by Bulmer Hobson in a 1947 Bureau of Military History witness statement.² Marnie Hay, in her biography of Hobson, describes them as a ‘force controlled by an independent body of men free from any discernible political allegiance, backed and supported by the population at large’.³ It will be argued here that, at the leadership level, the Volunteers, while not explicitly republican, were nevertheless revolutionary in both their composition and their aims. Firstly, the make-up of the Provisional Committee formed in late 1913 will be examined, with attention being given to Eoin MacNeill, the ‘figurehead’ leader of the Volunteers. Then, the manifesto of the Volunteers will be examined, to look at its compatibility or incompatibility with the goals of the home rule movement, and of the Home Rule Bill. Finally, the period leading up to the takeover of the Provisional Committee by the Irish Parliamentary Party will be dealt with, again with the emphasis on MacNeill, and his relationship with IPP leader John Redmond, as revealed in correspondence.

Formation of the Provisional Committee

The Provisional Committee of the Irish Volunteers grew from three to thirty members in the course of three weeks between early November and 24 November 1913. It began when either The O’Rahilly, at the behest of Bulmer Hobson, or O’Rahilly and Hobson together, visited Eoin MacNeill to ask if he would be willing to call a meeting of

¹ Daithí Ó Corráin, ‘“A most public spirited and unselfish man”: the career and contribution of Colonel Maurice Moore, 1854-1939’, *Studia Hibernica* 40 (2014), p. 88.

² Bureau of Military History, WS 31 (Bulmer Hobson), pp. 2-4; Ó Corráin, ‘Maurice Moore’, p. 89.

³ Hay, *Bulmer Hobson*, p. 26.

interested parties for the purposes of forming a volunteer body.⁴ By all accounts, the three reached agreement very quickly.

MacNeill, in his memoirs, recalled, ‘I had no doubt in my mind that both these men came to me from the old physical force party whose organisation was the IRB, and I also had little doubt of the part I was expected to play.’⁵ Bulmer Hobson did indeed represent the IRB; he was a member of the Supreme Council and chairman of the Dublin Centres Board. The board, at his suggestion, had already begun drilling members in July of that year, in anticipation of the forming of a Volunteer organisation.⁶ O’Rahilly had returned to Ireland only in 1911, and had very quickly got involved in the campaign to prevent the presentation of an address on the occasion of the visit of King George V, a visit that was for him ‘an incident in that war of conquest that England has waged against Ireland for seven centuries and which, thank God, is not completed yet.’⁷ He had joined the national council of Sinn Féin in the same year. Although not a member of the IRB, he believed that politics without arms was meaningless, and had written a number of articles in *Irish Freedom* in 1912 – before the creation of the Ulster Volunteers – arguing that freedom could not be attained if Irishmen were not armed, and that the 1798 Rebellion had failed, not for want of organisation, of leadership or of courage, but for want of arms.⁸ In January 1913, six months before the IRB made the decision to begin drilling, he and Éamonn Ceannt had proposed to the national council of Sinn Féin that ‘it is the duty of all Irishmen to possess knowledge of arms.’ The motion had passed.⁹ MacNeill said of himself, ‘personally, I was no doctrinaire, whether on behalf of physical force or against it.’¹⁰

The article in *An Claidheamh Soluis* that had brought the three together, MacNeill’s ‘The North Began’, has been described by Aodogán O’Rahilly as ‘a tortuous account of the political situation in the north of Ireland’, and he continues, ‘in all this convoluted sophistry there is no forthright message about the organisation of a force of Irish

⁴ Eoin MacNeill, ‘How the Volunteers Began’, in F.X. Martin (ed.) *The Irish Volunteers 1913 – 1915* (Dublin, 1963), pp. 71-2; Bulmer Hobson, ‘Foundation and growth of the Irish Volunteers, 1913 – 14’, in *ibid.*, p. 24.

⁵ MacNeill, ‘How the Volunteers Began’, p. 72.

⁶ Hobson, ‘Foundation and growth’, p. 23.

⁷ Ua Rathghaille, letter to the *Freeman’s Journal*, 3 April 1911.

⁸ Aodogán O’Rahilly, *Winding the Clock: O’Rahilly and the 1916 Rising* (Dublin, 1991), p. 83.

⁹ Michael Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland: The Sinn Féin Party, 1916-1923* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 33.

¹⁰ MacNeill, ‘How the Volunteers Began’, p. 72.

Volunteers.’¹¹ In fact it contains only two very brief references to a nationalist volunteer force, in both cases only saying that such a force *might* be raised. In the main, it is a celebration of the creation of the Ulster Volunteers. The fact that any body of Irishmen should arm and organise themselves for the purpose of defying England was for him a cause for celebration; the fact that it happened in his native Ulster, where the 18th-century Volunteers were particularly strong, was doubly so. MacNeill believed that the Ulster Volunteers had the potential to transform, as the 18th-century counterparts had done, from a force raised to defend imperial interests in Ireland into a revolutionary body committed to legislative independence, and could potentially join with a nationalist volunteer force in the process.¹² This belief was shared by MacNeill’s fellow-northerners Roger Casement and Alec Wilson.¹³ It was legislative independence *per se*, rather than specifically Redmondite home rule, that MacNeill believed in, and he saw the creation of an armed body as the means of achieving legislative independence. Although his article merely hinted at the creation of such a body, his covering letter to O’Rahilly said that he was ‘convinced that Volunteers must be started throughout the country... It will be a great blunder if it is not done.’¹⁴

John Boland MP, writing to MacNeill in May 1914 during the first round of his negotiations with John Redmond, said that MacNeill ‘had always been a loyal adherent of Party as the instrument of obtaining Home Rule.’¹⁵ One might wonder whether ‘loyal adherent of the Party’ was not merely a default position for any nationalist who was not a known adherent of any Sinn Féin or republican party. Bulmer Hobson used almost the identical phrase, ‘an avowed adherent of John Redmond,’¹⁶ but MacNeill’s biographer and son-in-law, Michael Tierney, said that ‘this description is only accurate in a sense which deprives it almost of any real meaning.’¹⁷ MacNeill had never shown any enthusiasm for parliamentarianism, and had written in a letter to a priest in 1904,

¹¹ O’Rahilly, *Winding the Clock*, pp. 94-5.

¹² Eoin MacNeill, ‘The North Began’, *An Claidheamh Soluis*, 1 November 1913.

¹³ Roger Casement to George F.H. Berkeley, 24 June 1914; Alec Wilson to A.S. Green, 22 June 1914, NLI, Erskine Childers Papers, Ms 7879.

¹⁴ O’Rahilly, *Winding the Clock*, p. 94.

¹⁵ Seaghán Ua Beoláin to Mac Neill, 21 May 1914, MacNeill Papers, NLI Ms 10,883.

¹⁶ Hobson, ‘Foundation and growth’, p. 24.

¹⁷ Michael Tierney, *Eoin MacNeill: Scholar and Man of Action 1867-1945* (Oxford, 1980), p. 103.

In theory I suppose I am a separatist, in practice I would accept any settlement that would enable Irishmen to freely control their own affairs, and I would object to any theoretical upsetting of such a settlement.¹⁸

MacNeill, who ‘had little doubt about the part he was expected to play’, was willing to take on the role of figurehead, but had no personal leadership ambitions. In his memoirs he said that when he asked his friend Dr. Sigerson for advice before starting the Volunteers, Sigerson had asked ““Do you think you will be able to control it?” I told him that I did not look forward to controlling it. In fact, at no time, then or since, did I propose to myself to become a leader in politics or of any section in politics.’¹⁹ Nor did he, initially, propose to lead the Volunteers. Right up to the split, his position was never higher than joint honorary secretary, and all official correspondence was signed by himself and Larry Kettle.

MacNeill was on friendly terms with home rulers such as Maurice Moore and Stephen Gwynn, through their common involvement in the Gaelic League. But there is evidence in his correspondence that he was on friendly terms with the advanced men as well. After the Irish National Volunteer Fund Committee cabled \$1000 to the Volunteers in June 1914, MacNeill sent a telegram to Joseph McGarrity: ‘Message just received announcing princely gift. Ten thousand thanks. Confident Ireland stands for Volunteers armed and permanent.’²⁰ A month later he sent McGarrity a longer telegram, giving details of the Howth gun-running, even though the guns at Howth had not been purchased with American money. The telegram also recounts the shooting at Bachelor’s Walk, and concludes, ‘All Ireland roused demanding arms.’²¹ The tone of both telegrams is a good deal more cordial than they might have been in what was essentially a business relationship, especially if it had been the case that each found the politics of the other distasteful. In a draft letter to Roger Casement giving a detailed first-hand account of the gun-running, he says at one point,

As we neared Clontarf I came upon Tom Clarke and Seán Mac Diarmada in a taxi. I asked them to take me up and go ahead of the Volunteers...to see if there was any

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ MacNeill, ‘How the Volunteers Began’, p. 73.

²⁰ MacNeill to Joseph McGarrity, 22 June 1914. McGarrity Papers, NLI Ms 17,504/3.

²¹ MacNeill to Joseph McGarrity, 29 July 1914. McGarrity Papers, NLI Ms 17,504/2.

sign of a hostile movement...There was not a sign...Tom and Seán went back in their car to report all clear.²²

It was rare for MacNeill – or any of his contemporaries – to refer to anybody by their first name, let alone by first name only, without the surname. This particular letter mentioned seventeen names, including ‘Hobson’, ‘Figgis’, ‘Judge’, ‘Fitzgibbon’ and ‘Col. Moore’, but the only other person to be referred to by his first name – presumably because he was a ‘young lad’ – was a Fianna member, Pádraic Ó Riain. The whole passage above suggests an easy familiarity with ‘Tom and Seán’ that went beyond mere intra-organisational relationships, especially given that Clarke was not even a member of the Volunteers.

Twelve people were invited to a meeting in Wynn’s hotel in Abbey Street on 11 November 1913, of whom eight remained on the Provisional Committee: MacNeill, Hobson, O’Rahilly, P.H. Pearse, Seán MacDermott, Éamonn Ceannt, Sean Fitzgibbon and Piaras Béaslaí.²³ All bar MacNeill were known to be advanced nationalists; all were members of the Gaelic League, while three were current members of Sinn Féin. Piaras Béaslaí says he looked at the company and ‘could see what people would say: “Who are they? Sinn Feiners! Gaelic Leaguers! Cranks! Not one supporter of the Party! Not one follower of the Chief!”’ (It is apparent that MacNeill did not count with Béaslaí as a ‘follower of the Chief’.) Efforts were made over the following days to get some of Redmond’s supporters onto the committee. The most important recruits, Béaslaí says, were Laurence Kettle, an electrical engineer who was made joint honorary secretary with MacNeill, and John Gore, a solicitor, who became joint honorary treasurer with O’Rahilly.²⁴ O’Rahilly, in his account, says:

As we were all in agreement that the movement must be broadly National and not confined to, or controlled by, any particular body, our first effort was to secure the cooperation of men prominent in existing organisations such as the Parliamentary Party, the United Irish League, the Ancient Order of Hibernians, the Gaelic Athletic Association, the Foresters, etc., and each of us was told off for special duty in this connection. But we found that the task was one of considerable difficulty, and refusals were the order of the day. I, for instance, was deputed to secure Lord Mayor Sherlock, who I found was unwilling, and Professor Kettle, who I was informed was

²² MacNeill to Casement, 15 August 1914. NLI, Hobson papers, Ms 13174/3.

²³ The O’Rahilly, ‘The Irish prepare to arm’, in Martin, *The Irish Volunteers*, p. 76.

²⁴ Piaras Béaslaí, ‘The national army is founded’, in Martin, *The Irish Volunteers*, pp. 80-1.

unwell. It will be remembered that Mr Sherlock, who refused invitation to join the Committee when it was a week old, became later one of Mr Redmond's nominees on that body, and that Professor Kettle has since recovered from his indisposition to take quite an active part in the Movement.²⁵

Professor Tom Kettle was an alcoholic. His 'indisposition' had come on at the labour peace conference in November, just as the Provisional Committee was being formed.²⁶ As MacNeill put it in a letter to Darrell Figgis, he 'went away from Dublin for special treatment and came back with his health restored'. He was co-opted to the Provisional Committee early in 1914.²⁷

Larry Kettle, although two years older than Tom, seems always to have lived in his brother's shadow. Even in his own introduction to his father's memoirs, Kettle says that it was always intended that they should be published by Tom. 'He [A.J. Kettle] said that, although Tom was obviously the most suitable editor, he was satisfied that he had other sons capable of the work.' When he told his father that Tom was missing in action after the battle of Ginchy, his father said 'if Tom is dead I don't wish to live any longer.'²⁸ Larry, like Tom, was a student at University College, Dublin, and seems also to have been a member of the Young Ireland Branch of the United Irish League, which was something of a maverick group within the League. John Gore was a middle-aged Dublin solicitor described by Hobson as 'a charming old man, but he was not noted for reticence.' Worried by the presence of the HMS *Panther*, anchored in Dublin Bay in the week before the Howth gun-running, Hobson told Gore 'in strict confidence' that there was a planned landing of arms in Waterford on the following Sunday, calculating 'that he would be unable to refrain from giving this news in strict confidence to every client who came to see him.' The *Panther* duly sailed south.²⁹ Gore seems to have been somewhat scatterbrained. It was he who was asked by Redmond to supply him with the names of the 'twenty-five' members of the Provisional Committee; he wrote back to inform him that

²⁵ The O'Rahilly, 'The Irish prepare to arm', p. 77.

²⁶ J.B. Lyons, *The Enigma of Tom Kettle: Irish Patriot, Essayist, Poet, British Soldier, 1880-1916* (Dublin, 1983), pp. 40.

²⁷ Eoin MacNeill to Darrell Figgis, 12 May 1914. NLI, Bulmer Hobson Papers. Ms 13174/3.

²⁸ L.J. Kettle, 'introduction', in A.J. Kettle, *The Material for Victory: Being the Memories of Andrew J. Kettle* (Dublin, 1958), pp. ix, xxi.

²⁹ Hobson, 'Foundation and Growth', p. 35.

there were in fact twenty-seven members, which was also inaccurate as there were twenty-nine.³⁰

Three days after the meeting of 11 November a second meeting was held. Hobson names three people who he says joined the committee at that meeting: Robert Page, Seamus O'Connor and Colm O'Loughlin.³¹ F.X. Martin, writing in 1963, said that in addition to those eleven the following were present on 14 November: Laurence J. Kettle, Éamon Martin, Michael J. Judge, Colonel Maurice Moore and Liam Gogan. Martin did not say what his source was for those names.³² However, in his submission to the Royal Commission on the Rebellion, Moore says that when the movement was formed he first went to Mayo, where he 'began raising Volunteer corps in various towns', and only later joined the Provisional Committee, when it had already reached twenty-five members.³³ Of the three named by Hobson, Page and O'Connor are said by him to have been members of the IRB, while according to a later account by Diarmuid Lynch, all three of them were.³⁴

Hobson's list classifies the committee not only by IRB members, but also by members of the United Irish League, members of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, and those he describes as 'not formally affiliated with any party'. Four are categorised as UIL: the two Kettles, Gore and Moore. Another four are categorised as AOH: Michael J. Judge, James Lenehan, Peter O'Reilly and George Walsh.³⁵ Judge was to play a significant part in the movement in the following year; the other three seem to have had very little profile, and very little involvement. Those 'not formally affiliated with any party' included several who would guide the Volunteers along the path to revolution, such as Pearse, Thomas MacDonagh, Joseph Plunkett and Roger Casement. Liam Gogan, according to Hobson, was a student of MacNeill at UCD, and acted as his secretary for a short while. Thus, despite the best efforts of O'Rahilly and others, only eight of the thirty eventual members of the Provisional Committee could in any way be described as 'Party men', and all of

³⁰ John Redmond to Eoin MacNeill and L.J. Kettle, 26 June 1914, NLI, MacNeill Papers, Ms 10,883(c).

³¹ Hobson, 'Foundation and growth', p. 26.

³² F.X. Martin, 'The Provisional Committee of the Irish Volunteers', in idem, *The Irish Volunteers*, p. 96.

³³ Draft statement of Col. Moore to the Royal Commission on the Rebellion, 1916. NLI, Col. Maurice Moore papers, Ms 10,572.

³⁴ Hobson, 'Foundation and growth', pp. 30-1; Diarmuid Lynch, *The I.R.B. and the 1916 Insurrection* (Cork, 1967), p. 96

³⁵ Hobson, 'Foundation and growth', pp. 30-1.

those were either quite individualistic or of very little importance. At any rate, the press was unconvinced that the new movement was representative of all shades of nationalism, causing MacNeill and Kettle, as secretaries, to write to the *Freeman's Journal* on 24 November, the day before the Rotunda meeting, reiterating 'that the Irish Volunteers are not being started or run by any existing organisation, whether political, sectarian, or social.' They enclosed a letter to show 'how the movement is viewed by a veteran who is above suspicion who has been identified with every Irish fight for the last half-century.' The letter of support was signed by Larry Kettle's father, the Land War veteran A.J. Kettle.³⁶

Of the IRB members of the committee, one group that deserves special attention is the Fianna Circle. Hobson had created the Fianna with Constance Markievicz in 1909. At its Ard Fheis in 1912, the Fianna's constitution was changed to make its object 'to re-establish the independence of Ireland.' That same year, Hobson formed a Fianna Circle of the IRB, known as the John Mitchel Literary and Debating Society. Among its members were Con Colbert, Éamon Martin, Michael Lonergan, Pádraig Ó Riain and Liam Mellows, all of whom became members of the Provisional Committee, thus creating an elite loyal to Hobson. Colbert was the head of the Circle.³⁷ Lonergan, Ó Riain, Colbert and 'probably' Martin acted as instructors when drilling took place in the Foresters Hall in Parnell Square during the summer of 1913 'in preparation for the formation of the Irish Volunteers in October'.³⁸ Tom Clarke attended the drills and 'used to stamp the attendance cards'.³⁹ Garry Holohan, a fellow member of the Circle, described Lonergan as 'a very competent drill instructor'. He was on the clerical staff of Cleary's in O'Connell Street, and was responsible for designing the Fianna uniform. He emigrated to the United States in 1914.⁴⁰ Another member of the Provisional Committee, Seamus O'Connor, was a member of the Dublin Centres Board of the IRB, and was present at the meeting in July 1913 at which the decision was taken to begin drilling.⁴¹

³⁶ *Freeman's Journal*, 25 November 1913.

³⁷ Marnie Hay, *Na Fianna Éireann and the Irish Revolution, 1909-23: Scouting for rebels* (Manchester, 2019, 2021), pp. 45, 48.

³⁸ BMH, WS 31 (Bulmer Hobson), p. 5.

³⁹ BMH WS 328 (Garry Holohan), p. 13.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

⁴¹ Hobson, 'Foundation and growth of the Irish Volunteers', p.23.

When it came to the crucial vote on 15 June 1914 on the admission of John Redmond's nominees to the Provisional Committee, seven of the eight men identified by Hobson as belonging to either the UIL or the AOH, as might have been expected, voted in favour of admission. The exception was Michael J. Judge. The remaining members, both IRB and non-IRB, were fairly evenly split between those who voted for and those who voted against.⁴² Apart from the dramatic falling out between Hobson and his former friends Clarke and MacDermott, however, there seems to have been little rancour between the other members on the either side. The dissenters wrote to the national newspapers pledging their continued support of the Volunteers. The statement that was issued on 24 September, announcing the expulsion of Redmond's nominees, was signed by twenty-one of the then twenty-nine members of the original Provisional Committee. Again, seven of the eight UIL/AOH men were among the eight who did not sign, and again, Judge was the exception.⁴³

Judge, a 40-year-old builders' foreman from Drumcondra in Dublin, seems to have been rather a passionate man. At Clontarf, following the gun-running, he confronted Commissioner Harrell, refusing to surrender any arms. When the soldiers moved on them with fixed bayonets, Judge and some others 'went at them with the butts of the rifles.' Judge received two bayonet wounds.⁴⁴ He later sued Harrell for his injuries. A year later he was charged with aggravated assault following a business dispute which resulted in his hitting another man in the face with a hammer, causing him grievous bodily harm. He was convicted and fined £5.⁴⁵ At the 15 June meeting Judge was vehemently opposed to the admission of Redmond's nominees saying later that 'had they been men, they could have snapped their fingers at John Redmond and all his influence'.⁴⁶ He remained with the MacNeill Volunteers after the split, but resigned shortly afterwards, explaining to John Sweetman, 'I believe the twenty men elected by the Convention as a central executive are utterly unfitted to guide the destinies of the Volunteers and I'm convinced that the six men who have formed themselves into a Military Council [MacNeill,

⁴² Record of voting on the question of admitting Redmond's nominees to the Provisional Committee, Hobson Papers, NLI Ms 13,174/10.

⁴³ Statement by the Provisional Committee of the Irish Volunteers, 24 September 1914, *ibid.*

⁴⁴ MacNeill to Casement, 15 August 1914, Hobson Papers, NLI Ms 13,174/3.

⁴⁵ 'A Heavy Fine', *Freeman's Journal*, 30 November 1915.

⁴⁶ Judge to John Sweetman, 8 January 1915, John Sweetman Papers, NLI Ms 47,588/5.

O’Rahilly, Hobson, Pearse, MacDonagh and Plunkett] and claimed to supersede the County and other Boards will play the deuce with the movement.’⁴⁷

Of the remainder, the only person to go with the Redmond Volunteers was Robert Page. Page was an IRB man, and a member of C Company, 4th Battalion, who drilled at Larkfield. He was defeated by Thomas McCarthy in an election for O/C of the company. At a meeting of the company after the split, Page was one of only four people out of 120 who opted to go with Redmond. McCarthy said that the four ought to join the British Army. Page did, and later became a recruiting sergeant. McCarthy ‘had a job to prevent them killing Page that night.’⁴⁸

Table 1 shows the growth of the Provisional Committee from the original eight named in O’Rahilly’s account, through the added names provided by Hobson and F.X. Martin, to the (incomplete) list provided by Gore to Redmond in June 1914. It shows members’ affiliation according to both Bulmer Hobson and Diarmuid Lynch, the breakdown of the vote on the admission of Redmond’s nominees, and the signatories of the September circular announcing the expulsion of those nominees.

Table 2 shows the names, addresses, places of birth, ages and occupations of the members as far as can be gathered from Gore’s letter to Redmond, 1911 census information, letterheads, later reminiscences etc. Half were in the 30-35 age group. There was a peak of under-25s (nearly all Fianna members), and a peak of men in their 40s and 50s which included two of the four UIL men and two of the four AOH men as well as MacNeill and Casement. The youngest, at 20, was Mellows; the oldest, at 59, was Moore. The age distribution is shown in figure 1. By far the majority came from Dublin, and only Casement and Moore were not normally resident in Dublin, giving their Dublin address as Buswell’s Hotel. The most common occupation was clerk or bookkeeper, followed by journalist, teacher and skilled or unskilled labourer. Three were members of the legal profession: two solicitors and one barrister.

Tom Garvin did a comparison between members of the post-split Irish Volunteers and the National Volunteers, looking at a number of variables. He found that the best differentiator between them was that membership of the Irish Volunteers tended to

⁴⁷ Judge to John Sweetman, 26 December 1914, *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ BMH, WS 307 (Thomas McCarthy).

correspond with an agrarian tradition, residence in Irish-speaking areas, and distance from Dublin, with the reverse true of the National Volunteers'. There was also a correlation between the Irish Volunteers – but not the National Volunteers – and large farm holdings.⁴⁹ Given that the great majority of the Provisional Committee became the Provisional Committee of the post-split Irish Volunteers, the make-up of the committee was therefore markedly different from the rank-and-file membership, being Dublin-based and having non-agricultural occupations. Only the two sons of A.J. Kettle had agrarian roots, and the only large farmer was Maurice Moore, and those three chose the National Volunteers. At least after the split, therefore, adherence to the Irish Volunteers was based on the political policies of the leadership, rather than its demographics.

⁴⁹ Tom Garvin, *The Evolution of Irish Nationalist Politics* (Dublin, 1981), pp. 108-9.

Table 1: Members of the Provisional Committee, their affiliation according to Bulmer Hobson and Diarmuid Lynch, and their votes on the admission of Redmond's nominees, and the split.

		11/11 O'R	14/11 BH	14/11 FXM	24/6 Gore	Aff. BH	Aff. DL	15/6 Vote	24/9 Circ.
1	Eoin MacNeill	✓	✓	✓	✓	–		For	✓
2	Bulmer Hobson	✓	✓	✓	✓	IRB	IRB	For	✓
3	The O'Rahilly	✓	✓	✓	✓	–		For	✓
4	P.H. Pearse	✓	✓	✓	✓	– [†]	IRB	Agst	✓
5	Seán MacDermott	✓	✓	✓	✓	IRB	IRB	Agst	✓
6	Éamonn Ceannt	✓	✓	✓	✓	IRB	IRB	Agst	✓
7	Seán Fitzgibbon	✓	✓	✓	✓	–		Agst	✓
8	Piaras Béaslaí	✓	✓	✓	✓	IRB	IRB	Agst	✓
9	Robert Page		✓	✓	✓	IRB	IRB	For	
10	Séamus O'Connor		✓	✓	✓	IRB	IRB	For	✓
11	Colm O'Loughlin		✓	✓	✓	–	IRB	For	✓
12	Larry Kettle				✓	UIL		For	
13	Maurice Moore			✓	✓	UIL		For	
14	Éamon Martin			✓	✓	IRB	IRB	Agst	✓
15	Michael J. Judge			✓	✓	AOH		Agst	✓
16	Liam Gogan			✓		–		For	✓
17	John Gore				✓	UIL		For	
18	Con Colbert				✓	IRB	IRB	Agst	✓
19	Thomas MacDonagh				✓	– [†]	IRB		✓
20	Joseph Plunkett				✓	– [†]	IRB	For	✓
21	Peadar Macken				✓	IRB	IRB	For	✓
22	Liam Mellows					IRB	IRB	Agst	✓
23	Pádraig Ó Riain				✓	IRB	IRB	For	✓
24	Roger Casement				✓	–		For	✓ [‡]
25	Peter White				✓	–			✓
26	James Lenahan				✓	AOH		For	
27	Peter O'Reilly				✓	AOH		For	
28	George Walsh				✓	AOH		For	
29	Michael Lonergan					IRB	IRB		
30	Tom Kettle*				✓	UIL		For	

*Co-opted 1914

[†]Later joined IRB

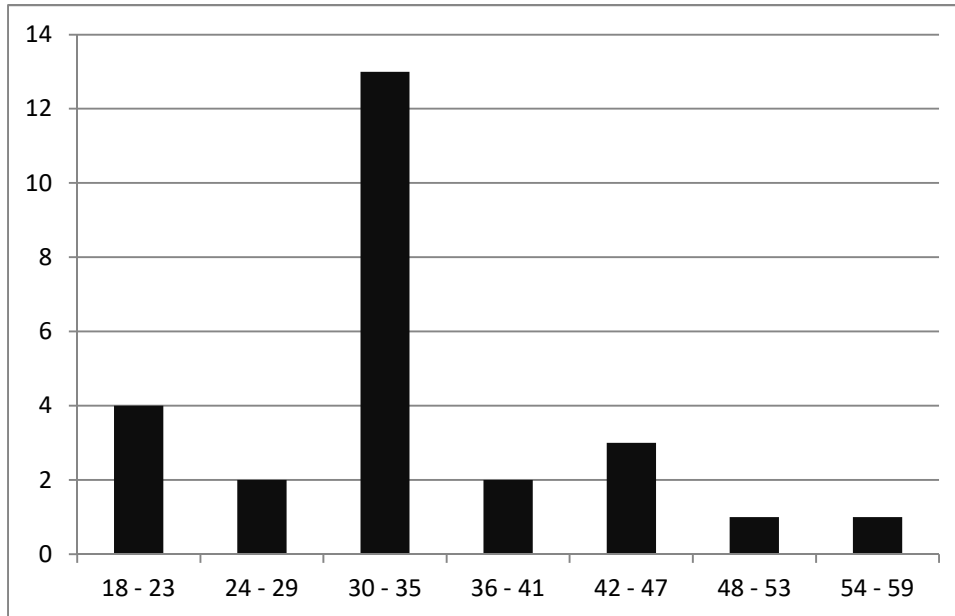
[‡]*In absentia*

Table 2: Demographics of the Provisional Committee

	Name	Birthplace	Age	Occupation
1	Eoin MacNeill	Glenarm, County Antrim	46	Professor
2	Bulmer Hobson	Belfast	30	Journalist
3	The O’Rahilly	Ballylongford, County Kerry	38	Journalist
4	P.H. Pearse	Dublin	34	Schoolmaster
5	Seán MacDermott	Kiltyclogher, County Leitrim	30	Clerk
6	Éamonn Ceannt	Ballymoe, County Galway	32	Clerk
7	Seán Fitzgibbon	Dublin	27	Clerk
8	Piaras Béaslaí	Liverpool	32	Journalist
9	Robert Page	Dublin	33	Labourer
10	Séamus O’Connor		32	Solicitor
11	Colm O’Loughlin			
12	Larry Kettle	Artane, Dublin	35	Elec. Engineer
13	Maurice Moore	Burriscarra, County Mayo	59	Officer (Retd.)
14	Éamon Martin			
15	Michael J. Judge	Dublin	40	Builder’s foreman
16	Liam Gogan	Dublin	21	Student
17	John Gore	Louth	53	Solicitor
18	Con Colbert	Limerick	23	Bookkeeper
19	Thomas MacDonagh	Cloughjordan, County Tipperary	35	Teacher
20	Joseph Plunkett	Dublin	25	Journalist
21	Peadar Macken	Dublin	35	Housepainter
22	Liam Mellows	Manchester (raised Wexford)	20	Bookkeeper
23	Pádraig Ó Riain	Dublin	22	Clerk
24	Roger Casement	Dublin	46	Ex-Foreign Office
25	Peter White			
26	James Lenehan	Dublin	31	Ironmonger
27	Peter O’Reilly	County Meath	35	Dairy man
28	George Walsh	Dublin	43	Builder
29	Michael Lonergan			Clerk, Cleary’s
30	Tom Kettle	Artane, Dublin	33	Barrister

Note: with the exception of Moore (Mayo) and Casement (Belfast), all of the members were resident in Dublin at the time of the 1911 census.

Figure 1: Age range of members of the Provisional Committee



Manifesto of the Irish Volunteers

The manifesto of the Volunteers, and most of the Volunteer documents, were drawn up by Eoin MacNeill.⁵⁰ According to MacNeill himself, Tom Kettle was also involved. Writing to Figgis in May 1914, he said ‘in November, when we began work, Tom was very enthusiastic for the IV and assisted in drawing up the manifesto.’⁵¹ MacNeill’s insistence that the Volunteers were in no way opposed to the Ulster Volunteers, as Ulstermen, is reflected in the opening paragraph of the manifesto: ‘a plan has been deliberately adopted by one of the great English political parties...to make the display of military force and the menace of armed violence the determining factor in the future relations between this country and Great Britain.’ Thus the enemy is not Carson, the Unionist Party or the UVF, but the Tory Party. The policy of this party, which could very easily gain (or seize) power in the near future, ‘proposes to leave us the political franchise in name, and annihilate it in fact. If we fail to take such measures as will effectually

⁵⁰ Hobson, ‘Foundation and growth’, pp. 31-2.

⁵¹ MacNeill to Figgis, 12 May 1914, Hobson Papers, NLI Ms. 13,174/3.

defeat this policy, we become politically the most degraded population in Europe, and no longer worthy of the name of Nation.’⁵²

There is already constructive ambiguity apparent here. The effective message is that parliamentary politics have failed, and will fail. There is no point in hoping that British politics will resolve the problem. ‘In a crisis of this kind, the duty of safeguarding our own rights is our duty first and foremost. *They have rights who dare maintain them*’ (italics in original). At the same time there is no overt criticism of home rule or home rule politicians. It is open to those who support the Party to join the Volunteers, and the Volunteers will defend those rights which the Party has gained. But the mere defence of the Party’s political gains is not the main purpose of the Volunteers. Indeed, in a key passage, the manifesto goes on to say,

The Volunteers, once they have been enrolled, will form a prominent element in the national life under a National Government. The Nation will maintain its volunteer organisation as a guarantee of the liberties which the Irish people shall have secured.

This is the reverse of parliamentary democracy. Rather than the people electing a government which then decides how the national army will be constituted and what the relationship between government and army will be, the Volunteers, in the name of the people, constitutes itself as the national army and says what its relationship to the government will be.

Constructive ambiguity is also apparent in the best-known passage of the manifesto:

The object proposed for the Irish Volunteers is to secure the rights and liberties common to all the people of Ireland. Their duties will be defensive and protective, and they will not contemplate either aggression or domination.

As MacNeill said in a 1916 memorandum, it was ‘generally understood and accepted that the import of the phrase “rights and liberties” was self-government’. But it was not specified what form that should take, and ‘an Irish volunteer might be anything in politics from moderate Home Ruler to Republican or Separatist.’⁵³ However, there is also ambiguity in the word ‘aggression’. Aggression is not the same thing as offensive action. People might take offensive action to assert or safeguard its own liberty, whereas

⁵² Manifesto of the Irish Volunteers, Hobson Papers, NLI Ms. 13,174/2.

⁵³ MacNeill memorandum in pencil, n.d. (1916), Hobson Papers, NLI Ms. 13174/13.

aggression implies an attack on the liberty of others. The words ‘aggression’ and ‘domination’, joined as they are in this phrase, may be seen as an assurance to their political opponents that the Volunteers would neither attack northern unionists nor oppress southern unionists. This is something that was repeatedly stressed by MacNeill and others of the Volunteers’ founders. On the particular question of a rising, the manifesto can be construed as standing mute.

This led to some interesting and very varied interpretations of the manifesto. Maurice Moore, in his submission to the Royal Commission on the Rising, quotes in full the leading article he wrote for the very first issue of the *Irish Volunteer*, written some months before the assassination of Franz Ferdinand. In it he imagined a German invasion of Ireland, and the depredations that Irish towns would suffer as a result.

But supposing we had 100,000 Irish Volunteers to oppose the invading force, and that we were successful, Does anyone imagine that a Unionist Government would be in a position to repeal the Home Rule Bill and put a coercion act in force to prevent the Irish people from governing themselves? Even if we were not successful against the Germans does anyone think that the state of affairs that would then ensue would be favourable for the suppression of Irish Nationality by an English party?

He adds, ‘This article was not disapproved as far as I know by any member of the Committee and was certainly approved by many.’⁵⁴ As well it might be, since it illustrated the potential of an armed force to achieve and protect Irish self-government. On the other hand, Stephen Gwynn, writing to MacNeill in June 1914 urging cooperation with Redmond, said, ‘If this Government falls, you will not be able to get arms at all, save so many as will furnish out another 1848. If one came I might be in it, but there have been enough of defeats without the Irish having any chance of victory.’⁵⁵ Here we have a committed Redmondite envisaging the Volunteers taking part in an insurrection! J.J. (“Ginger”) O’Connell, writing during the July Crisis from Staten Island where he was still staying, having just been discharged from the American army, submitted a draft article to Joseph McGarrity entitled ‘A Scheme of Defence for Dublin.’ This was a meticulous and detailed military plan, not in any sense fantastic or futuristic, but it envisaged an independent Ireland, with total control of her own armed forces, and made the assumption

⁵⁴ Statement of Col. Moore to the Royal Commission on the Rebellion, 1916. NLI Ms 10,572.

⁵⁵ Stephen Gwynn to MacNeill, 19 May 1914, MacNeill Papers, NLI Ms. 10,883 (c).

that the invader would be England. A short time later, immediately after Britain had declared war on Germany, he submitted another draft article, 'The Improvisation of Supply Trains', which began, 'Perhaps the most difficult task of all connection with the management of an insurrectionary army is that of keeping its troops regularly supplied with stores of all kinds.'⁵⁶ Both these articles were directed at the Irish Volunteers, and demonstrate, especially with the use of the word 'insurrectionary', a very different construction of the manifesto from that of Col. Moore.

As will be seen later, MacNeill, in May 1914, wrote a draft letter which was not in the end sent, but which said in part

that the special function of the Irish Party lapses and comes to an end with the attainment of National selfgovernment. At that point the Nation at large assumes direction and commands the services of the Irish Volunteers without the distinction of party.⁵⁷

In his mind, national self-government was not synonymous with a mere enactment of a home rule bill, and the national government, or even the national leadership, was not synonymous with the leadership of the Irish Parliamentary Party. In a memorandum written apparently just after the outbreak of war, MacNeill said that the situation was 'almost entirely favourable from the point of view of Ireland's political advantage.' The bulk of the army would have to be withdrawn from Ireland, and the civil administration was out of favour with all sections of the people. There was no reason to believe that the Volunteers could not be armed and trained before the end of the war.

The conclusion to be drawn from these facts is that, taking advantage of this unexpected state of affairs, the Irish national leaders ought so to act as *to take as far as possible the control of Irish affairs into their own hands*. [emphasis in original]⁵⁸

The negotiations with Redmond

The initial negotiations with John Redmond, early in 1914, were initiated by the Volunteer leadership at the suggestion of their chief inspector, Colonel Maurice Moore. Colonel Moore was pre-occupied with two matters: the inefficiency of a committee consisting of twenty-five non-military men and the necessity at that point in time of gaining at least the tacit co-operation of the Irish Parliamentary Party. These two issues

⁵⁶ J.J. O'Connell to Joseph McGarrity, 5 August 1914, NLI, Joseph McGarrity Papers, Ms 17,504/1.

⁵⁷ MacNeill to Redmond, 1 June 1914, NLI, MacNeill Papers, Ms 10,883 (c).

⁵⁸ MacNeill memorandum, n.d. (August 1914), NLI, Hobson Papers, Ms 13,174/13.

were interlinked throughout the negotiations with Redmond. Moore believed 'that a large body of twenty five members of different views, very indiscriminately chosen, and with no technical knowledge could not govern the Volunteers.' He 'considered that a committee of three would be best, but it was argued that there were not in the committee three men sufficiently known and trusted in Ireland to undertake the job, and that five would be necessary.'⁵⁹ As to the Party, 'it seemed to me that if the great Ulster Tory alliance were to be countered, all National Ireland must be bound in a solid phalanx, and this could not be effected without the cooperation of the Irish Party.'⁶⁰ Accordingly, it was arranged for Moore to meet Redmond in London. In March 1914 he 'went to the House of Commons, by appointment, to meet Mr Redmond, expecting only a quiet conversation with him, and with no particular line of conduct marked out. I was embarrassed to find assembled the other leaders of the Party, Mr Dillon, Mr T.P. O'Connor and Mr Devlin'.⁶¹ At first the MPs were non-committal. Then Redmond asked Moore what was the strength of the Volunteers, and was surprised by Moore's estimate of 20-25,000 and growing. Dillon, however, was already aware, and agreed with Moore's estimate.⁶² Later, when he was alone with Redmond, Moore felt that 'he seemed to be kindly, and well disposed.' Moore said to Redmond that he 'understood that Mr Dillon had been opposed to the Volunteers; he replied very frankly that this was so, and that he also had been opposed to them, but had changed his mind. Mr Devlin, on the contrary, had, he said, favoured them.'⁶³ Devlin, as a Belfast man, was aware that Ulster nationalists were fearful of the threat of the Ulster Volunteers and of partition, and looked to the Irish Volunteers to protect them.

There were subsequent face-to-face meetings, not involving Moore, but it is not clear how many. Denis Gwynn mentions a meeting in April when MacNeill and Roger Casement met Redmond and Dillon in London, and Michael Tierney says that on 15 April MacNeill, Casement and Tom Kettle met Joe Devlin in Dublin.⁶⁴ MacNeill, Casement and Kettle travelled to London on 8 May for what MacNeill clearly hoped would be the

⁵⁹ Draft statement of Maurice Moore to the Royal Commission on the Rebellion, NLI, Col. Maurice Moore Papers, Ms 10,572.

⁶⁰ Maurice Moore, 'History of the Irish Volunteers', *Irish Press*, 7 January 1938.

⁶¹ Moore, 'History of the Irish Volunteers', *Irish Press*, 8 January 1938.

⁶² Moore, 'History of the Irish Volunteers', *Irish Press*, 10 January 1938.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Denis Gwynn, *The Life of John Redmond* (London, 1932), p. 311; Michael Tierney, *Eoin MacNeill: Scholar and Man of Action 1867-1945* (Oxford, 1980), p. 130.

final meeting. MacNeill wrote to Darrell Figgis four days later, 'When [Tom] Kettle & I parted with you in London on Saturday, I felt fairly confident that my trip to London had been all to the good, & that we had arrived at a working understanding & a position of confidence on both sides. W. Redmond's letter to the Westminster Gazette, printed concurrently in the Freeman's Journal on Saturday morning, confirmed me in this view.' William Redmond had given his unreserved support to the Volunteer movement in that letter. MacNeill told Figgis that the committee of five, which Moore had been persuaded to accept, would consist of the existing secretaries (himself and Larry Kettle), the existing treasurers (The O'Rahilly and John Gore) and Roger Casement. He obviously believed that John Redmond had been satisfied with that arrangement, and suggested to Figgis that they might add another member, 'who will be in intimate touch with Mr Redmond, & whom the country will recognise in that sense...& I can think of nobody more suitable than Mr Wm. Redmond.'⁶⁵ MacNeill was therefore surprised when, even before he left London, Tom Kettle told him to expect an ultimatum from the Party 'before very long.'⁶⁶

MacNeill was inclined to suspect Kettle himself of stirring up trouble. Kettle had been trying to re-integrate himself into the Party after several months' absence with alcohol-related problems, and MacNeill thought that 'Mrs. Tom' had been trying to get her husband to improve his standing by making himself important to the Party. 'The method of procedure seems to be, that suspicions are to be aroused regarding the good faith of the members of the Provisional Committee who are not adherents of the Party. In this way Tom would appear to be the guardian of the Party interests.'⁶⁷ But it is just as likely, if not more so, that it was Dillon who erected obstacles to an agreement, and that he did so because he was opposed to any arrangement with the Volunteers that did not leave control in the hands of the Party. In response to a comment by Redmond that 'it would be a great misfortune if a disagreement should result in the possible establishment of a second body of Irish Volunteers' MacNeill said 'at our interview in London Mr Dillon suggested the same alternative, that is to say that you might openly set us aside, and I thought it better at the time not to go into Mr Dillon's point of view, lest it should stand in the way of a good understanding.'⁶⁸ MacNeill apparently hoped that he could neutralise Dillon, and reach a

⁶⁵ MacNeill to Figgis, 12 May 1914, NLI, Bulmer Hobson Papers, Ms 13174/3.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Tierney, *Eoin MacNeill*, pp. 131-2.

mutually acceptable arrangement with Redmond. In an 11 May letter to Figgis, he pointedly asked him ‘to see Redmond, or else Devlin, at a very early date.’⁶⁹

There followed an exchange of letters between MacNeill and Redmond that resembled a chess game, or rather, a game of poker where the stakes were progressively raised. On 13 May, MacNeill opened by suggesting the committee of six: the two secretaries, the two treasurers, Casement and William Redmond.⁷⁰ Redmond replied on 16 May, saying he had no objections to those names, and welcoming the addition of his brother’s name, but he added, ‘I do not think, however, that I could sanction Mr. William Redmond’s accepting this position unless the new body were enlarged from six to eight by the addition of two men possessing our confidence. These two men need not necessarily be what might be called progressive political partisans, but they should be selected by us.’ He expressed himself anxious to reach agreement, but it was in this letter that he dropped the not-so-subtle hint, referred to above, that the alternative was the creation of a second Volunteer force.⁷¹ MacNeill’s response, on 19 May, was indignant. The combination of extra demands and veiled threats amounted to ‘condemnation of the line of action with which I have been associated, and that my acceptance of a proposal in this form must stand as an admission on my part that I have acted wrongly, and that all assurances which I have given publicly on many occasions and privately to yourself, Mr Dillon, and Mr Devlin, are judged and admitted to be worthless.’⁷² Redmond wrote on 21 May, expressing surprise at MacNeill’s rejection of his ‘moderate demand’.⁷³ Having made his point, MacNeill answered on 23 May, accepting the committee of eight, and suggesting that Maurice Moore, as inspector general, should also be added.⁷⁴ Redmond wrote again on 26 May, saying he was ‘greatly gratified to find that you agree to my suggested addition to the new Governing Body which is proposed’, and approving of the addition of Moore as a ninth member. As to his two nominees, he said, ‘I would be inclined to nominate Mr Joseph Devlin MP and Mr Michael Davitt’. He urged MacNeill to meet Dillon in Dublin as soon as possible.⁷⁵

⁶⁹ MacNeill to Figgis, 11 May 1914, NLI, Bulmer Hobson Papers, Ms 13174/3.

⁷⁰ MacNeill to Devlin, 13 May 1914, Redmond Papers, NLI, Ms 15,204.

⁷¹ Redmond to MacNeill, 16 May 1914, *ibid.*

⁷² MacNeill to Redmond, 19 May 1914, *ibid.*

⁷³ Redmond to MacNeill, 21 May 1914, *ibid.*

⁷⁴ MacNeill to Redmond, 23 May 1914, *ibid.*

⁷⁵ Redmond to MacNeill, 26 May 1914, *ibid.*

It seems likely that it was Dillon who suggested Davitt's name, and quite likely that he suggested it in the full knowledge that it would be unacceptable. According to Denis Gwynn, Dillon had taken Davitt aside in November 1913 when he discovered that Davitt was scheduled to speak at the launch of the Volunteers. As a result, Davitt had 'made a hesitating speech which was as little welcome as a douche of cold water. His appeal for confidence in the official National leaders only provoked an excited audience.'⁷⁶ Maurice Moore said in 1938 that 'it was generally supposed that...Mr. Dillon, always preferring to sit in the dark background, pulling the strings of an automaton, had named Mr. Davitt to represent himself.'⁷⁷ Dillon met MacNeill in Dublin, and reported back to Redmond, 'To my amazement he raises an objection to Davitt's name.' He advised Redmond that 'if you were to withdraw Davitt's name the same procedure might be adopted with regard to another name.'⁷⁸ MacNeill wrote on 29 May, 'Mr Dillon has no doubt by this time informed you of his conversation with me yesterday. I told him that I could not recommend young Mr Davitt to be a member of the new governing council of the Irish Volunteers, and that, even if I were to recommend him, I could get no one to accept him.' He reminded Redmond that at the London meeting he had 'disclaimed any intention of putting forward nominees for the governing council,' but that subsequently, 'you went beyond the ground of our conversation and claimed that besides Mr William Redmond you desired to have the nomination of two others.' He had agreed to accept two nominees of Redmond, but not to accept any name regardless of whether he believed that person was committed to the Volunteer movement. Devlin was acceptable, he said; as for the other nominee, he suggested Joseph Plunkett or Thomas MacDonagh, both of whom, he said, were members of the Young Ireland Branch of the United Irish League.⁷⁹

Once again Redmond wrote to say that he was 'astonished' at MacNeill's attitude. He had made his recommendation and would not depart from it. The matter had to be settled at once, as he was 'receiving requests for advice from all parts of the country and cannot longer postpone action.'⁸⁰ MacNeill sat down on 1 June to write a letter clarifying his position, but did not send it at once. The following day he evidently decided that he had said more than was wise, and wrote a second draft, which he sent. In both letters he re-

⁷⁶ Gwynn, *Life of John Redmond*, p. 243.

⁷⁷ Maurice Moore, 'History of the Irish Volunteers', *Irish Press*, 21 January 1938.

⁷⁸ Gwynn, *Life of John Redmond*, p. 314.

⁷⁹ MacNeill to Redmond, 29 May 1914. NLI, MacNeill Papers, Ms 10,883.

⁸⁰ Redmond to MacNeill, 30 May 1914, *ibid*.

iterated the publicly stated aims of the Volunteers, and said that he could not contemplate admitting to the committee anybody who was not whole-heartedly in favour of those aims, nor allow its composition to be dictated from outside in the interests of an outside party, and expressed his confidence that the Volunteers had the approval of the people, and could be allowed to continue their work without interference. In the unsent letter, however, he wrote

Your object, as stated repeatedly to me, is to safeguard the position and policy of the Party. I have as constantly assured you that the Irish Volunteers has never contemplated interference with the functions of the Party. In any event it is entirely right that the Volunteer organisation shall be controlled and administered solely and wholly with a view to its own completeness and efficiency for National defence, and not in any degree for the safeguarding of the interests of the Irish Party, as a party, especially in view of the fact that the special function of the Irish Party lapses and comes to an end with the attainment of National selfgovernment. At that point the Nation at large assumes direction and commands the services of the Irish Volunteers without the distinction of party.⁸¹

Two conclusions can be drawn from this paragraph. First, MacNeill had relatively little regard for the Party. He was content for it to take the lead in politics, but politics of the parliamentary variety were not of particular interest to him and were not, in his view, the business of the Volunteers. Furthermore, leadership at Westminster did not automatically entitle it to leadership of post-home rule Ireland. Secondly, even at this late stage, MacNeill did not feel at any disadvantage in the negotiations with Redmond. He felt that the Volunteers were strong enough in the country that the Party would eventually be compelled to come to terms with them. He was continuing to play the game. Redmond's response on 3 June, that he understood 'that you no longer desire my co-operation or that of my friends in the control of the movement, and I must act accordingly', must have seemed inevitable and predictable.⁸² The game seemed to have ended without any winners. He appears to have been as shocked as anybody else when Redmond played his trump card on 9 June with his letter to the papers 'suggesting' the addition to the committee of 'twenty-five representative men from different parts of the country nominated at the instance of the Irish Party and in sympathy with its policy and aims.'⁸³

⁸¹ MacNeill to Redmond, 1 and 2 June 1914, *ibid.*

⁸² Redmond to MacNeill, 3 June 1914, *ibid.*

⁸³ Gwynn, *Life of John Redmond*, p. 317.

The most striking aspect of Redmond's letter to the papers of 9 June 1914 is the extent to which his demands differ from what he was arguing for up until 3 June. Instead of a slimmed-down committee of nine, the majority of whom would be members of the existing committee, with three nominated by the Party, he now proposed an enlarged committee of fifty-two, of whom twenty-five would be nominated by the Party. In fact, it seems that at the meeting in the House of Commons on 8 May Redmond had indicated that he would be satisfied with a committee of six, all of them drawn from the existing committee and none of them nominated from outside; it was MacNeill who first proposed adding William Redmond. The volume of correspondence between the two in the last two weeks of May bears this out. MacNeill repeatedly reminded Redmond that at that meeting there was no suggestion of the Party nominating members to the committee, and Redmond replied to each letter at length, but without ever asserting that MacNeill had misunderstood the situation.

A cause of much annoyance to the committee, when the list of proposed nominees was presented to them on 26 June, was that, of the twenty-five 'representative men from different parts of the country', the majority were in fact from Dublin, and very few could be called in any way 'representative'. A further cause of surprise was the absence of Michael Davitt's name. Maurice Moore later described the meeting:

Where, said I, in this long list is the name of the young man who was considered to be absolutely essential to the party of three, and for whose sake our initial agreement was broken and our organisation challenged to a public tournament? He is no longer worthy to be a member of the twenty-five; evidently he was put forward only to provoke a quarrel.⁸⁴

It was not an unreasonable conclusion. Kettle's warning of an impending 'ultimatum' on the day after the May discussions, and Redmond's consequent issuing of additional demands, culminating with his nomination of Davitt, do appear to have been designed to push MacNeill to the point where he would provide a pretext to Redmond for breaking off negotiations, allowing him to make a unilateral demand which was of an entirely different nature to what had hitherto been proposed.

What had been under discussion before 3 June, despite the occasional use of the word 'control', was the governance of the Volunteers, and the question of whether they could

⁸⁴ Moore, 'History of the Irish Volunteers', *Irish Press*, 27 January 1938.

be trusted to support the Party, rather than the outright control of the Volunteers by the Party. The committee of five originally proposed was designed to appear well-disposed towards the Party. It included Larry Kettle, John Gore and MacNeill himself, all of whom were viewed as Party supporters. The committee of fifty-two, on the other hand, seems to have been designed less to control the Volunteers, in the sense of directing its policy, than to render it toothless, by stifling all discussion on policy. Why should this have been?

An early biographer of John Redmond, writing in 1919, said that at the time of their formation Redmond was unsympathetic towards the Volunteers for three reasons: a 'certain jealousy natural in the leader of a disciplined party which consistently deprecated independent action in Irish politics', a fear that the organisation 'might develop along extreme lines', and the fact that he himself was a 'strict constitutionalist' whose 'own natural bent was opposed to extra-constitutional action.'⁸⁵ It was on these grounds that MacNeill, Moore and Casement were concerned to reassure Redmond during their talks between March and the end of May. Up to early May, at least, MacNeill had good reason to believe that they had succeeded in that task, and that they would soon have Redmond's endorsement. At that precise period, however, events were taking place which put Redmond in a very different position to that in which he had been when the first contacts took place. On 9 March the prime minister, Herbert Asquith, announced for the first time the government's intention to introduce an amendment allowing for the exclusion of Ulster from the provisions of the Home Rule Bill for a period of six years. This was followed by a bellicose speech delivered by Winston Churchill at Bradford warning that any militant action by Ulster unionists would be met head-on.⁸⁶ This was intended to show to nationalists that only the minimum of concessions would be made to unionists, that the whole country would have home rule by the end of the decade, and that any attempt to prevent this by extra-constitutional methods would be put down. However, the Curragh mutiny on 20 March showed that the government would be unable to follow through on Churchill's threat to meet unionist resistance with force. A month later, on the night of 24-5 April, the UVF landed 25,000 rifles and three million rounds of ammunition at Larne. The effect of this coup, in Ronan Fanning's words, was that it was 'almost impossible for the Unionist leaders to agree to any settlement short of the permanent

⁸⁵ Warre B. Wells, *The Life of John Redmond* (New York, 1919), pp. 153-4

⁸⁶ Ronan Fanning, *Fatal Path: British Government and Irish Revolution 1910-1922* (London, 2013), pp. 106-7.

exclusion of the six north-eastern counties of Ulster.’⁸⁷ Alec Wilson, writing to Joseph Plunkett on 28 April, reported that ‘the Ulster Unionist crowd are so cock-a-whoop that there is not the remotest chance of getting them to accept any settlement this side of a general election.’ Wilson had spent some months in England, and was ‘more disgusted than ever at the way Irish interests are treated by the politicians in Westminster.’⁸⁸ Redmond was suddenly under immense pressure; having once conceded the principle of exclusion, he was now expected to make further concessions.

Thus, at the beginning of May, Redmond was dealing with two issues. It is quite likely that at first he saw the issues as quite separate, with the Ulster crisis by far the more serious one, and the Volunteers only a minor irritant. However, he must soon have realised, or it must have been borne in on him by others, that the existence of an independent, armed organisation would severely curtail his freedom of action. Whatever he was forced to accept as a home rule settlement – and realistically, that was what it came down to – he could square it with the electorate somehow, if only because no other person or party could make a better deal. But he could not expect to square it with an organisation that had made no secret of its impatience with the parliamentary process, or its mistrust of any British government, Liberal or Tory. MacNeill repeatedly stressed to Redmond his conviction that the advanced men on the committee would do nothing to undermine him, but it may well be that MacNeill’s honesty was his undoing. The mere fact of the presence of extremists on the committee may have been less alarming to Redmond than the fact that the leadership was apparently loyal to those extremists to the point where it outweighed its loyalty to the Party. Redmond was unlikely to be impressed, for instance, that in rejecting Davitt, MacNeill suggested instead Joseph Plunkett or Thomas MacDonagh, both of whom he said were members of the Young Ireland Branch of the United Irish League (according to Plunkett’s biographer and grandniece, Honor O Brolchain, his diary records that he was elected to the branch in January 1911, but he left it very shortly afterwards because he saw it as ‘just a part of the Party machine’; MacDonagh told Sean Fitzgibbon ‘that he had no connection with the party at any

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

⁸⁸ Wilson to Plunkett, 28 April 1914, NLI, Joseph Plunkett Papers, Ms 10,999/2.

time’).⁸⁹ Putting forward these names was not the best way to convince Redmond that he could count on the unswerving support of the committee no matter what his actions.

Even the suggestion of adding William Redmond was not as straightforward as it might have seemed. MacNeill’s rationale in suggesting him was that the committee needed ‘a prominent supporter of Mr. John Redmond, who will be identified by everybody with his policy’, and that ‘the nearer the person is to Mr. Redmond the better’.⁹⁰ Neither William nor John Redmond seems to have seen his nomination in the same light. William Redmond’s response was a brief two paragraphs. In the first, he said he would be pleased to act on the committee but that he could not do so unless his brother consented; he does not seem to have been under the impression that MacNeill was suggesting him specifically in order to please his brother. The second paragraph is worth quoting in full: ‘I note you say the Volunteer movement is not hostile to the Irish Party. This is of course right – the movement should be hostile to no section of our people great or small.’⁹¹ The sentiment is the same as that of MacNeill or O’Rahilly, and in marked contrast to the attitude of the Party leaders, who wanted the movement to *favour* the Irish Party, and were hostile to the IRB and Sinn Féin. John Redmond’s response is also curious: ‘I do not think, however, that I could sanction Mr. William Redmond’s accepting this position unless the new body was enlarged from 6 to 8 by the addition of two men possessing ~~my~~ our confidence.’⁹² The correction was left in the letter when it was sent to MacNeill. It seems to imply that his brother did not have his full confidence, and that, rather than balancing the committee in John Redmond’s favour, it would shift the balance away from him so much as to require another two men to restore it. What Redmond needed at this moment was a committee that would give him its unthinking and unhesitating support, come what might; what MacNeill was proposing was a committee of strong and independent thinkers who would not be slow to speak their minds. Was this naïveté on MacNeill’s part, or gamesmanship?

While the MacNeill-Redmond correspondence was ongoing, in late May there was a brief exchange of letters between Stephen Gwynn and MacNeill. Gwynn wrote to MacNeill on

⁸⁹ MacNeill to Redmond, 29 May 1914, NLI, Redmond Papers, Ms 15,204; Honor O Brolchain, *Joseph Plunkett: 16 Lives* (Dublin, 2012), p. 107; BMH, WS 130 (Sean Fitzgibbon).

⁹⁰ MacNeill to Devlin, 13 May 1914, Redmond Papers, NLI, Ms 15,204.

⁹¹ William Redmond to MacNeill, 16 May 1914, NLI, MacNeill Papers, Ms 10,883 (c).

⁹² John Redmond to MacNeill, 21 May 1914, *ibid*.

19 May, MacNeill replied to Gwynn of 20 May, Gwynn wrote a second letter on 21 May and MacNeill replied again on 22 May. Copies of all four are in the Redmond papers in the National Library, suggesting that Gwynn wrote at the behest of Redmond, and passed the replies back to him. What is striking about Gwynn's first letter is the extent to which the language differs from Redmond's. It is quite militaristic in tone, suggesting either that Gwynn shared MacNeill's broad view or that he pitched his letter to appeal to MacNeill's sentiments. He says that 'it will be a different kind of Home Rule if the young men of Ireland have helped to win it & if Ireland comes into her new position armed.' Gwynn expresses the opinion that the Party 'should have taken control of the movement from the start, but that now it will be too late for it to do so.' He warns MacNeill that 'If this Government falls, you will not be able to get arms at all, save so many as will furnish out another 1848. If one came I might be in it, but there have been enough of defeats without the Irish having any chance of victory.'⁹³ This suggests that, even in Redmond's circle, there were two different ideas of 'control'; Gwynn was talking about control for the purpose of asserting Ireland's claim to independence with a show of force, while Redmond only wanted control for the purpose of drawing the Volunteers' teeth.

MacNeill, in his reply, emphasises that 'a cardinal point in our aim was to get as many supporters of the Irish Party as possible for of course it was easy to get Sinn Feiners and extremists', but assures Gwynn that he has 'never allowed any spirit of antagonism to the Irish Party, and there is no danger at present of such antagonism to the Volunteer movement if nothing is done from outside to excite and provoke it.'⁹⁴ Gwynn's second letter follows Redmond's line far more closely than his first. He says he believes Redmond's demand (to be allowed to nominate two men to the committee) is an 'entirely moderate and reasonable proposal', and counsels against the adoption of any policy beyond home rule.⁹⁵ MacNeill responds that 'the men proposed should not be mere watchdogs on their colleagues', but 'should be men whose aim is, in common with the rest, to build up and make thoroughly efficient the volunteer organisation, and who are prepared to work in hearty co-operation to that end.'⁹⁶ Presumably, this was enough to convince Redmond that he would not find MacNeill pliable.

⁹³ Stephen Gwynn to Eoin MacNeill, 19 May 1914, NLI, MacNeill Papers, MS 10, 883(c).

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

In order to get what he wanted, therefore, Redmond needed to break off the negotiations on a reduced committee, and instead create an enlarged committee, packed with his own supporters and yes-men. His letter to the newspapers, suggesting 'that the present provisional committee should be immediately strengthened by the addition of 25 representative men from different parts of the country, nominated at the instance of the Irish Party and in sympathy with its policy and aims', was written on 9 June and published the following day.⁹⁷ It was a week later that the Provisional Committee voted to accept the demand, and a further ten days before Redmond submitted his list of twenty-five men. From then on, however, he became increasingly anxious to have them installed on the committee. In the letter of 26 June, in which he gave his list of nominees, he said, 'I would suggest that no time whatever be lost in co-opting these names'.⁹⁸ On 3 July he wrote, 'I understand that a meeting...has been held...and I have been expecting to hear from you. In my opinion it is of the utmost consequence...that there should be no delay in this matter.'⁹⁹ MacNeill explained that there was a delay due to procedural matters. On 10 July Redmond sent a telegram saying 'Anxious to know if cooptions can be made...am sincerely anxious to promote smooth and effective working'.¹⁰⁰ He had reason to be anxious. Although the Buckingham Palace conference was not called until 17 July, he must have known that a face-to-face meeting with Carson and Craig was imminent. The Ulster Volunteers did and said exactly what Carson and Craig wanted them to; the last thing Redmond needed was a Volunteer force at his back acting as a loose cannon.

Even after the breakdown of the Buckingham Palace conference, and the outbreak of war, with the concomitant outbreak of 'peace' in Ireland, Redmond was still writing to MacNeill expressing his anxiety: 'I understand that a meeting of the Standing Committee has been called for tomorrow night "to discuss policy". I would urge most strongly upon you that no declaration of policy whatever should be put forward.'¹⁰¹ Again, he had reason to be concerned. An agenda from early September shows Ceannt and Pearse putting down motions against conscription, against control of the Volunteers by anybody other than an elected Irish executive, against any arrangement 'that would place them wholly or partly under the control of the British War Office', against any policy 'in the

⁹⁷ 'Mr. Redmond and Provisional Committee', *Freeman's Journal*, 10 June 1914.

⁹⁸ Redmond to MacNeill and L.J. Kettle, 26 June 1914, NLI, MacNeill Papers, MS 10, 883(c).

⁹⁹ Redmond to MacNeill, 3 July 1914, NLI, Redmond Papers, Ms 15,204.

¹⁰⁰ Redmond to MacNeill (telegram), 10 July 1914, NLI, MacNeill Papers, Ms 10,883 (c).

¹⁰¹ Redmond to MacNeill, 3 August 1914, *ibid.*

present European crisis' not directed towards 'the sole objective of the Irish Volunteers, securing and maintaining the rights and liberties of the people of Ireland', and in favour of the occupation of ports – in cooperation with the Ulster Volunteers – to prevent the export of essential food supplies out of Ireland.¹⁰² It is little wonder that Pearse should write to McGarrity that 'I am now scarcely allowed to speak. The moment I stand up there are cries of "Put the question," etc.'¹⁰³ Redmond needed his permanent majority to save him from continual embarrassment.

What of the remainder of the original committee? How did they view the original negotiations and the subsequent takeover? Writing about it later, Hobson stressed that MacNeill carried on the negotiations without consulting the committee, and therefore without a mandate from the committee.¹⁰⁴ It should be noted that this was only in retrospect – in the 1930s or later – at a time when Hobson was asserting the primary role of the IRB in the setting up of the Volunteers. In his 1918 book *A Short History of the Irish Volunteers* he describes the negotiations in a dispassionate way, without any hint that MacNeill had no authority to carry them on.¹⁰⁵ To say that MacNeill had no formal mandate is therefore probably true, but probably also unimportant. John Dillon wrote to Redmond, at the point where MacNeill had definitely ruled out the name of Michael Davitt, that he was astonished to find that MacNeill had been acting alone, without authorisation from the committee. But here again, Dillon may have had a reason for stressing that: very likely he was trying to give Redmond a pretext for breaking off negotiations and switching to a hostile takeover. Maurice Moore in 1917 said that he attended a committee meeting at which the negotiations were discussed, but as against that MacNeill in his 13 May letter to Devlin refers to a committee meeting consisting only of himself, Judge, Larry Kettle, Tom Kettle and O'Rahilly.¹⁰⁶ With a committee of thirty, such ad hoc meetings were probably not unusual, and some actions were probably decided by informal agreement rather than by formal resolution.

¹⁰² Provisional Committee agenda, 10 September 1914, NLI, Bulmer Hobson Papers, Ms 13,174/1.

¹⁰³ Seán Cronin (ed.), *The McGarrity Papers: Revelations of the Irish Revolutionary Movement in Ireland and America 1900–1940* (Tralee, 1972), p. 48.

¹⁰⁴ Hobson, 'Formation and Growth', pp. 44-6.

¹⁰⁵ *Idem.*, *A Short History of the Irish Volunteers* (Dublin, 1918), pp. 95-7.

¹⁰⁶ Draft statement of Maurice Moore to the Royal Commission on the Rebellion, NLI, Col. Maurice Moore Papers, Ms. 10,572; MacNeill to Devlin, 13 May 1914, NLI, Redmond Papers, Ms 15,204.

The weight of the evidence suggests that MacNeill had the informal agreement of the committee to come to terms with Redmond. Even Hobson said that he became aware of the negotiations as soon as he returned from the US in the spring of 1914, but that he was happy to let them proceed and see what came of them. Sean Fitzgibbon, in his witness statement, only said that the discussions ‘were subsequently reported on to the Volunteer Executive by MacNeill.’¹⁰⁷ MacNeill in his letters to Redmond repeatedly stressed that he had the support of the committee, saying, for instance, on 19 May, that it was not a question of who controlled the Volunteers and adding, ‘and on this point I count on the unanimous adhesion of all my colleagues here’.¹⁰⁸ It was a bold statement, and one he would have had to be able to stand by if he had clinched an agreement with Redmond. Hobson, in his later accounts, said that the IRB would never have allowed an executive that did not have an IRB member on it, but as a member of the Supreme Council in 1914, he would have been well aware that it was not IRB policy to *control* organisations such as the Volunteers, and there was every reason to expect that any of the various configurations that MacNeill proposed or accepted would have continued to organise the Volunteers along the lines already begun, allowing the IRB free rein when it came to filling in military posts within the organisation, a point made by Marcus Bourke in his biography of the O’Rahilly. Finally, the nine members who voted against the admission of the twenty-five wrote to the newspaper setting out the reasons for the disagreement with the majority on the committee, but there was no mention of the earlier negotiations, nor any hint that anything had been done behind their back.¹⁰⁹ It seems reasonable to conclude, therefore, that there was no disagreement within the committee at the time with respect to the negotiations. Pearse told McGarrity that he ‘blamed’ MacNeill, but only because he was weak and indecisive, not on account of his earlier dealings with Redmond.¹¹⁰

There was near unanimity, as well, that Redmond’s demands of 9 June were totally out of order. MacNeill, Moore and Casement were all bitterly opposed to them, and Hobson argued with them for hours until they accepted that they must accede to the demands if they wanted to avoid a fatal split in the movement. Moore said of the committee meeting on 16 June:

¹⁰⁷ Bureau of Military History, WS 130 (Sean Fitzgibbon), p. 6.

¹⁰⁸ MacNeill to Redmond, 19 May 1914, Redmond Papers, NLI, Ms 15,204.

¹⁰⁹ ‘The Minority Group Protests but Submits, 17th June 1914’, in Martin (ed.), *The Irish Volunteers*, p. 149.

¹¹⁰ P.H. Pearse to Joseph McGarrity, 19 June 1914, NLI, McGarrity Papers, 17,477.

On counting the votes all except eight were for accepting Mr Redmond's ultimatum, but very few approved of his actions. Two indeed there were – Mr Gore and another – so loyal to the party that, amidst jeers and protests, to resolve themselves into a committee to journey to London and lay their homage at Redmond's feet.¹¹¹

This is particularly damning coming from somebody who would join those two on the committee of the National Volunteers only a few weeks later, and gives some idea of the strength of feeling at that meeting. Those who voted against, although they criticised the majority, accepted that the majority had voted as they had only to avoid what they considered an inevitable split in the movement. Sean Fitzgibbon in his witness statement said that the nine quickly came to the decision to remain on the committee and continue to cooperate with their colleagues, and their letter to the papers a couple of days later made this decision public.¹¹² There is evidence that the nine considered themselves as something of an elite. This theme is found in Eamon Martin's papers, where he points out that seven of the nine were members of the IRB.¹¹³ But this, of course, ignores the fact that the majority of the IRB members voted in favour of the admission of the nominees. Pearse wrote to McGarrity to say that guns should only be sent to one of the nine, but in that same month MacDonagh wrote to Plunkett asking if he could supply some guns to his men (they had nearly all lost their guns in the confusion after Howth, and were expected to parade – armed – at the funeral of the Bachelors Walk victims), and assuring him that 'they will be the right sort and will satisfy Hobson and the others.'¹¹⁴ So the feeling of being an elite was not confined to the nine.

All the members of the original committee, including Judge but excepting the other seven home rulers, continued to work together to try to overcome the stifling influence of the nominees. Moore recounted the story of O'Rahilly (who had voted in favour of the motion) and Fitzgibbon (who had voted against) meeting on the stairs before a meeting and agreeing that if a particular resolution was passed they would have to split the committee. When two leading Redmondites spoke against the motion, the two remained silent, knowing it would fail.¹¹⁵ Whatever bad feeling had resulted from the vote, therefore, seems to have dissipated very quickly. The way in which history has focused

¹¹¹ Maurice Moore, 'History of the Irish Volunteers', *Irish Press*, 27 January 1938.

¹¹² BMH, WS 130 (Sean Fitzgibbon), p. 6; Martin, 'The Minority Group Protests but Submits', p. 149.

¹¹³ 'The Irish Volunteers', NLI, Eamon Martin Papers, MS 49482/1.

¹¹⁴ Thomas MacDonagh to Joseph Plunkett, 28 July 1914, Joseph Plunkett Papers, NLI, MS 10,999.

¹¹⁵ Maurice Moore, 'History of the Irish Volunteers', *Irish Press*, 7 February 1938.

on the irreparable rift between the two former friends Hobson and MacDermott has obscured the fact of the enduring solidarity among all the others, which was shown by their immediate reaction to Redmond's speech at Woodenbridge, County Wicklow, on 20 September 1914, in which he exhorted the Volunteers to fight in the war.¹¹⁶ On 24 September, twenty members of the Provisional Committee, including all of the advanced men (bar Robert Page, mentioned earlier), issued a statement repudiating Redmond and declaring that 'the Provisional Committee consists only of those whom it comprised before the admission of Mr. Redmond's nominees.' Eoin MacNeill remained as Chairman of the Provisional Committee.¹¹⁷

Those who planned the launch of the Volunteers had a vision of a military force that was not in keeping with the IPP's purely political policy, or compatible with the provisions of the Home Rule Bill. It was conceived as a revolutionary force, even among those who did not envisage it as a vehicle for insurrection.

¹¹⁶ Hay, *Na Fianna Éireann*, pp. 50-1.

¹¹⁷ 'The Provisional Committee Repudiates John Redmond', in Martin, *Irish Volunteers*, pp. 166-7.

6. Application of the Defence of the Realm Act in Ireland, 1914-16

The Irish Volunteers was ostensibly a military organisation whose purpose, depending on one's point of view, was either to defend in arms whatever freedom was granted to Ireland or to mount an insurrection against British rule; it had apparently no role to play in political activity, either in peacetime or after the outbreak of war. Yet Volunteer members at the highest level did engage in political activity, most importantly in its opposition to Ireland's involvement in the British war effort, and to recruiting for the British Army. Moreover, they strove to gain the maximum publicity for this activity. The response of the government relied almost entirely on the use of the Defence of the Realm Act 1914, and therefore a study of the application of that act in Ireland provides a means of assessing advanced nationalist political activity, including that of the Volunteers, between the start of the war and the Easter Rising.

The first Defence of the Realm Act was hurriedly enacted on 8 August 1914, four days after Britain entered the war, having been introduced the previous day by the Home Secretary, Reginald McKenna, 'coming into the House without a draft of the Bill, with only half a sheet of notes in my hand'.¹ The act allowed the issue of regulations 'to prevent persons communicating with the enemy' and 'to secure the safety of any means of communication, or of railways, docks or harbours...', and provided for the trial by court-martial of any person contravening the regulations.² Its scope was widened by an amending act on 28 August, but it was the Defence of the Realm (Consolidation) Act, enacted three months later on 27 November, that made DORA the formidable weapon it would become. It provided that 'His Majesty in Council' had power 'to issue regulations for securing the public safety and the defence of the realm, and as to the powers and duties for that purpose of the Admiralty and Army Council...', thus giving the civil and military authorities wide-ranging powers to suppress newspapers, ban public meetings and jail or banish those who spoke critically of the military or of the war effort.³ The act provided for the issuing of regulations, known as Defence of the Realm Regulations or

¹ Cornelius Cotter, 'Constitutionalizing Emergency Powers: The British Experience', *Stanford Law Review*, 5:3 (April 1953), p. 384.

² *Ibid.*, p. 385.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 385-6; Brian P. Murphy, 'The Easter Rising in the Context of Censorship and Propaganda with Special Reference to Major Ivon Price', in Gabriel Doherty and Dermot Keogh (eds), *1916: The Long Revolution* (Cork, 2007), p. 144.

DORR, by Order in Council, of which 63 were issued on 28 November 1914, and more than 250 had been issued by August 1918.⁴ It also allowed for minor infringements of the regulations to be dealt with by courts of summary jurisdiction, and for courts-martial to pass the death sentence.⁵

The Consolidation Bill passed relatively easily through the Commons, but was met with spirited resistance in the Lords. There, the trial of civilians by military courts, especially when those courts could pass the death sentence, was regarded as an intolerable violation of civil liberties. The bill was passed only when the government promised that an amending bill would be brought in early in the new year, and that no death sentences would be carried out in the interim.⁶ Lord Parmoor, one of the fiercest critics of the act, introduced a bill in the Lords ‘to restore to civilians their right to be tried in the ordinary Criminal Courts’, but that bill was allowed to lapse when the government introduced its own amending bill in the Commons. The Defence of the Realm (Amendment) Act 1915 retained the provision that accused persons could be tried by court-martial, but allowed the accused to opt instead for a trial in a civil court before a jury.⁷ The act became popularly known as the ‘Parmoor Act’.

Of the regulations contained in the original DORR, two are of particular importance as regards the use of DORA against advanced nationalists in Ireland. Article 14 provided that ‘where a person is suspected of acting, or of having acted, or of being about to act in a manner prejudicial to the public safety or the defence of the Realm’, the competent military authority (CMA) could make an order prohibiting that person from residing in a specified area, and if that person failed to leave the area or tried to re-enter it, he would be ‘guilty of an offence against these regulations.’ The CMA for Ireland was Major-General Lovick Friend, General Officer Commanding, Ireland.⁸ Article 27 said that ‘no person shall by word of mouth or in writing or in any newspaper, periodical, book, circular, or other printed publication, (a) spread false reports or make false statements; or (b) spread reports or make statements intended or likely to cause disaffection to His Majesty or to interfere with the success of His Majesty's forces...; or (c) spread reports or make

⁴ Charles Cook (ed.), *Defence of the Realm Manual* (HMSO, 1918), 6th edition, pp. iv, 29-40.

⁵ Cotter, ‘Constitutionalizing Emergency Powers’, p. 386

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 387.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Murphy, ‘Censorship and Propaganda’, p. 149.

statements intended or likely to prejudice the recruiting, training, discipline, or administration of any of His Majesty's forces.’⁹ The latter article was used to suppress advanced nationalist newspapers and to imprison activists for anti-recruiting speeches, but it was the former that eventually caused the more outrage, as the definition of a ‘specified area’ from which persons could be excluded was successively expanded from a town to a county, to several counties, and, ultimately, to the whole of Ireland. Seán Enright, writing about the post-Rising situation in Ireland, says:

The government relied on the criminal justice system to suppress the growing insurrection but a crucial factor was that juries could not be relied upon to deliver convictions in cases with a political aspect. This enduring crisis in the justice system encouraged the government to revive or create special powers: banishment, internment without trial, curfews, curbs on freedom of speech and association. It also drove the executive to move trial venues to disturbed areas and to resort to special juries, special courts of summary jurisdiction and courts martial under the Defence of the Realm Act. These developments were widely distrusted and the resentment they spread was exploited by the insurgents.¹⁰

Not all of these methods were used prior to the Rising, but those that were proved of significant propaganda for advanced nationalists, particularly the Volunteers.

Suppression of the papers.

Within weeks of war being declared, both the British press and members of parliament were calling for the suppression of the Irish advanced nationalist newspapers. *The Times*, on 31 October and again on 24 November, blamed the papers for the failure of recruiting in Ireland to reach the desired levels, citing the *Irish Volunteer*, *Sinn Féin*, *Irish Freedom* and the *Irish Worker*.¹¹ As the consolidation bill was being debated, Conservative members such as Walter Long and Rowland Hunt were asking the Chief Secretary, Augustine Birrell, what he intended to do about these papers. Long asked Birrell on 25 November ‘what steps he proposed to take to render a repetition of that treasonable practice impossible’. Birrell provoked predictable outrage when he said in his reply that he did not personally see the papers as a danger.¹² But his flippancy masked the fact that the process leading to their suppression was already under way. On 26 November 1914

⁹ Cook, *Defence of the Realm Manual*, pp. 105, 126.

¹⁰ Seán Enright, *After the Rising: Soldiers, Lawyers, and Trials of the Irish Revolution* (Sallins, 2016)

¹¹ Murphy, ‘Censorship and Propaganda’, p. 144.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 144-5.

Hunt asked the Chief Secretary whether he intended to stop publication of the *Irish Volunteer* and other ‘seditious papers’ and prevent the circulation of the *Gaelic American* in Ireland. The Under-Secretary for Ireland, Matthew Nathan, suggested that Birrell should answer either ‘that the answer is in the affirmative’ or ‘that the matter referred to...has engaged the serious attention of the Irish Government’ but that it would not be in the public interest to give details. Nathan preferred the second answer, and that was the answer that was given.¹³

Parliamentary questions are a device whereby members can ask questions aimed at embarrassing the government, and ministers can give evasive answers. It is the debate on the bill itself that gives a clear indication of what was planned. At the committee stage of the bill the Conservative, Sir John Butcher, proposed an amendment specifically giving the power ‘to secure the free enlistment of all British subjects willing and anxious to serve in His Majesty’s Forces.’ His reason was the anti-recruitment work being done in Ireland, and his belief that a less than satisfactory recruitment rate there was ‘due in no small degree to those disloyal and traitorous utterances, sometimes on platforms and more generally in the Press.’ He refrained from giving the House ‘many nauseous samples of the utterances to which I refer’, but named the *Irish Volunteer*, *Sinn Féin*, *Irish Freedom* and the *Irish Worker* as the chief culprits.¹⁴ The Home Secretary, Reginald McKenna, replied:

I am sure the whole Committee associates itself thoroughly with the expressions of abhorrence which here follow from the hon. and learned Gentleman in regard to the articles themselves. There is hardly need for me to say that this Amendment, if it were necessary to insert it in the Bill, would be accepted with hardly a dissident. But the hon. and learned Gentleman will see, if he looks at the Bill, that we already have these powers without adding these words.¹⁵

‘These powers’ referred to the new power to issue regulations by Order in Council, and the relevant regulation was Article 27, quoted above. It is clear, therefore, that the suppression of the advanced Irish nationalist papers – and those papers only – had been agreed upon in cabinet at the outset, when the consolidation bill was being drafted, that

¹³ National Archives of Ireland, CSORP/1914/20918; ‘Seditious Irish Publications’; *Cork Examiner*, 27 November 1914.

¹⁴ *Hansard* 5, lxviii, 1268-9 (25 November 1914).

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 1271-2.

Article 27 was drafted with those papers in mind, and that Birrell’s answer to Hunt on 26 November, for all his flippancy, indicated as much.

The bill passed all stages and was enacted on 28 November 1914. The new regulations were published in the *Dublin Gazette* on 2 December. On the same day, warnings were given to the printers of *Irish Freedom*, *Sinn Féin*, *Éire*, the *Irish Worker*, the *Irish Volunteer*, *Fianna Fáil*, and the *Leader*. All except *Fianna Fáil* (published in Cork by Terence MacSwiney) were Dublin papers. *Irish Freedom* had been issued that morning: all copies that could be found were seized. The *Irish Worker* was published with parts missing, but was still deemed to contain material that contravened the regulations, so all copies of that paper were seized, as well as type and movable parts of the printing machinery. *Sinn Féin*, *Fianna Fáil* and *Éire* 'voluntarily' ceased printing, the last after a second warning had been given. A police report says that ‘in the case of “The Leader” and “The Irish Volunteer” there was no undoubted contravention of the Regulations, and no action was taken’, and later that the two ‘were, and have remained sufficiently in order not to warrant seizure.’¹⁶

Table 1: Action against newspapers, December 1914.¹⁷

Title	Editor	Date	Result
The Kerryman	Maurice Griffin	2 Dec 1914	Became unobjectionable
Fianna Fáil	Terence MacSwiney	2 Dec 1914	Ceased publication
Sinn Féin	Arthur Griffith	2 Dec 1914	Ceased publication
Cork Celt	?	2 Dec 1914	Ceased publication
The Leader	D. P. Moran	2 Dec 1914	No action taken
Irish Volunteer	Eoin MacNeill	2 Dec 1914	No action taken
Irish Freedom	Bulmer Hobson	2 Dec 1914	Seized
Irish Worker	James Connolly	2 Dec 1914	Seized
Éire (Ireland)	Arthur Griffith	4 Dec 1914	Ceased publication

¹⁶ Breandán Mac Giolla Choille, *Intelligence Notes 1913-16, Preserved in the State Paper Office* (Dublin, 1966), p. 116.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

No action was taken against any newspapers in England or Scotland at that time. Reports of the suppression of papers in the British press mentioned only the Irish papers. *The Times* gloated that it was its own campaign that had forced a reluctant government belatedly to take action, and lamented that ‘in a time of war, when newspapers in this country of whose loyalty there can be no doubt...have been harried by a rigorous censorship, these Irish publications have been suffered to conduct a vicious agitation in favour of the enemy.’¹⁸ The *Guardian* satisfied itself with reporting the facts of the action, though on an earlier date it had said, ‘We like the repression of public opinion as little as anybody, but it is obviously absurd that, while every newspaper in Great Britain is subject to the most severe and even meticulous restrictions...these petty enemies of everything that is most Irish, and most English too, should be left free to say what they like...’.¹⁹

Some other facts are worthy of note. Firstly, that whatever divergences historians may subsequently have seen between the ideologies of *Irish Volunteer*, *Sinn Féin*, *Irish Freedom* and the *Irish Worker*, in 1914 the government, members of the opposition and the British press, all of whom had taken the trouble to read the papers, saw them as all of a kind. And well they might: the papers were all preaching the same doctrines: the inevitability of betrayal by the Liberal government, and, by extension, by the Parliamentary Party, the desire for a nation free of British rule, the declaration that England’s war was not Ireland’s war, and the need to stop Irishmen from enlisting in the British army. It would, in truth, be hard to tell the difference between an article in *Sinn Féin* and one in the *Irish Volunteer*.²⁰ *Sinn Féin* was enthusiastic about the formation of the Volunteers in 1913, and again about the expulsion of Redmond’s nominees in September 1914.²¹ In turn, when *Nationality*, the successor to *Sinn Féin*, made its appearance in June 1915, it was welcomed by the *Irish Volunteer* in the warmest possible terms:

Irish Volunteers very naturally welcome the new weekly journal, which undoubtedly will become a power in the land. Its policy is no compromise, and it will contain

¹⁸ ‘Sedition Suppressed’, *The Times*, 7 December 1914.

¹⁹ ‘Irish Journal Suppressed’, *Manchester Guardian*, 5 December 1914; ‘Ireland and the Army’, *Manchester Guardian*, 1 December 1914.

²⁰ Brian Feeney, *Sinn Féin: A Hundred Turbulent Years* (Dublin, 2002), p. 56.

²¹ *Ibid.*

much matter which the military character of the “Volunteer” naturally makes it difficult, if not impossible, to include.²²

Ironically, given that much of the application of DORA in Ireland was directed against the Irish Volunteers, the *Irish Volunteer* newspaper was never suppressed, although it did suffer reversals. It was originally published in Enniscorthy by the publishers of the *Echo*, where it was edited by Larry de Lacy, an IRB member.²³ After the raids in Dublin and Cork in December 1914 the proprietors took the decision to discontinue publication.²⁴ Eoin MacNeill began publishing it himself in Dublin, the first issue of the new series coming out on 5 December, and it was printed by Mahon’s of Yarnhall Street.²⁵ In May 1915 its printers were raided and machinery was confiscated. Laurence Ginnell asked Harold Tennant, Under-Secretary of State for War, whether this was not a further attempt to suppress the *Irish Volunteer*. Tennant replied in the negative, saying that the machinery was confiscated because the printer was printing another very extreme paper – Arthur Griffith’s *Scissors and Paste*.²⁶

Also of note, as far as the authorities were concerned, is that the seditious nature of the papers lay, not in any claim to freedom from British domination, or even in their attacks on the British government, but only in their opposition to the British war effort, and to recruitment in particular. This may help to explain why the *Irish Volunteer* was never suppressed. The remodelled paper tended to restrict itself to ‘matter of a military character’ and to the articulation of Irish nationalist ideals.²⁷ Thus, while its content might be abhorrent to the authorities, it did not fall under Article 27 of DORR.

Coincidentally with the appearance of new advanced nationalist papers in 1915, the attitude of those papers towards army recruits changed as casualties began to mount. Initially, those who joined the British Army were treated as traitors or dupes. In the second year of the war this changed. In 1915, advanced nationalist papers were the only ones reporting

²² ‘Nationality’, *Irish Volunteer*, 19 June 1915.

²³ Virginia Glandon, *Arthur Griffith and the Advanced Nationalist Press* (New York, 1985), p. 79; BMH WS 81 (Bulmer Hobson), pp. 1-2.

²⁴ Marnie Hay, *Bulmer Hobson and the Nationalist Movement in Twentieth-century Ireland* (Manchester, 2009), p. 169.

²⁵ Murphy, ‘Censorship and Propaganda’, p. 433 (fn 18); *Intelligence Notes*, pp. 116-17.

²⁶ *Hansard* 5, lxxi, 1627 (12 May 1915).

²⁷ Murphy, ‘Censorship and Propaganda’, p. 155.

the horror of life and death in the trenches.²⁸ Especially with the horrific casualties in Gallipoli, the traditional attitude of scorn towards the soldiers became one of sympathy and horror.²⁹ Instead, it was the recruiters who were vilified. This extended to ‘Recruiting Sergeant John Redmond’.³⁰ The high mortality rate among Irish troops relative to British troops at Gallipoli led to scathing criticism of the British leaders, *Honesty* accusing them of ‘murder by muddling’.³¹

Seán O’Hegarty

In August 1914, as part of the process of removing suspected separatists from the Irish public service, Seán O’Hegarty, who worked for the post office in Cork, received orders transferring him to Britain.³² He refused to go and was sacked.³³ O’Hegarty was a Volunteer officer in Cork.

Early in 1915 Seán O’Hegarty was served with an order, under Article 14 of the Defence of the Realm Regulations, forbidding him to reside in Cork city. He moved to Ballingearry, but was then served with a second order excluding him from County Cork, so he went to Enniscorthy to stay with Larry de Lacy.³⁴ After spending some weeks there, he was arrested on a charge of distributing seditious literature contrary to Article 27 of DORR. The literature in question consisted of hand-written notices telling residents that in the event of a German invasion they should ignore police orders and welcome the invaders. When they went to de Lacy’s house to arrest O’Hegarty, police found a cache of explosives and ammunition. De Lacy having fled the country, O’Hegarty and another lodger, James Bolger, were charged with possession.³⁵ The arrests were made in early March, and it was expected that the pair would be tried by court-martial, which would have meant a possible death sentence. However, the Parmoor Act received the Royal Assent on 16 March, and they both took advantage of it to elect for a jury trial.³⁶ They were represented by Tim Healy MP, who made no secret of his support for the British

²⁸ Ben Novick, *Conceiving revolution: Irish nationalist propaganda during the First World War* (Dublin, 2001), p. 55.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 60-1.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

³² Keiron Curtis, *P. S. O’Hegarty (1879-1955): Sinn Féin Fenian* (London, 2012), p. 6.

³³ Leon Ó Broin, *Dublin Castle and the 1916 Rising* (London, 1970), p. 36.

³⁴ Anon., *The Defence of the Realm Act in Ireland* (Dublin, 1915), p. 5.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ ‘Recent Enniscorthy Arrests’, *Cork Examiner*, 22 March 1915.

war effort;³⁷ this was an advantage, given not only the nature of the notices written by O'Hegarty, but the fact that police had also found in the house a large number of copies of an anti-war pamphlet, *Ireland, Germany and the Freedom of the Seas*, written by Roger Casement in Germany.³⁸ Bolger's case was put back, and O'Hegarty was tried initially on a charge of possessing explosives 'in the immediate vicinity of a railway' (the added wording was necessary because possession of explosives on its own was not an offence under DORA). The defence relied on the fact that it could not be proven that de Lacy had not acquired and stored the explosives without O'Hegarty's knowledge. The jury agreed, and found him not guilty, whereupon he was arraigned on the original charge of distribution of seditious literature.³⁹

At the second trial, the former postmaster at Cork and an assistant superintendent at Cork post office both identified the handwriting on the notices as O'Hegarty's, based on letters he had written while employed there. Healy asserted that there had been friction between O'Hegarty and his superiors in the post office in Cork, due to religious differences. Despite Mr. Justice Kenny, in his summing up, deploring the fact 'that sectarian matters should have been introduced into the trial', the jury failed to reach agreement, and were discharged.⁴⁰ Two months later there was a retrial, at which O'Hegarty was acquitted.⁴¹ This time, the case drew considerably less publicity.⁴²

Publicity was a matter of nearly as much concern to the authorities as the activity that had given rise to the trials. Although the Chief Secretary's Office insisted that any action under DORA was a matter for the military authorities and did not concern the Dublin Castle authorities, it was revealed in the House of Commons that the undersecretary had both telephoned and written to newspaper editors, 'requesting' that they not publish details of the trial.⁴³ Briefing the Chief Secretary on his suggested answer, Sir Matthew Nathan reported to him that on 30 March he had phoned the editors of the *Freeman's Journal/Evening Telegraph*, *Irish Times* and *Daily Express/Evening Mail*, and met William Martin Murphy of the *Irish Independent/Evening Herald* in person, about

³⁷ 'Trial at Commission', *Freeman's Journal*, 9 April 1915.

³⁸ 'Recent Enniscorthy Arrests', *Cork Examiner*, 22 March 1915.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ 'Enniscorthy Case', *Freeman's Journal*, 13 April 1915.

⁴¹ Ó Broin, *Dublin Castle*, p. 37.

⁴² 'Trial at Dublin: the Verdict', *Kerry Sentinel*, 9 June 1915.

⁴³ *Hansard* 5, lxxiii, 1955 (26 July 1915).

‘reducing the reports of tomorrow’s application for bail on behalf of Hegarty and Bolger, and of the subsequent trial of these men, to brief paragraphs simply reporting the result of the application and the trial.’ A week later, on 8 April, on being told that this had been interpreted as referring to the bail applications only, he wrote to each of them, clarifying that it referred to the entire proceedings, as it was ‘considered against the public interest that details of the evidence or the speeches of Counsel in this trial should be given to the Public Press.’⁴⁴ Since, under DORA, the newspaper could be suppressed without notice if it printed anything ‘likely to cause disaffection’, such a ‘request’, would have to be taken very seriously indeed. Nevertheless, Nathan must have been disappointed with the amount of detail that did appear in the papers, and correspondingly gratified that the retrial received so little publicity.

The case of Seán O’Hegarty is significant for a number of other reasons. Firstly, although the explosives find was the most sensational aspect of the case, the discovery was accidental; the decision to arrest had been made on purely political grounds, specifically his anti-recruiting activities. Secondly, it shows that jurors were inclined to side with the defendants in such cases. Faced with the prospect of a series of humiliating defeats, it was decided that, in future cases, the accused person would be tried by a court of summary jurisdiction rather than by court-martial. In such a case the defendant could not opt for a jury trial.⁴⁵ This was done in future cases. As the author of the propaganda pamphlet *The Defence of the Realm Act in Ireland* put it:

Three successive juries failing to convict Mr. Hegarty, the authorities decide to have no more trials by jury, but to bring all future cases before a court of summary jurisdiction; in other words, before stipendiary magistrates. Thus, yet another of the people’s rights has been filched from them.⁴⁶

The downside, from the authorities’ point of view, was that a magistrate’s court could not impose a sentence of more than six months, whereas the court in O’Hegarty’s case could have passed a sentence of death.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Kurten to Power, 30 March, 8 April 1915, NAI, CSORP 1915/22244.

⁴⁵ *Hansard* 5, lxxiv, 1284 (13 October 1915).

⁴⁶ *Defence of the Realm Act*, p. 9.

⁴⁷ William Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish 1912-1921* (Oxford, 2014), p. 37; ‘The King v. John Hegarty, and the King v. James Bolger’, *Freeman’s Journal*, 23 April 1915.

‘Banishment’

On 23 June, and again on 7 July 1915, Laurence Ginnell asked the Chief Secretary the number of people who had been ‘banished from their homes and places of livelihood under the Defence of the Realm Act.’ The answer was that ‘thirteen persons in Ireland have been prohibited, by order of the competent military authority, in pursuance of Article No. 14 of the Defence of the Realm Regulations, from residing in, or entering into, the area specified in the order.’ On each occasion, Birrell was sent a typed list of the thirteen people expelled, with handwritten notes added, none of which was to be made public. Three of the thirteen had German names, while a fourth, Rev. Edward E. Knowles, was said in a note to be German. The others were:

- John Hegarty, ordered out of Cork 24/10/14
- Robert Monteith, ordered out of County Dublin 14/11/14
- Thomas (alias Desmond) Fitzgerald, ordered out of County Kerry 25/1/15
- Bernard Boyle, ordered out of County Donegal 30/4/15
- J.L. Fawsitt, ordered out of County Cork 7/5/15
- William Casey, ordered out of County Cork 5/6/15
- Michael Ryan, ordered out of County Cork 14/6/15
- Patrick O’Sullivan, ordered out of County Cork 14/6/15
- J.J Walsh, ordered out of County Cork 6/5/15⁴⁸

Monteith was described by the *Irish Independent* as ‘Chief Instructor of the Irish Volunteers’. The Dublin City and County Board of the Irish Volunteers adopted a resolution of protest at his expulsion, and the Irish Citizen Army held a protest meeting in Stephen’s Green, which was addressed by James Connolly, William Partridge, P.T. Daly, Constance Markievicz, Seán Milroy and The O’Rahilly (Connolly told Bulmer Hobson that he should have mobilised the Volunteers to prevent Monteith’s removal).⁴⁹ Fitzgerald was a Volunteer organiser in Kerry. He went to Dublin, but he was subsequently excluded from County Dublin, so he went to Bray, County Wicklow, and became an organiser there. Fawsitt and Walsh were both speakers at the meeting at which the Volunteers were formed in Cork City in 1913. Casey, Ryan and O’Sullivan were all from Mitchelstown, County Cork. Sometime between 22 June and 6 July all three were also ordered out of

⁴⁸ Kurten to Power, 22 June 1915, NAI, CSORP 1915/22312; Kurten to Power, 6 July 1915, CSORP 1915/22287.

⁴⁹ ‘Volunteer Officer Deported’, *Irish Independent*, 16 November 1914; Austen Morgan, *James Connolly: A Political Biography* (Manchester, 1988), p. 150.

Kerry and Limerick.⁵⁰ The name William Casey appears in Bureau of Military History witness statements as a member of the committee at the formation of the Volunteers in Mitchelstown in November 1913, and Patrick O’Sullivan as another member of the company.⁵¹ Casey and O’Sullivan both mobilised in Mitchelstown on Easter Sunday 1916, and again on Easter Thursday, and were among those arrested after the Rising.⁵² The name Michael Ryan does not occur in witness statements, or in the Military Service Pension files; a handwritten note on the list sent to Birrell describes him as a ‘cornerboy’ and ‘discharged soldier’ without employment. Bernard Boyle likewise does not appear in either witness statements or MSP files; he was fined 10s earlier that month for taking a travel voucher from one of two young men who were travelling to Omagh to enlist, causing them to miss their train, but there was no mention at his trial of him belonging to the Volunteers or any other organisation.⁵³ A fourteenth name was added on 7 July: Michael O’Rahilly, a member of the Volunteers’ headquarters staff, then resident in Dublin, had been excluded from Kerry, Cork and Limerick on 26 June.⁵⁴

The exclusion of people from designated areas was taken a step further when four men – Herbert Moore Pim, Denis McCullough, Ernest Blythe and Liam Mellows – received orders commanding them to reside outside Ireland. The expulsion orders were issued on 10 July 1915 and served within the following three days.⁵⁵ At least three of the four were Volunteer organisers: Pim in County Tyrone, Blythe in County Clare and Mellows in County Galway. McCullough was a founder of the Dungannon clubs and later leading member of Sinn Féin and the IRB, as well as a Volunteer officer. Pim was a contributor to the *Irish Volunteer* and *Nationality*, under the pseudonym ‘A. Newman’. He was also the son of a respected Belfast Unionist.

The exclusion orders presented an opportunity for advanced nationalists to make political capital. Éamonn Ceannt, a member of both the Volunteer executive and the military committee of the IRB, wanted to mobilise the Volunteers to ‘surround [Pim and McCullough] and dare the British to come and get them’, but MacNeill, always opposed

⁵⁰ Kurten to Power, 6 July 1915, CSORP 1915/22287.

⁵¹ BMH, WS 1224 (Thomas Delarue), p. 1; WS 1186 (Michael O’Sullivan), p. 1.

⁵² BMH, WS 1186 (Michael O’Sullivan), pp. 6-8.

⁵³ ‘Interfering with Recruiting’, *Irish Times*, 8 April 1915.

⁵⁴ Kurten to Power, 7 July 1915, CSORP 1915/22641; ‘Order Prohibiting a Person Residing in or Entering Specified Areas’ (Michael O’Rahilly), CSORP 1915/22289.

⁵⁵ Murphy, *Political Imprisonment*, p. 40.

to precipitate military action, instead instructed McCullough to go to America.⁵⁶ Tom Clarke was utterly opposed to such a suggestion: it would mean that the ‘banishment’ orders had had the desired effect, and would thus lead to their more widespread use. He went so far as to tell McCullough that if he obeyed MacNeill’s order their friendship would be at an end and Clarke would regard him as a traitor.⁵⁷ Pim, travelling to Dublin with Pat McCartan, was ‘rather depressed’ that MacNeill wanted the exclusion orders to be obeyed, but he was ‘delighted to hear that Tom Clarke and the Committee had decided, in view of the banishment orders served on Blythe and Mellows, to resist the orders.’⁵⁸ He left Clarke’s shop ‘in high spirits, and went to hunt up The O’Rahilly’, with whom he went to MacNeill’s house. Again, MacNeill argued for the propaganda value of Pim travelling to America, but Pim ‘insisted on “seeing the thing through,” and going to jail’, to which MacNeill finally, if reluctantly, agreed. That evening Pim attended a meeting of the Volunteer Committee, where they finalised the details of his arrest. He stayed the night with MacNeill and lunched the following day with Arthur Griffith and others before returning to Belfast to await his arrest.⁵⁹ Griffith was not an officer in the Volunteers, but he was very much in the counsels of the leadership. It was he who advised Blythe, a Protestant, to stay with Fr. Lorcan O’Kieran – a long-time member of the Sinn Féin executive – while awaiting arrest, because of the propaganda value of a Protestant nationalist being arrested at the home of a Catholic priest.⁶⁰

Pim, McCullough, Blythe and Mellows were duly arrested, tried before a magistrate (where Pim was defended by Henry Hanna, a fervent unionist who believed in the impartial administration of justice) and sentenced to between three and four months in prison.⁶¹ Hanna had wanted to try to get them the shortest possible sentence, but Seán T. O’Kelly had told him that they were not interested in short sentences, but in the maximum of publicity.⁶² On their release from prison, the expulsion orders against the four were not enforced. Instead, each received a notice stating that the expulsion order was suspended, but would be re-enforced if the CMA believed ‘that you are again endeavouring to

⁵⁶ Michael T. Foy, *Tom Clarke: The True Leader of the Easter Rising* (Dublin, 2014), p. 161; BMH WS 915 (Denis McCullough).

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Herbert Moore Pim, *What It Feels Like (Tracts for the Times*, no. 8; Dublin, 1915), p. 9.

⁵⁹ Pim, *What It Feels Like*, pp. 9-11.

⁶⁰ Murphy, *Political Imprisonment*, p. 40.

⁶¹ Foy, *Tom Clarke*, p. 162.

⁶² BMH, WS 1765 part 2 (S. T. O’Kelly), pp. 206-7.

prejudice recruiting or the public safety'. This allowed the propagandists to say that the orders were simply a pretext for locking them up without charging them with a specific offence; having put them out of circulation for three or four months, the authorities were 'willing to let the expulsion orders drop for a while.'⁶³ The answers to parliamentary questions appear to bear this out. Ginnell, a radical nationalist who had been expelled from the IPP in 1909, raised questions on an almost daily basis from the time the expulsion orders were first issued. To a lesser extent, Arthur Lynch, another individualistic MP, who had fought for the Boers in 1899-1902, also tabled questions. On one occasion, Lynch managed to take a swipe at Edward Carson when he asked whether the banishees had 'been merely criticising the general policy of the Government or done something more serious such as would qualify them for Cabinet rank'.⁶⁴ On 13 October Ginnell asked the Chief Secretary

for what reason Messrs. Pim, MacCullagh [*sic*], Blythe, and Mellows were brought before a resident magistrate to be sentenced to imprisonment by direction of the military authorities, instead of being dealt with by those authorities themselves; if any offence was committed or apprehended, will he say what it was in each case; why it was withheld from the Court; why the Crown witness in each case expressly declined to answer defendant's counsel as to any offence, or evidence of offence, or reason for punishment; under what part of any Statute the magistrate, without trial, passed sentence of imprisonment for something not stated and of which no evidence was given...⁶⁵

Birrell's response was to reiterate that the CMA could at his discretion have the case tried by a court of summary jurisdiction, and that the prisoners had been charged with only one offence, which was clearly stated in court: that of failing to obey the expulsion order. The answer was carefully framed so as to avoid giving any reason for the expulsion order, but Nathan, in drafting the answer, appended a note for Birrell's information:

The reason for the order removing the persons referred to from Ireland was that it was suspected that as Organisers of the Irish Volunteers they were, by their propaganda, prejudicing the recruitment of Irishmen in the Army and Navy in contravention of Article number 27 of the Regulations.⁶⁶

⁶³ *Defence of the Realm Act*, pp. 17-18.

⁶⁴ *Hansard* 5, lxxiii, 2139 (27 July 1915).

⁶⁵ *Hansard* 5, lxxix, 1283-4 (13 October 1915).

⁶⁶ NAI, CSORP 1915/22683.

Later in the year, the authorities took the opposite course of action. Alfred Monahan, a Belfast man who was a Volunteer organiser in County Cavan, was arrested when he returned to Cavan in October 1915 after receiving an order excluding him from there, but was tried on a charge of making statements ‘calculated to prejudice recruiting’ at a meeting in Cornafean, which, it was stated, was the reason for his expulsion in the first place. He was sentenced to three months.⁶⁷ Desmond Fitzgerald was tried for the same offence after a speech in Bray in September, and additionally for having entered Dublin contrary to an exclusion order. He was sentenced to six months on each count, the two sentences to run concurrently.⁶⁸ Monahan was later sent to Galway by the Volunteers to assist Liam Mellows as organiser.⁶⁹ At the end of March 1916 he was again ordered to leave Ireland, along with Mellows and Blythe, who were arrested.⁷⁰ Mellows and Blythe were forcibly deported to England. Monahan evaded arrest by dressing as a priest; Mellows escaped back to Ireland, also disguised as a priest, and they both took part in the Rising in County Galway, and went on the run together for several months afterwards.⁷¹

Prisoners

The profile of people in prison under the act in June 1915 was quite different to that of the ‘banishees’. When Ginnell on 15 June asked the number of people ‘in prison in Ireland for political offences’, Nathan suggested substituting ‘for offences under the Defence of the Realm Acts’ in the answer, and attached a reply from Max Green, chairman of the General Prisons Board, with a list of 21 names.⁷² Of these, two were Germans, and four were prominent nationalists, but the great majority were ordinary people who had voiced support for Germany or opposition to the British military while drunk, either in a bar or in the street after leaving a bar. In Dublin in March, Patrick Mahon was sentenced to three months with hard labour for saying to a soldier in a bar, ‘It shows a lack of intelligence on your part to be wearing that uniform. The Germans are better men than you, and I wish they were here, and the Emperor wearing the King's Crown.’⁷³ In Cashel in May, James Horan was sentenced to two months with hard labour for shouting ‘Up the Germans’ and ‘Go on the Germans’. The magistrate said it was ‘a frightful state of affairs’ to be

⁶⁷ ‘Prosecution in Belfast: Anti-recruiting Speech in County Cavan’, *Belfast Newsletter*, 27 October 1915.

⁶⁸ ‘Defence of Realm: Prosecution at Bray’, *Freeman's Journal*, 1 November 1915.

⁶⁹ BMH, WS 298 (Ailbhe Ó Monacháin), pp. 11-12.

⁷⁰ ‘Irish Volunteers ordered to Leave Ireland within Six Days’, *Kerry Sentinel*, 29 March 1916.

⁷¹ BMH, WS 298 (Ailbhe Ó Monacháin), p. 13 *et seq.*

⁷² Kurten to Power, 14 June 1915, CSORP 1915/22336; Max S. Green to Nathan, 14 June 1915, *ibid.*

⁷³ ‘A War Altercation - Civilian Gets Three Months’, *Irish Independent*, 30 March 1915.

shouting such things only days after the sinking of the *Lusitania*.⁷⁴ In Strabane, Bernard Goan was sentenced to two months with hard labour for throwing up his hands as a recruiting meeting was dispersing, and shouting 'I hope no one in Strabane will join the colours.'⁷⁵ In Tralee, John Ducey was given two months with hard labour for taking a recruiting sergeant's cap off him in a bar and kicking it in the air. Ducey said it was meant as a joke. The magistrates did not accept it was a joke, 'but even if it was, he should suffer, as this sort of thing must be put a stop to.'⁷⁶ Also in Tralee, Patrick Healy was sentenced to one month for saying to a recruiting sergeant that 'he would drive his hand through anyone who would wear the uniform'.⁷⁷ In Dunlavin, Murtagh, or Murtha, Nolan was given two months with hard labour for saying to two soldiers that 'they shouldn't be wearing the uniform, but that it was the Kaiser's uniform they should be wearing', that 'the Kaiser should be on the Throne of England instead of King George', and that 'he wouldn't have King George looking after his pigs.'⁷⁸

Michael Toye, a Donegal man staying in Belfast, was convicted, not with making statements likely to cause disaffection, but with 'attempting to elicit information regarding the movements of his Majesty's ships'. He had gone into a pub, and said to two stokers in the Royal Navy that 'the German Emperor should be on King George's throne, and will be there yet.' He had then left with the two, promised them 'any amount of drink', and asked them what ship they were on, and what they knew about the movement of ships, whereupon they reported him to a policeman. The prosecutor said the incident would not have gone so far if he had not used such language about the king.⁷⁹ At his appeal against the six months sentence, his counsel said that the section under which Toye was charged implied an intention to communicate the information to the enemy, which he did not intend, but the magistrate disagreed, asking, 'what intent was too strong to attribute to a man who had in his mind the feelings which that language implied?'⁸⁰ Martin Walsh, a 60-year-old Galway man, was charged under article 27 for having interrupted a recruiting sergeant in a bar while he was encouraging a sailor to enlist, saying 'You, a Galway man, ought to be ashamed to be wearing the King's uniform.' A

⁷⁴ 'Case in Cashel: Young Man Gets Two Months', *Cork Examiner*, 15 May 1915.

⁷⁵ 'Penalty of Two Months' Imprisonment', *Belfast Newsletter*, 5 May 1915.

⁷⁶ 'Prosecution in Tralee', *Cork Examiner*, 8 June 1915.

⁷⁷ 'Tralee Sessions Clerk', *Cork Examiner*, 1 June 1915.

⁷⁸ 'Important Case at Dunlavin', *Nationalist and Leinster Times*, 22 May 1915.

⁷⁹ 'Inquisitive Donegal Man Sentenced to Six Months Imprisonment', *Belfast Newsletter*, 13 April 1915.

⁸⁰ 'Appeal Against a Belfast Prosecution', *Belfast Newsletter*, 22 May 1915.

younger man, Thomas Finnerty was charged with using similar language on the same occasion, including 'God bless Germany'. The sailor had not enlisted. The recruiting sergeant, who was the main prosecution witness, knew both men personally. He was aware that Walsh had two sons, three nephews and a brother in the army, and that Finnerty was a former member of the Royal Naval Reserve and was intending to re-enlist. He believed both men were 'loyal'. Walsh was sentenced to two weeks, and Finnerty to two months.⁸¹ All of the above were on the list supplied to Nathan, and in every case the accused 'had drink taken'.

It must be doubted whether the sentences had any deterrent effect on other people who became drunk and aggressive; on the other hand, they would have served to reinforce the 'them and us' attitude of a sizable portion of the population. Augustine Birrell, at the Royal Commission on the rebellion, spoke of 'the old hatred and distrust of the British connection, always noticeable in all classes and in all places, varying in degree and finding different ways of expression, but always *there*, as the background of Irish politics and character'.⁸² The 'British connection' was represented not only by the British Army, but also by the Irish police and judiciary. Thus mutual antipathy between Irish and English, and mutual suspicion between police and magistrates on one hand, and nationalists on the other, could lead to a spiral at the end of which ordinary people were more 'disaffected' than before.

This is best illustrated in the case of John Kinsella, which was raised by Laurence Ginnell in the House of Commons, and recounted in the pamphlet *The Defence of the Realm Act in Ireland*.⁸³ Kinsella was an Arklow fisherman working out of Valentia, in County Kerry. In June 1915, he became involved in an argument in a Cahersiveen bar with a group of English sailors from a patrol boat at Valentia. According to a contemporary account by Eoin MacNeill, one of the sailors insulted Kinsella and his friends, calling them 'Irish bumms', and subsequently struck Kinsella, knocking him to the floor. Kinsella then said, 'England is no good. We would be better off under German rule',

⁸¹ 'God Bless Germany', *Connacht Tribune*, 19 June 1915.

⁸² *The Royal Commission on the Rebellion in Ireland. Minutes of evidence and appendix of documents* [Cd. 8311], pp. 20-21.

⁸³ *The Defence of the Realm Act in Ireland*, p. 32.

whereupon the sailor who had hit him charged him under DORA.⁸⁴ The facts were disputed in court, but it was established that the sailor, Percy Owen, had been drinking before he went to the bar, and that he had knocked Kinsella to the ground, although he said that Kinsella had attempted to strike him first. It also emerged that Owen had in the past been in trouble with his captain for drunkenness, and had been put ashore on another occasion for an unspecified reason.⁸⁵ What made the story newsworthy, however, was that Detective Inspector Hicks, prosecuting, cross-examined three witnesses who had come forward to defend Kinsella, and asked them how much German gold they had received for doing so.⁸⁶ Further, the presiding magistrate, R.M.P. Wynne, passing sentence of two weeks hard labour, said that in future anybody in Cahersiveen who contravened DORA would be given six months hard labour.⁸⁷ This led Ginnell to ask in the Commons how the conduct of the two men could be justified.⁸⁸

Hicks, by way of justification, said that he had a right to ask any question 'to shake the witnesses' credit...and by doing this I can make myself hard on the Sinn Feiners', and added that 'Sinn Feinism and disloyalty are rampant in this district.' Two of the defence witnesses worked for a man who was 'brother-in-law to Jeremiah O'Connell, Captain of the Sinn Feiners here and it is generally spoken of here that O'Connell is getting German money.' Hicks enclosed an anonymous letter sent to two of the magistrates in the case, which said, 'Notwithstanding that the balance of the evidence was in accused's favour, two despicable people on the bench bearing Irish patronymics concurred with the Removable and the Ascendancy man in sentencing their fellow countryman to fourteen days imprisonment', and remarked sarcastically that 'the people of Cahersiveen should be proud of their J.P.'s...when it is set down by Edward Fitzgerald J.P. and Dr. Joseph F. Mannix J.P. that the oaths of three Englishmen are of more value than the oaths of three Irishmen and one Irishwoman.' It was signed 'Up Kerry', and a postscript said, 'May the Lord soon send the Germans or some other breed of *men* to drive all backboneless men out of Ireland.'⁸⁹ For his part, Wynne explained that he had wanted to sentence Kinsella to two months' imprisonment with hard labour, but had been out-voted by his fellow

⁸⁴ Eoin MacNeill, 'Daniel O'Connell and Sinn Fein (Part 1)', in John X. Regan (ed.), *What Made Ireland Sinn Fein* (Boston, 1921), pp. 166-7.

⁸⁵ 'Defence of the Realm: Caherciveen Case', *Cork Examiner*, 7 June 1915.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ 'Defence of the Realm Charge: Arklow Fisherman in Trouble', *Kerryman*, 12 June 1915.

⁸⁸ *Hansard* 5, lxxii, 1314 (24 June 1915); lxxiii, 188-9 (7 July 1915).

⁸⁹ DI Hicks to District Inspector-General, 15 June 1915, CSORP/1915/22786.

magistrates who felt that Kinsella had been provoked. He wanted to warn the public that future cases would be more severely treated. Nathan believed that Wynne

was activated by a very proper desire to warn the public in a notoriously disloyal part of the country of the gravity of offences against the Defence of the Realm Act and prevent the necessity of future prosecution.⁹⁰

As regards the prosecution's tactics, Nathan felt that it would be 'sufficient to tell Hicks to avoid such ground for complaint.'⁹¹ Concerning the fact that Kinsella had been charged by a drunken sailor, Birrell promised to consider the suggestion of Timothy Healy that in future, prosecutions should 'only be commenced on the initiative of their superior officers, and not on that of the men themselves'.⁹²

Christopher Kennedy has shown that recruitment of nationalists into the army fell dramatically following an initial eagerness and sense of excitement, from 41,259 in the year to August 1915 to 15,902 in the following year, and that recruitment in rural counties such as Clare and Leitrim was as low as 4% of men eligible for service.⁹³ Even among the National Volunteers, whom Redmond had exhorted to 'go wherever the firing line extends', only 8,000 of an estimated 160,000 total membership enlisted in the three months following the Woodenbridge speech, and 24,000 by January 1918.⁹⁴ Kennedy says that Redmond was 'fighting an uphill battle' in trying to reverse the traditional aversion to enlistment.⁹⁵ Recruiting meetings were often well-attended and enthusiastically supported, but often resulted in few or no recruits.⁹⁶ A contemporary writer observed that Irish people 'like the demonstration for its own sake, for the fun of it independently of its object.'⁹⁷ Recruiting was highest among the urban poor, suggesting that economic necessity was an important factor; recruiting levels among the rural poor were not high, as Irish agriculture fared well economically during the war.⁹⁸

⁹⁰ Kurten to Power, 2 July 1915, CSORP/1915/22288.

⁹¹ Kurten to Power, 7 July 1915, CSORP/1915/22286.

⁹² *Hansard* 5, 183 (6 July 1915).

⁹³ Christopher M. Kennedy, *Genesis of the Rising, 1912-1916: A Transformation of Nationalist Opinion* (New York, 2010), pp. 143, 145.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 146-7.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 158-60.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 170-172, 175.

MacDermott, Milroy and Sheehy-Skeffington

Seán MacDermott, Seán Milroy and Francis Sheehy-Skeffington were arrested in June 1915 under section 27 of DORR, MacDermott in Tuam and the other two in Dublin. At the time of his arrest MacDermott was actively planning the Rising. He had visited P.S. O’Hegarty in Welshpool and laid the plan before him (O’Hegarty disagreed with them and was consequently frozen out of the IRB leadership). Milroy was not involved in the planning of the Rising, although he took full part as a member of the GPO garrison, and led parties of men back and forth between the GPO and the *Telegraph* offices. Sheehy-Skeffington has been presented, for instance by William Murphy, as somebody entirely outside the separatist movement, whose anti-recruiting speeches were motivated only by his pacifism, based on a principled objection to war in general, rather than any anti-British sentiment.⁹⁹ On the contrary, he had been a strong Nationalist at least since the mid-1900s when he was a member of the progressive Young Ireland Branch of the UIL. In the 1910s he was associated with both the Sinn Féin and the labour movements. In 1911, at the height of the protests that had preceded the visit of George V, MacDermott, Milroy and Sheehy-Skeffington had all given evidence at the trial of Helena Molony: all three had been together at the meeting in Beresford Place which had led to her arrest.¹⁰⁰ Although Sheehy-Skeffington was not involved in the setting up or the running of the Irish Volunteers, he was on the committee of the Irish Citizen Army when it was formally constituted three months later.¹⁰¹

The meeting for which Milroy was arrested was chaired by Sheehy-Skeffington.¹⁰² Sheehy-Skeffington’s own anti-recruiting speeches were from a clear nationalist point of view. Cross-examining a police witness (he defended himself), he pointed out that the meeting had been the fortieth held at Beresford Place for the same purpose, and asked, ‘Wasn’t the tone the tone of a meeting of Irish Nationalists?’ The reply was, ‘There was a great deal of that tone in the meetings.’¹⁰³ In a report to the Chief Secretary Sheehy-Skeffington was quoted as saying at the meeting:

⁹⁹ Murphy, *Political Imprisonment*, p. 39.

¹⁰⁰ ‘Exciting Incidents’, *Freeman’s Journal*, 5 July 1911.

¹⁰¹ Sean O’Casey, *The Story of the Irish Citizen Army* (London, 1919), p. 15.

¹⁰² ‘Prosecutions in Dublin’, *Kerry Sentinel*, 12 June 1915.

¹⁰³ ‘Case against Mr. Sheehy-Skeffington’, *Irish Times*, 10 June 1914.

Ireland cannot spare either the men or the money for a fight of this kind...We have got no interest whatever in fighting in this war against Germany. Secondly, we have a supreme interest in keeping Ireland at peace and keeping everyone at home to build up the nation; and thirdly, looking on if there is any power that we should see smashed in this war it is not Germany but England.¹⁰⁴

He quoted himself in his 'Speech from the Dock', which was published in pamphlet form, and, after his death the following year, in the American pro-German fortnightly paper *Issues and Events*, and said:

On the basis of that claim for 'small nationalities' which is the basis of this war, it is now taken for granted that it is right and rational for the people of Bohemia and Transylvania to rejoice in the defeats and break-up of the Austrian Empire; that it is right and rational for the people of Alsace-Lorraine and of Posen to rejoice in the break-up of the German Empire...I claim that to put this argument before the Irish people in the form which I have shown, and to tell them it was just as right and natural for them to rejoice in the danger of the British Empire was a constitutional right.¹⁰⁵

When sentenced to six months hard labour, Sheehy-Skeffington responded with the established suffragist tactic of the hunger strike. The authorities countered – as they did in suffragist cases – by releasing him under the Cat and Mouse Act. A note from the under-secretary said that 'his licence expires on the 30th inst., but the period can be extended and if he behaves himself further detention may be unnecessary.'¹⁰⁶

In contrast with the actions taken under DORA for anti-recruitment activity, conduct of a military nature drew no reaction at all from the authorities. In December 1914, a protest meeting in Beresford Place against the suppression of the papers was overlooked by armed Citizen Army members from inside Liberty Hall. James Connolly told the meeting that if there had been any attempt to interfere with the meeting 'the rifles would not have been silent.'¹⁰⁷ Harry Colley described an incident in Dublin in 1916, when armed Volunteers under Oscar Traynor confronted 'a posse of police under an Inspector on their way into Father Matthew Park', forcing them to withdraw.¹⁰⁸ Herbert Pim described the circumstances of the service of his expulsion order in the pamphlet *What It Feels Like*. He was at a Volunteer training camp in Carrickmore when he was told the police had entered the ground. He found 'a red-faced sergeant and a file of constables and the local DI

¹⁰⁴ Kurten to Power, 8 June 1915, CSORP/1915/22345.

¹⁰⁵ 'F. Sheehy Skeffington's Speech from the Dock', *Issues and Events* 4:21 (1916), p. 350.

¹⁰⁶ Kurten to Power, 21 June 1915, CSORP/1915/22322.

¹⁰⁷ 'Suppressing Seditious in Ireland: Dublin Meeting of Protest', *The Times*, 7 December 1914.

¹⁰⁸ BMH WS 1687 (Harry Colley).

[District Inspector] and a “G” man [plainclothes detective] held up by seven men with pistols.’ Fearing that if the police tried to press on there would be bloodshed, he told the DI that he was on private ground, that he had no right to force his way past the sentries and had ‘merely forced my men to do their duty.’ The DI acknowledged this and said he only wished to speak to ‘Mr Newman’. He then proceeded to serve the notice.’¹⁰⁹ That no action was taken in any of these cases against men who had not only obstructed the forces of the law in the performance of their duties, but threatened to kill them, is remarkable. Restraint in the face of general arming and drilling is one thing; restraint in the face of an incident of armed aggression is another – unless the police took the view that the Volunteers were entitled to defend their property in arms against unauthorised intrusion.

Shots were actually fired at the police at the Irish Volunteers’ rooms in Tullamore in March 1916, when police responded to a confrontation between the Volunteers and a hostile mob, during which the Volunteers had fired warning shots into the air. The police entered the rooms and attempted to search for arms, at which point revolvers were drawn and hurleys produced. One policeman suffered a near-fatal bullet wound to the chest, and three others were less seriously injured.¹¹⁰ Thirteen people were charged with attempted murder – but not under DORA.¹¹¹ They would eventually be tried by court-martial under DORA, but that was in May, after the Easter Rising has taken place.¹¹² At the time of the incident, the Volunteers’ headquarters issued a statement saying, ‘The Volunteers cannot submit to being disarmed either in numbers or in detail without surrendering and abandoning the position they have held at all times...The raiding for arms and attempted disarming of men, therefore, in the natural course of things, can only be met by resistance and bloodshed.’¹¹³ No action was taken as a result of that statement.

Commemoration and military displays

In June 1915 Dublin Corporation was forbidden by the CMA, General Friend, from erecting a plaque on Bachelors Walk to commemorate the people who died following the Howth gunrunning. The proposed inscription was not made public but, following notice of a question in the House by Laurence Ginnell, the wording was included in a

¹⁰⁹ Pim, *What It Feels Like*, pp. 8-9.

¹¹⁰ ‘Out of Hand: Rival Factions in Tullamore’, *Westmeath Express*, 25 March 1916.

¹¹¹ ‘Tullamore Prisoners in Court’, *Kerry Sentinel*, 29 March 1915.

¹¹² ‘On Trial: Tullamore Prisoners in Dublin’, *Westmeath Independent*, 27 May 1916.

¹¹³ ‘Irish Volunteers: Sinn Fein Statement’, *Cork Examiner*, 28 March 1916.

memorandum to the Chief Secretary's Office: 'On this spot three unarmed citizens of Dublin were shot dead, and many persons wounded, by the King's Own Scottish Borderers, on the 26th July, 1914.'¹¹⁴ Ginnell followed up a few days later by asking if they might now expect 1798 memorials around the country to be destroyed under the DORR. The answer originally suggested by Nathan – that it was thought 'unnecessary to issue any orders with respect to monuments regarded with affection and pride by many loyal persons in that part of the United Kingdom' – was later amended by him to say, 'monuments connected with sad events of long ago.'¹¹⁵ The earlier answer gives a useful indication of official thinking about commemoration: it was harmless in itself but any attempt to interfere with it might arouse the hostility of ordinary nationalists.

Such an attitude might explain the lack of response of the government on the death of Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa. Kathleen Clarke, in her memoirs, recalled how her husband Tom's response to John Devoy's query as to how to proceed was, 'Send his body home at once.'¹¹⁶ A funeral committee was set up, with Thomas MacDonagh – with the temporary title of Commandant-General – as chief marshal, James Connolly heading the Citizen Army contingent and Pádraig Ó Riain in charge of the Fianna.¹¹⁷ On petitioning MacDonagh, the National Volunteers were allowed to join the procession, 'with orders to coordinate their movements to those of the Irish Volunteers, and permit no sort of friction to spring up between them, whatever might happen.'¹¹⁸ The publicity sub-committee included Arthur Griffith, Éamonn Ceannt and Seán T. O'Kelly.¹¹⁹ In fact, according to a DMP report, the funeral was organised jointly by the Volunteers and the Wolfe Tone Memorial Association.¹²⁰ The Wolfe Tone Memorial Association was an IRB front organisation, of whom, as shown in the souvenir booklet, the president was Tom Clarke, and the vice president was Seán MacDermott, then in prison.¹²¹ Joseph Plunkett was on the Funeral and Cemetery Sub-committee, as well as being on the 'general staff' in

¹¹⁴ Headquarters, Irish Command to Chief Secretary, 20 July 1915, CSORP/1915/22254.

¹¹⁵ Nathan to Birrell, 28 July 1915, CSORP/1915/22235.

¹¹⁶ Kathleen Clarke, *Revolutionary Woman: Kathleen Clark 1878-1972, An Autobiography* (Dublin, 1991), p. 56.

¹¹⁷ Murphy, 'Censorship and Propaganda', p. 157.

¹¹⁸ Maurice Moore, 'The O'Donovan Rossa Funeral', *Irish Press*, 22 February 1938.

¹¹⁹ Murphy, 'Censorship and Propaganda', p. 156-7.

¹²⁰ Chief Secretary's Office, Crime Branch: Dublin Metropolitan Police (DMP) Movement of Extremists, 31 July 1915.

¹²¹ *Diarmuid Ó Donnabháin Rosa, 1831-1915: Souvenir of Public Funeral to Glasnevin Cemetery* (Dublin, 1915), p. 24.

charge of the procession, with the rank of Commandant. Patrick Pearse was on the Funeral and Obsequies Sub-committee, and gave the funeral oration.¹²²

In the days and weeks before the funeral, some of the provincial papers made reference to an event that Alvin Jackson has called ‘a formidable display of Fenian organizational skill’: the funeral of Terence Bellew MacManus.¹²³ A piece that appeared in a number of papers said that ‘The funeral of a ’67 man occurring at a time such as this, must inevitably remind us of the circumstances attending the funeral of T.B. MacManus in 1861. This was the first occasion on which the Fenians gave any indication of their strength’; the *Cork County Eagle* (in a reprint of a 1904 article) recalled that ‘It was not until the occasion of the MacManus funeral, in 1861, that the full force of Fenianism presented itself’; and an article by ‘Benmore’, also published in a number of papers, told how the funeral ‘stirred the manhood of Ireland to do battle for those principles to which so many had contributed so much blood and treasure’.¹²⁴ In the case of O’Donovan Rossa’s funeral, however, the authorities showed no signs of alarm. The DMP faithfully reported the arrival by excursion trains of ‘a large number of Provincial suspects’, including Tom Kenny of Craughwell, Patrick Hughes of Dundalk, Terence MacSwiney of Cork and Austin Stack of Tralee, while the RIC in Belfast reported that ‘all the local suspects of IRB, Sinn Fein etc.’ travelled to Dublin for the funeral, but otherwise, the event appears to have been seen as nothing more than a tribute to an old man ‘regarded with affection and pride’ by Irish nationalists.¹²⁵ Virtually identical reports of the funeral appeared in the *Irish Times* and the *Irish Volunteer*, presumably provided by the publicity subcommittee.¹²⁶ Viewed in this context, the famous line from Pearse’s oration, ‘the fools, the fools, the fools, they have left us our Fenian dead’, may be seen as something more than mere hyperbole.¹²⁷ Forgetting the lesson of the McManus funeral, the authorities were content to allow this massive propaganda exercise to proceed unmolested.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Alvin Jackson, *Ireland 1798-1998: War, Peace and Beyond*, 2nd edition (Chichester, 2010), p. 95.

¹²⁴ ‘Funeral of O’Donovan Rossa’, *Nenagh News*, *The Liberator*, *The Kerryman*, 17 July 1915; ‘Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa’, *Cork County Eagle*, 10 July 1915; ‘Benmore’, ‘Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa’, *Strabane Chronicle*, *Donegal News*, 17 July 1915, *Ulster Herald*, 24 July 1915.

¹²⁵ Chief Secretary’s Office, Crime Branch: Dublin Metropolitan Police (DMP) Movement of Extremists, 3 August 1915, NAI, CSO/JD/2/51; Reports: Police Reports: Inspector General’s And County Inspectors’ Monthly Confidential Reports, 1 August 1915, NAUK, CO 904/97.

¹²⁶ ‘O’Donovan Rossa’s Funeral’, *Irish Times*, 2 August 1915, *Irish Volunteer*, 7 August 1915.

¹²⁷ Murphy, ‘Censorship and Propaganda’, p. 157.

The report of the Commission on the Rebellion purported to show that there was ample evidence of the military build-up of the Volunteers between 1913 and April 1916, with the inevitable conclusion that the failure of the civil and military authorities in Ireland to take appropriate action was the cause of the rebellion. But that was only in retrospect. From the point of view of those authorities during those three years preceding the Rising, isolated reports of arming, drilling and the issuing of militant statements were not sufficient reason to expect that an insurrection of any significant magnitude would take place in the near future. The most recent insurrection had been fifty years earlier. Then, the Fenians had numbered in the tens of thousands, and had been well-armed. More importantly, the level of intelligence was such that the authorities knew what people would be doing before they knew themselves. The superintendent of G Division of the DMP was able to report in December 1866 that a rising would take place in Dublin in the new year.¹²⁸ The general plan was known by 21 February 1867, and the detailed plan, including place, date and hour, was obtained from a number of different sources by 27 February, six days before the rising took place.¹²⁹

The situation in 1916 was very different. In terms of men and arms, an impression can be gained from the Volunteer military displays that took place on St. Patrick's Day 1916. In Dublin, a review was held in College Green and Dame Street which was inspected by Eoin MacNeill, causing those streets to be closed off and leading to serious traffic congestion. The reaction to it was one of annoyance rather than apprehension. The *Irish Times*, which might have been expected to be more alarmist than the nationalist papers, reported:

The principal interest in the "review" was the appearance and bearing of the men from a military standpoint. It was evident that the participators were exceedingly anxious to be regarded as soldiers...Actually, only about 1,600 took part. Many of the demonstrators were middle-aged men, and others were boys in their teens. About two-thirds of the men were armed, though the weapons were a very miscellaneous collection indeed.¹³⁰

Outside Dublin, about 4,500 Irish Volunteers took part in parades around the country. About two in five of them were armed. In his report on the parades, the Inspector-General

¹²⁸ Leon Ó Broin, *Fenian Fever: An Anglo-American Dilemma* (London, 1971), p. 96.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 140, 143.

¹³⁰ 'Sinn Fein Review in Dublin', *Irish Times*, 18 March 1916.

of the RIC said, ‘There can be no doubt that the Irish Volunteer leaders are a pack of rebels who would proclaim their independence in the event of any favourable opportunity, but with their present resources and without substantial reinforcements it is difficult to imagine that they will make even a brief stand against a small body of troops.’¹³¹

In terms of intelligence, the amount of concrete information reaching Dublin Castle specifically concerning a rising was negligible. The most explicit detail obtained from an informer came in March 1916 from a member of the Volunteers, code-named ‘Chalk’, who told police that ‘the young men of the Irish Volunteers are very anxious to start “business” at once’, but that ‘the heads of the Irish Volunteers are against a “rising” at present, and MacDonagh (one of the principal Officers) said it would be sheer madness to attempt such a thing...’. Another informer, code-name ‘Granite’, interviewed in the immediate aftermath of the Tullamore incident, said that ‘there is at present no fear of any rising by the Volunteers. Standing alone they are not prepared for any prolonged encounter with the forces of the Crown, and the majority of them are practically untrained.’¹³²

Information of a rather more explicit sort was received on 17 April, when General Friend gave Sir Matthew Nathan a letter sent to him by the General Officer Commanding, Queenstown, stating that a shipment of arms and ammunition was expected on the south-east coast during the week, and a rising had been fixed for that Saturday, 22 April. Though the information was said to have come from an ‘absolutely reliable source’, the source was not named – it had come from communications between the German Embassy in the US and Berlin that had been intercepted and deciphered in Room 40 of the Admiralty, who wished to keep their operation a secret – and Nathan and Sir Neville Chamberlain, Inspector General of the RIC, were ‘doubtful whether there was any foundation for the rumour’.¹³³ Friend himself, in a letter to his successor General Maxwell explaining his absence in London when the Rising began, said that the information, which had reached him on 16 April, ‘was conveyed in a private note and was

¹³¹ *Royal Commission on the Rebellion in Ireland. Report of commission* [Cd. 8279], p. 10.

¹³² Nationalist Organisations: Sinn Fein Movement: 3. Meetings and other activities, 1916-1917, NAUK, CO 904/23, pp. 48, 56.

¹³³ Leon Ó Broin, *Dublin Castle and the 1916 Rising* (London, 1970), pp. 79, 137-8.

stated to be a rumour, and was not stated to be from the Admiral of that station.’¹³⁴ Consequently, the authorities in Dublin had no expectation of Volunteer military action until the *Aud* was intercepted and Roger Casement was arrested on Good Friday, 21 April. This was not due to any falling off of the intelligence capability of the police or the Crime Branch, but rather to the absolute secrecy that the planners of the Rising observed.

Why political activity?

The use of DORA in the suppression of the papers, and the expulsion and imprisonment of Volunteers, was not, therefore, intended to counter a perceived military or revolutionary threat, but rather a response to *political* activity – specifically, to anti-recruiting activity. Organised opposition to enlistment in the British army had been a key part of advanced nationalist political activity since the Boer War at the end of the nineteenth century. One of the objects of the Irish Transvaal Committee, founded in 1899 by Maud Gonne and Arthur Griffith, was ‘to organise meetings all over the country against recruiting’; Gonne worked with James Connolly, Alice Milligan and Anna Johnston in putting up anti-enlistment posters.¹³⁵ Police reports said that both the Irish Republican Brotherhood and the Ancient Order of Hibernians were involved in the distribution of leaflets.¹³⁶ Griffith’s newspaper, the *United Irishman*, was to the fore in opposing recruitment, and in April 1900 published Gonne’s article ‘The Famine Queen’, in which she said, ‘Queen, return to your land; you will find no more Irishmen to wear the red shame of your livery.’¹³⁷ Anti-enlistment activity was a central theme at the first annual convention of Griffith’s National Council in 1905, while Bulmer Hobson’s Dungannon Clubs, also started in 1905, distributed anti-enlistment literature throughout Ireland, including a leaflet written by Hobson, Alice Stopford Green and Roger Casement.¹³⁸ Through 1905 and 1906 anti-enlistment activity was carried on by Cumann na nGaedheal, the Gaelic League and the Gaelic Athletic Association, as well as the Young Ireland Society and the Irish National Foresters.¹³⁹ Sinn Féin, formed by the amalgamation of Cumann na nGaedheal, the Dungannon Clubs and the National Council,

¹³⁴ Lovick Friend to General Sir John Maxwell, 30 April 1916, *Secret communications between General Maxwell, Major General Friend, the War Office and General Headquarters, Home Forces*, UCD Digital Library, https://doi.org/10.7925/drs1.ucdlib_54008.

¹³⁵ Terence Denman, ‘The Red Livery of Shame’: The Campaign against Army Recruitment in Ireland, 1899-1914, *Irish Historical Studies* xxix:114 (Nov. 1994), p. 212.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 213.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 217-8.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 220-1.

included in its 1908 constitution the ‘withdrawal of all voluntary support to the British armed forces’.¹⁴⁰ Boys joining the Fianna, formed in 1909, had to promise never to join the British Army.¹⁴¹ As late as 1913, one of the principal items for discussion at Sinn Féin executive meetings was prevention of enlistment.¹⁴²

The Irish Volunteers were, in other words, doing the political work carried on by advanced nationalist organisations since the end of the previous century. The question is: why? If their aim was purely to protect the rights of the Irish people, and if they were, as claimed, a non-party organisation, one would not have expected to find them carrying on the anti-recruiting work of Sinn Féin. Splitting with the National Volunteers on the issue of support for the war effort did not logically entail frustrating enlistment into the British Army. On the face of it, whether their aim was to effect self-government at the war’s end or to mount a rebellion during it, the best way to do so was to keep their heads below the parapet, and to continue to arm and train, while allowing the war to look out for itself. Why, then, did they devote so much time to political activity – especially when that political activity led to the arrest or deportation of so many senior officers, when they would have remained more or less unmolested if they had confined themselves to military activity?

The answer lies in the organisational structure of the Volunteers after the 1914 convention. A headquarters staff was appointed in early December 1914, consisting of:

Chief of Staff:	Eoin MacNeill
Director of Organisation:	P.H. Pearse
Director of Military Operations:	Joseph Plunkett
Director of Training:	Thomas MacDonagh
Director of Arms:	The O’Rahilly
Quartermaster General:	Bulmer Hobson ¹⁴³

In September, Pearse, Plunkett and MacDonagh had been among those who had met the labour leaders James Connolly and William O’Brien in the Gaelic League offices in

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 225.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 225-6.

¹⁴² Michael Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 31-2.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 211-12.

Dublin, and agreed to stage a rising before the war's end.¹⁴⁴ While they made up exactly half of the headquarters staff, they controlled the critical areas of organisation, training and military operations. In other words, they had more or less complete control of the day-to-day activities of the Volunteers. They were thus able, not only to prepare the Volunteers for the anticipated fight against the British, but also to use them as a propaganda tool. This was further facilitated by the addition to the headquarters staff of Éamonn Ceannt as Director of Communication in 1915.¹⁴⁵ Ceannt had also been present at the September meeting. Opposition to recruiting, as well as being something desirable in itself, and something that resonated with ordinary people, had the additional advantage of being a stick with which to beat the Parliamentary Party. Sir Matthew Nathan informed Augustine Birrell in November 1915 that the Party was no longer in control of the country, that the extremists were gaining ground, and that they were using the threat of conscription to win support.¹⁴⁶ To make matters worse for the Party, it found itself obliged to protest against the arrest, imprisonment and deportation of Volunteers for what were in effect political offences.¹⁴⁷ The net effect was to both feed upon and contribute to the feeling of 'them and us'. This, together with an increasing number of military displays, would have the effect of creating, if not an expectation of armed conflict, at least an environment in which it was imaginable.

At the time of the split, 150-170,000 men went with the National Volunteers, and 10-12,000 with the Irish Volunteers. Thereafter, membership of the National Volunteers declined and membership of the Irish Volunteers increased. This was already well under way by May 1915, and 'City Man', a writer for the *Cork County Eagle* whose sympathies did not lie with the Irish Volunteers, was in no doubt why. Reporting the expulsion of J.L. Fawsitt from Cork, he declared that 'the penalising of Mr. Fawsitt for these sillinesses has the contrary effect to that intended', and that,

having gone to the trouble to find out the effect such is having on the members of the Sheares Street [Irish Volunteers] Hall, I can say that the effect has been to increase the membership and to make the prominent members more active. As one of them said to the writer: The more we get the "Legion of Honour" from Mr. Birrell the more

¹⁴⁴ William O'Brien, Introduction to Desmond Ryan (ed.), *Labour and Easter Week: A Selection from the Writings of James Connolly* (Dublin, 1949), p. 3.

¹⁴⁵ Martin, *The Irish Volunteers*, p. 212.

¹⁴⁶ Leon Ó Broin, *Dublin Castle and the 1916 Rising* (London, 1966), p. 54.

¹⁴⁷ Evidence of Ivon Price, *The Royal Commission on the Rebellion in Ireland. Minutes of evidence and appendix of documents* [Cd. 8311], p. 57.

assured we are of our cause being just. Weeks ago I protested against the silly plan of placing detectives nightly outside the Sheares Street Hall...The result has been as I thought. The Volunteers are still in Sheares Street and seemingly more numerous than ever while the others [the National Volunteers] have ceased even to advertise in the "Echo".¹⁴⁸

The temporary loss to the Irish Volunteers of having men expelled or imprisoned was offset by an increase in membership; not only that, but the resolve of those who were already members was hardened, and an obvious enemy was identified. They were being conditioned to rise in arms when the time came.

¹⁴⁸ 'City Man', 'A Notice to Quit', *Cork County Eagle*, 29 May 1915.

7. The Revival of Sinn Féin 1916-17

A not untypical view of the revival of Sinn Féin was given by Joseph Lee in 1990:

[Following the Rising] the home rule press and the British succeeded in investing Griffith's moribund Sinn Féin with a degree of authority it had never managed to achieve on its own, by the simple device of branding all rebels Sinn Féiners. Little wonder that those more immediately involved resented Griffith's elevation to unprecedented prominence.¹

He goes on to describe the political progress within advanced nationalism following Count Plunkett's victory in the Roscommon by-election as a power struggle between Plunkett, Éamon de Valera, and Arthur Griffith, and concludes that

De Valera's spectacular victory as a Sinn Féin candidate in the Clare by-election in July 1917 enabled him to repulse the challenge for the leadership not only of Plunkett, but also of Griffith himself, firmly relegated to the vice-presidency of his own party.

He concludes that 'The rejuvenated Sinn Féin was more akin to a popular front resistance movement than to a parliamentary party.'²

This chapter will critically examine the period between the Rising and the Sinn Féin Ard Fheis of 1917 and ask how many, if any, of the above assumptions are true. It will first test the assumption that the identification of the Rising with Sinn Féin was merely a result of ill-informed commentators, asking to what degree the Irish Volunteers were already identified with Sinn Féin following the split of September 1914. It will look at the importance of Plunkett, asking whether his 'leadership' was more apparent than real, and whether there was in fact any possibility of him ever controlling the movement. It will look at the relationship of de Valera with Sinn Féin from Easter 1917, when he was still a prisoner in Lewes, to his election as president in October of that year. Finally, it will ask whether Griffith was indeed 'firmly relegated', or whether he willingly handed over the *presidency* of the party, while keeping both his role in the leadership and the policy he enunciated in 1905 intact.

¹ Joseph Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985: Politics and Society* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 38.

² *Ibid.*

The ‘Sinn Féin’ Volunteers

Laurence Ginnell said in the House of Commons, during the debate on the Rising in April 1916, that ‘the Sinn Fein body was and remains an economic and non-military body. The name was adopted and applied solely for the purpose of opprobrium, solely for a purpose corresponding to that which impels the people and the Press of this country to call the Germans Huns.’³ Opprobrium there certainly was; John Dillon, in his speech shortly before, which castigated the government for its response to the Rising, had said that the ‘Sinn Feiners’ were ‘our bitterest enemies. They have held us up to public odium as traitors to our country because we have supported you at this moment and stood by you in this great War.’⁴ However, by 1924 P.S. O’Hegarty had cast this ‘term of opprobrium’ in a rather different light: he said that in the early 1910s Sinn Féin

seemed to have become so harmless that when the orators and the Press of the Irish Party wanted to discredit the Irish Volunteers in 1914, they called them the *Sinn Féin* Volunteers. And now, with a similar motive, they called the insurrection the *Sinn Féin* Insurrection.⁵

Thus, a term of opprobrium became a term of ridicule, and one that in fact makes very little sense. If orators and publishers wanted to denote harmlessness, they might have used any number of derisive labels, but it would only have bewildered listeners or readers to see the Volunteers linked to a political organisation with which they supposedly had no connection. But whatever about contemporary readers, the idea found favour with historians: R.M. Fox wrote in 1938 that ‘by fastening the name Sinn Féin on the rebels, the supporters of the IPP intended to hold them up to contempt as ineffectual and insignificant.’⁶

An online search of the Irish Newspaper Archive for the period between 25 September 1914 (the date of the Volunteers split) and 23 April 1916 (the day before the Easter Rising) produces 77 results for the phrase ‘Sinn Fein Volunteers’. Of these, thirteen are from the *Freeman’s Journal* (organ of the Parliamentary Party), six from the *Irish Independent* (independent), eleven from the *Cork Examiner* (national-liberal), nine from

³ *Hansard 5 (Commons)*, 83, col. 966, 11 May 1916.

⁴ *Ibid.*, col. 951.

⁵ P.S. O’Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Féin* (Dublin, 1924), p. 7.

⁶ R.M. Fox, *Green Banners: The Story of the Irish Struggle* (London, 1938), p. 66.

the *Limerick Leader* (nationalist), four from the *Southern Star* (nationalist), two from the *Connacht Tribune* (nationalist), nine from the *Connaught Telegraph* (national), ten from the *Cork County Eagle* of Skibbereen (independent), eight from the *Kerryman* (printed *Sinn Féin* notes), two from the *Ulster Herald* (nationalist, printed *Sinn Féin* notes), one from the *Derry People and Donegal News* (nationalist, printed *Sinn Féin* notes), one from the *Nenagh Guardian* (independent, printed *Sinn Féin* notes) and one from the *Kildare Observer* (unionist).⁷ This is a wide spread of newspapers and by no means confined to ‘the Press of the Irish Party’. If the search is restricted to the first year after the Volunteers split, however, an even more interesting pattern emerges. The phrase appears 35 times, almost half of the total, but only four times in the *Freeman’s Journal*, three times in the *Cork Examiner*, and not at all in the *Irish Independent*, as against seven times in the *Connaught Telegraph* and the *Cork County Eagle*, and six in the *Limerick Leader*. Allowing for the dangers of false negatives in an online search, it still appears as though the phrase was more prominent in the local press than in the larger papers, and that was by no means confined to supporters of the Irish Party.

Certainly, there was a certain amount of ‘opprobrium’ shown in the press, especially in the two or three months following the split. The *Connaught Telegraph* reported J.D. Nugent, of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, as saying in Dublin Corporation that German gold was being paid to certain people to ‘embarrass’ Redmond and the Irish Party and hinder recruiting, and remarking that it was ‘heartening to find that they are not making converts, and that the country as a whole is behind the policy put forward by Mr Redmond and that the Sinn Fein Volunteers are a negligible quantity.’⁸ The following week it reported that ‘the Sinn Fein Volunteers have been snuffed out [in Castlebar]: this ugly excrescence on Ireland’s National Volunteer army has been pruned off and cast away to rot and disappear.’⁹ The *Connacht Tribune* reported a speech by William O’Malley MP in Durham, where he said that ‘Not only are these men constituting themselves the allies of Germany, but they are the allies of the Carsonites.’ While the Carsonites wanted to fight home rule by going to the front and thus demonstrating their loyalty to the Empire, ‘the policy of the Sinn Fein Volunteers is to stay at home,

⁷ Irish Newspaper Archive (<http://archive.irishnewsarchive.com/Olive/APA/INA/Default.aspx>); descriptions are from Virginia Glandon, *Arthur Griffith and the Advanced-Nationalist Press, Ireland, 1900-1922* (New York, 1985), pp. 252-304.

⁸ *Connaught Telegraph*, 7 November 1914.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 14 November 1914.

denounce recruiting, and in that way strengthen the hands of Carson in killing Home Rule. Can you imagine a more diabolic policy?’¹⁰ This ‘opprobrium’ had turned into a less hysterical kind of opposition within a few months. For instance, in August 1915 the *Southern Star* complained of the Sinn Féin Volunteers being allowed to organise a shooting competition in Dunmanway where, it said, they did not have a company,¹¹ and in September the *Cork County Eagle* complained that the playing of a band at a recent meeting of the Sinn Féin Volunteers, also in Dunmanway, had served only to upset ‘local influential and popular citizens’ who were in mourning for a young relative who had died tragically, without gaining any recruits.¹²

On the other hand, a number of papers said the criticism of the ‘Sinn Fein Volunteers’ was unfair. The *Limerick Leader* reported in December 1914, ‘malicious spirits have been busy for some days back circulating the baseless and ludicrous rumour that the Sinn Fein Volunteers intend creating a disturbance of the forthcoming [National Volunteers] review. In justice to the Sinn Fein Volunteers as a body we think the majority of them would be altogether opposed to such blackguard proceedings.’¹³ A letter to the *Kerryman* in May 1915 criticised the editor of the *Kerry Press*. ‘He speaks of what he calls “the Sinn Fein Volunteers” “marching en masse with the band at their head,” “and they were sporting an Irish flag.” Fancy! A body of Irish Nationalists carrying their own National flag!’¹⁴ Similarly, a letter to the *Cork Examiner* criticised the *Cork Constitution* for a ‘most malicious article’ stating that the Sinn Féin Volunteers were to be suppressed at the instance of the National Volunteers in advance of the St Patrick’s Day parade, saying there was no bad blood between the two organisations.¹⁵

Only one newspaper spoke of ‘Sinn Fein Volunteers’ as a term of abuse: the *Ulster Herald* reported that at a board meeting,

an application was made by the Irish Volunteers for the use of the town hall for a lecture, and a member who advocated the adjournment of the question said that these were the “Sinn Fein Volunteers” (knowing that the expression “Sinn Fein” stinks in

¹⁰ *Connacht Tribune*, 21 November 1914.

¹¹ *Southern Star*, 14 August 1915.

¹² *Cork County Eagle*, 2 September 1915.

¹³ *Limerick Leader*, 11 December 1914.

¹⁴ *Kerryman*, 22 May 1915.

¹⁵ ‘The “Cork Constitution” and the Volunteers’, *Cork Examiner*, 16 March 1916.

the nostrils of Nationalists) and that there would probably be trouble which would cause serious injury to the municipal property.¹⁶

It is important to understand that the word ‘Nationalists’ here referred to home rulers; the expression did not ‘stink in the nostrils’ of advanced nationalists. The *Donegal News*, at about the same time, said that ‘a policy of uncompromising hostility towards Professor MacNeill’s Volunteers’ only had the effect of driving people into the ranks of the Sinn Féiners. It went on, ‘Instead of manufacturing Sinn Feiners by constantly referring to MacNeill’s following as “the Sinn Fein Volunteers” – an organisation which has no existence, so far as I know – would it not be better to endeavour to show these people the error of their ways and behave towards them in [a charitable manner].’¹⁷ Objection to the term from within the organisation came, not from separatists, but from those who considered themselves Redmondites. Mr D. O’Neill wrote to the *Limerick Leader* saying that ‘like myself, the majority of my comrades are supporters of the Irish Parliamentary Party, and we resent our being called Sinn Feiners. Not that I personally have any objection to the words... Though I differ from the policy of that movement still that does not prevent me from respecting and admiring its members’. The *Leader* retorted that O’Neill ‘appears to forget that the party to which he has attached himself [the Irish Volunteers], and which he is backing up with all his energy, is engaged in trying to “dish” Mr Redmond and the cause for which he stands.’¹⁸ Again, in June 1915, the *Limerick Leader* commented: ‘The most amusing, but at the same time significant, fact in connection with the Sinn Fein Volunteers is that a large number of them protest that they are not against but in favour of Mr Redmond! Of all the comical pretences we have ever heard of that certainly takes an easy lead in absurdity.’¹⁹

But in fact, by far most of the reports using the term ‘Sinn Fein Volunteers’ were neutral in tone. A report on the Manchester Martyrs demonstration simply said that the Sinn Féin Volunteers were among those taking part,²⁰ a report on the suppression of advanced nationalist papers stated that ‘the “Irish Volunteer”...is now under the editorship of Mr John McNeill, head of the Sinn Fein Volunteers’,²¹ a report of the sinking of the SS

¹⁶ *Ulster Herald*, 15 April 1916.

¹⁷ *Donegal News*, 8 April 1916.

¹⁸ *Limerick Leader*, 2 November 1914.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 4 June 1915.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 30 November 1914.

²¹ *Kerryman*, 12 December 1914.

Arabic mentions in one of those lost was a member of the Sinn Féin Volunteers,²² a report states that ‘Castlebar Sinn Fein Volunteers and the Choral Society had an outing in Achill,’²³ a report of the protest meeting organised by the Gaelic League in support of Claude Chavasse, who had been arrested for refusing to speak English, says that the Sinn Féin Volunteers were represented, and the report of a court case against a man for driving a cab without a licence mentions that one of his passengers was ‘Mr Pearse, organiser, Sinn Fein Volunteers’.²⁴ Numerous cases of Volunteers being charged under the Defence of the Realm Act are reported in a strictly neutral tone, and in one criminal case involving a man charged with assault it is – again neutrally – reported that the defence alleged bias against the defendant because of his membership of the Sinn Féin Volunteers.²⁵ In May 1915, the *Freeman* reported that ‘a party of Sinn Fein Volunteers’ arriving in Limerick from Dublin and Cork were attacked by a crowd of women and young people who threw stones and bottles, and the attack was renewed when they were leaving from Limerick station. It reported, without comment, that ‘the Sinn Fein party fired a number of shots in their alarm from the pressure of the crowd’, and that no arrests were made.²⁶ The mayor of Limerick subsequently praised the local clergy and the police for helping prevent a serious riot, and said that ‘the conduct of the women in the old town was to be deplored...while the visitors showed very great restraint in not retaliating under the provocation they received.’²⁷ Another attack by locals, at the ‘Sinn Fein room’ in Tullamore in March 1916, was followed by a police raid, during which members of the Volunteers fired shots, seriously injuring an RIC sergeant. The Athlone-based *Westmeath Independent* reported extensively on the incident, but said that ‘outside the injury to the police sergeant, and the few minutes excitement in the club-room, the whole occurrence was not of much moment, but is deeply regretted by the entire body of townspeople.’²⁸ The reporting of the cases of actual violence involving the ‘Sinn Féin Volunteers’ show a lack of any antagonism in the press, and in some cases actual sympathy.

²² *Freeman's Journal*, 21 August 1915.

²³ *Connaught Telegraph*, 11 September 1915.

²⁴ *Irish Independent*, 15 March 1916.

²⁵ *Cork Examiner*, 28 August 1915.

²⁶ ‘Sinn Fein Volunteers: Hostile Reception in Limerick’, *Freeman's Journal*, 25 May 1915.

²⁷ ‘Limerick Disturbances: References by the Mayor’, *Cork Examiner*, 28 May 1915.

²⁸ ‘Out of Hand: Rival Factions in Tullamore: Sinn Feiners Fare Badly’, *Westmeath Independent*, 25 March 1916.

Even the previous year, when the Volunteers had first been set up, the organisation had been linked with Sinn Féin. M.J. Judge, a member of the AOH and a founding member of the Volunteers, wrote in 1916 that his first involvement was when a friend had invited him to a meeting in Wynn's Hotel to arrange its formation. "I believe," he added, "it is really a Sinn Fein move." "It doesn't matter a hang," said I. "All that counts is that it be made a success. I shall attend the meeting with pleasure."²⁹ A letter to the *Cork Examiner* in December 1914 noted with some distaste that of the four people calling a meeting for the formation of the Volunteers in Cork, 'three profess the "extreme" or Sinn Fein brand.' The three were J.J Walsh, Liam de Róiste and Jeremiah Fawsitt.³⁰ A follow-up letter said that 'The "Sinn Fein" Society in conjunction with the "Freedom Club" – both nonentities, and the Hibernians, Irish American Alliance, deadly enemies of the "Ard Righ" Mr. John Redmond, are the life and soul of the so-called Irish Volunteer movement.'³¹ J.J. Turley of Monaghan, speaking at the opening of an AOH (Board of Erin) hall in March 1914, said that 'he had no hesitation in saying that the Volunteers were being formed by the Healyite Party, by the Sinn Féin Party.'³² In June, a letter to the *Irish Independent* protesting against the proposed takeover of the Volunteers by the party, and urging that they 'remain non-sectarian and non-party', was followed by an editor's note saying that the writer was 'a well-known worker in Gaelic League and Sinn Fein circles.'³³

From the foregoing, it is clear that the Irish Volunteers were indeed known as the 'Sinn Féin Volunteers', but not for any reason of 'opprobrium' or 'ridicule'. The true reason for the alias was given by Seán Ó Lúing in a 1957 newspaper article:

The original founders of the Volunteer force had carefully tried to exclude any outward appearance in Sinn Féin influence, and with that view had deliberately not invited Griffith to membership of the committee. Yet the ideas of Sinn Féin had made such an impression that the name was inevitably used to describe the advanced national groups who were the most aggressive opponents of British occupation.

He goes on to quote the Royal Commission on the Rebellion as saying that 'the two expressions [Irish Volunteers and Sinn Féin Volunteers] from the end of 1914 are

²⁹ M.J. Judge, 'The Inner History of the Volunteers', *Irish Nation*, 29 July 1916.

³⁰ 'Common Sense', 'The Irish Volunteers', *Cork Examiner*, 15 December 1913.

³¹ D. Buckley, letter to *Cork Examiner*, 17 December 1913.

³² 'New AOH Hall', *Anglo-Celt*, 21 March 1914.

³³ 'Banba', 'Volunteers and Imperialism', *Irish Independent*, 4 June 1914.

synonymous.³⁴ It follows that the Rising was not ‘erroneously’ described as the ‘Sinn Féin Rebellion’. The people who joined Sinn Féin in such great numbers in the eighteen months after the Rising did so for a variety of reasons. In many cases it was because they had come around to the Sinn Féin point of view, but it was not because they were somehow misled into thinking that the Sinn Féin organisation itself was the organiser of the Rising.

Political organisation in 1916

The surge in support for advanced nationalism among ordinary Irish people that followed the Rising, together with the fact that nearly all of the political and military leaders had been imprisoned, created a situation in which organisation had to be on an *ad hoc* basis. Hayden Talbot reported Michael Collins as saying in 1922, after the Dáil had approved the Treaty,

The result at home was that – although not only did the British have in custody the men who had actually taken part in the Rising, but also the political activists from nearly every part of the country – nevertheless, the national spirit reawakened with marvellous promptitude. Popular feeling went entirely in favour of the insurgents, and thus it was possible for reorganisation to begin at an early date. Large and ever-increasing numbers gave their adherence to the cause that was espoused in Easter week and more and more Irish eyes turned to the futility of representation in the British Parliament at Westminster, and of agitation there, to the utility of organisation at home and reliance on their own effort at home.³⁵

Thus the various attempts at organisation centred on both support of the Rising and the political policy of self-reliance. A number of groups sprang up, all with the same broad principles, but differing in details of policy, and each headed by people who believed themselves to be the natural leaders of the movement.

Michael J. Judge, the Hibernian and founding member of the Irish Volunteers, started the newspaper, *The Irish Nation*, in June 1916, and soon afterwards founded the Repeal League.³⁶ The aims of the League were as stated in the title:

³⁴ Seán Ó Lúing, ‘Sinn Féin and the Volunteers’, *Irish Press*, 25 April 1957.

³⁵ Hayden Talbot, *Michael Collins’ Own Story* (London, 1923), p. 53.

³⁶ *Irish Nation*, 15 July 1916.

We would have Repeal of the Union and the restoration of our status as a free and independent Monarchy united to England by the common bond of one Sovereign the first and main plank in such a national combination.³⁷

It soon became clear that Judge believed these to be the aims of Sinn Féin as well, and he was both surprised and hurt when he was first attacked by Herbert Moore Pim in the *Irishman* and then ignored by Griffith.³⁸ The League stood a candidate, Jasper Tully, in the North Roscommon by-election of February 1917, but otherwise made very little impression on Irish politics. Nonetheless, the paper is of interest as an indicator of certain attitudes that were current on the fringes of advanced nationalism in 1917. Judge criticised Griffith and other Sinn Féin leaders for assuming the leadership of advanced nationalism, when they had not fought in the Rising, causing one reader to write: 'You ask where were A. Griffith, etc., at that fatal time. Well, I have heard the same question asked about yourself, and I am sure they could give as good reasons as you for their absence.'³⁹

The Irish Nation League came into existence in Derry on 8 August 1917. It was formed initially to oppose partition and to advocate Colonial Home Rule.⁴⁰ Judge's *Irish Nation* was not well disposed towards the Irish Nation League, which it referred to as the 'League of Seven Attorneys' – this was because several of its founders, men such as F.J. O'Connor, James Murnaghan, George Murnaghan and Kevin O'Shiel were solicitors or barristers from County Tyrone.⁴¹ Pim, in the *Irishman*, was also critical, describing it as a parliamentary organisation that had been founded 'by the Ultra-Redmondite Bishop of Derry' and claiming that its most prominent members were also members of the United Irish League.⁴² Pim took pleasure in reporting the disturbances that occurred at a meeting of the Irish Nation League in Dublin in October 1916.⁴³ Following the collapse of the Redmond-Carson talks, as the danger of partition appeared to be receding, it was decided to broaden both the membership and the aims of the organisation, and well-known figures such as J.J. O'Kelly ('Sceilg') and P.J. Little, editor of *New Ireland*, were co-opted.⁴⁴ In

³⁷ Ibid., 8 July, 1 July 1916.

³⁸ "'Sinn Fein" and Ourselves', *Irish Nation*, 7 April 1917.

³⁹ 'Our Criticisms of Sinn Feiners', *ibid.*

⁴⁰ BMH, WS 1769 (Patrick J. Little), p. 16.

⁴¹ 'North Roscommon', *Irish Nation*, 3 February 1917.

⁴² 'The Truth about the Irish Nation League', *Irishman*, 7 October 1916.

⁴³ 'The Expiring Nation League', *ibid.*, 21 October 1916.

⁴⁴ BMH, WS 427 (J.J. O'Kelly), p. 2.

January 1917 its Supreme Council, which now included MP and former Irish Party member Laurence Ginnell, passed two resolutions: that the League would cooperate with 'real Nationalists or national organisations' to state Ireland's case and seek representation in any post-war peace conference, and a demand for the release of Eoin MacNeill and other 'prisoners of war.'⁴⁵ In an appeal for funds by the treasurers, Stephen O'Mara and George Murnaghan, in *New Ireland* the following month, the League declared that partition 'was killed'. Its objects at that point were the right of Ireland to recognition as a sovereign state, representation at the peace conference and resistance to any attempt to introduce conscription. It called on the people of Ireland 'to rely on themselves alone'.⁴⁶

Herbert Moore Pim was a prisoner in Reading Jail with Arthur Griffith after the Rising, but was released in August 1916. Prior to his release, it was agreed that he should convert the *Irishman*, which until then had been a monthly non-political newspaper, into a weekly Sinn Féin newspaper, to fill the gap left by the closure of the existing advanced nationalist papers consequent to the Rising.⁴⁷ Pim was an odd choice. He was from a Unionist background, and had joined the Volunteers without passing through any of the other advanced groups – Sinn Féin, the IRB or the Gaelic League. Nonetheless, he had become an officer, and was considered important enough to merit a deportation order, and a prison term when he failed to obey it. As 'A. Newman', he had edited the *Tracts for the Times* series of pamphlets, which, as he remarked, received a very special mention before the Rebellion Commission.⁴⁸ The first edition of the new format of the *Irishman* appeared in September 1916. In it, like both Judge and Little, Pim stressed the need for national unity and the formulation of a national programme.⁴⁹ As a Sinn Féin journalist and organiser, however, he was something of a liability. He continued to attack members of the Nation League after it became clear that they were natural allies of Sinn Féin, writing in November that 'as there are good and true and consistent men associated with the Nation League, Sinn Féin is wide and liberal enough to absorb the Nation League.'⁵⁰ He referred to the Sinn Féin organisation by odd and confusing titles, such as 'Constitutional Sinn Féin' and 'the Sinn Féin League'. He repeated the assertion of Sinn

⁴⁵ 'The Irish Nation League Means Business', *New Ireland*, 13 January 1917.

⁴⁶ 'Irish Nation League: Appeal', *New Ireland*, 3 February 1917.

⁴⁷ 'Notes', *Irishman*, 16 September 1916.

⁴⁸ 'Tracts for the Times', *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ 'Notes', *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ 'The Irish Nation League and A. Newman', supplement to the *Irishman*, 18 November 1916.

Féin's opponents that the name 'Sinn Féin' had been given to the Irish Volunteers by the Redmondites 'in the hope that the name, which was the title of a league over which Redmond's policy had triumphed for a time, might injure the Volunteers.'⁵¹ Worst of all, he wrote a letter to Frank Healy, who had been in Richmond prison with him and who was a candidate for the West Cork by-election, in which he implied that he was in correspondence with the British government, which he said was 'absolutely agreeable, nay, rather anxious, that Sinn Fein should spread, because they know it will give the people so much work that they will not attempt invincible methods.' Healy released the correspondence to the press after the election on 15 November, and Judge gleefully published it, under the headline 'Is It Treachery?'⁵² Griffith, in Reading Gaol, commented that 'My well-meaning but feather headed friend Herbert Pim seems to be muddling up Sinn Féin a bit. However we must trust in God to take him in hand and show him how to unmuddle it.'⁵³ Griffith was released from prison in December 1916 and re-launched *Nationality* in February 1917. By that time, the re-organisation of Sinn Féin had been begun by a group that included Pádraig Ó Caoimh, Seán Milroy, Seán Fitzgibbon, Seán Campbell and Dan McCarthy.⁵⁴

This, then, was the situation when Count Plunkett, on 17 March 1917, called his conference of nationalists to be held in the Mansion House on 19 April. By now, the *Irishman* was referring to Plunkett as 'the new leader of the Irish Race', and under the banner headline (above the newspaper title) of 'A National Conference Called!' said that 'by this Conference, Ireland closes the miserable chapter of abject Parliamentarianism, and begins a new era whose end is the status of a sovereign nation.'⁵⁵ P.J. Little's *New Ireland* – the 'unofficial voice' of the Irish Nation League – said that 'the great opportunity has arisen for the "uncorrupted intellect" of Ireland to express itself through the conference called together by Count Plunkett.' It commented that although the majority of public bodies in Ireland were still dominated by home rulers, a number of them were sending delegates to the conference, and a number of members of the bodies were attending as individuals, and it devoted four pages to a list of delegates to the

⁵¹ 'The Rising through Scottish Eyes', *Irish Nation*, 14 October 1916.

⁵² 'Sinn Fein and the Government: Is It Treachery?', *Irish Nation*, 25 November 1916.

⁵³ Griffith to Lily Williams, 29 November 1916, NLI, Lily Williams Papers, Ms 5943.

⁵⁴ Ann Matthews, *Renegades: Irish Republican Women 1900-1922* (Cork, 2010), p. 178.

⁵⁵ 'A National Conference Called!', *Irishman*, 31 March 1917.

conference.⁵⁶ *Nationality* noted that elections to local bodies had been due in 1917, but had been postponed, so that there had been no chance to elect people who represented the new spirit in Ireland, and urged voters to remember the names of those who voted against Plunkett's letter and vote against them when the war was over. It also printed the full text of the letter, in which Plunkett said 'The duty has been cast upon me of inaugurating a policy for Ireland...I have therefore decided to convene an assembly of the representatives of the Administrative bodies and National Organisations, and other public men of Ireland.'⁵⁷ Since his election for North Roscommon Plunkett had begun to be viewed as a major figure in the advanced nationalist movement. As Michael Laffan put it, 'to many outsiders he personified the Sinn Féin movement.'⁵⁸ The Mansion House convention was intended to be his coronation.

Plunkett, de Valera and Sinn Féin

While he held prestigious positions in the National Museum of Ireland and the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language, Plunkett had personal ambitions that went beyond that. He had contested the 1892 election in the mid-Tyrone constituency as a Parnellite candidate, and in Stephen's Green (Dublin) in 1905 as a UIL candidate. On neither occasion had he offered any more than the platitudes that were being offered by his nationalist opponents. At the time of the 1917 by-election it was rumoured that in the early 1900s he had applied for the position of Under-Secretary. As it transpired, he was the perfect candidate for the North Roscommon by-election, but it is very likely that Fr. O'Flanagan underestimated his ego.

Plunkett's son-in-law Tom Dillon remarked that it was as though Plunkett was not aware of the existence of Sinn Féin.⁵⁹ Of course, he had to have been aware of it. Without the help of Sinn Féin he would not have won in North Roscommon, and he had been in discussions with Griffith and other Sinn Féin members in the period since the election. It might, however, have suited him to *act* as though he was not aware of them. It would

⁵⁶ 'The Conventions Opportunity'; 'Delegates to the Mansion House Conference', *New Ireland*, 21 April 1917.

⁵⁷ *Nationality*, 31 March 1917.

⁵⁸ Michael Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 86.

⁵⁹ Thomas Dillon, 'Ireland 1865-1921', *University Review*, 3:8 (1966), p. 83.

have been consistent with a desire to bypass the existing organisations and become the sole leader of Irish nationalist opinion.

According to Dillon, Plunkett did not want an agenda for the Mansion House meeting (there would, indeed have been no need for an agenda if the only purpose of the meeting had been to proclaim Plunkett as national leader). He was persuaded to allow Dillon to draw up one, and Dillon and Rory O'Connor took it upon themselves to frame what they considered to be suitable resolutions.⁶⁰ The resolutions were to include a vote in honour of those who had died and those who were in prison following the Rising, a declaration of liberty, a statement of Ireland's claim to representation at the peace conference, a resolution dealing with taxation, resolutions on military conscription and the conscription of labour, and finally, 'Proposals by the Chairman for the National Organisation of Ireland, and Resolutions for immediate action in connection with same.'⁶¹

Dillon, writing about it fifty years later, recalled his shock when Griffith told him that he did not intend to go to the meeting, and that, when Dillon persuaded him to come, he sat at the back and had to be coaxed up onto the platform.⁶² However, it may very well be that Plunkett had deliberately tried to exclude Griffith from the platform, without even informing his son-in-law. Among the documents relating to the meeting in Count Plunkett's papers in the National Library is a note in Irish expressing dismay at Griffith's exclusion: 'Should Arthur G. not be invited to the platform? In the name of God don't let it be said there is a "split".'⁶³ Possibly with the intention of rubbing salt into the wound, Griffith was invited in his capacity as editor of *Nationality*.⁶⁴ Griffith was apparently content to remain in the background for what he assumed was going to be no more than a merging of nationalist organisations with Plunkett at the head. He could not have guessed what Plunkett actually had in mind.

It would appear that even those most involved with the organisation of the Mansion House meeting were not aware of what the Count was planning. The resolution for the

⁶⁰ Thomas Dillon, 'Arthur Griffith and the re-organization of Sinn Fein, 1917' (unpublished article, Sept. 1953), Trinity College, Dublin, Thomas Dillon Papers, Ms 3738, p. 1.

⁶¹ Agenda, Irish Assembly, Mansion House, 19 April 1917, Count Plunkett papers, NLI, Ms 11,383/3 (2).

⁶² Dillon, 'Arthur Griffith and the re-organization of Sinn Fein', p. 2.

⁶³ 'C. Mac G' to Michael O'Mullane, 19 April 1917, Count Plunkett Papers, NLI, Ms 11,383/3 (28).

Translation from Laffan, *Resurrection of Ireland*, p. 91.

⁶⁴ List of newspaper editors invited to meeting, Count Plunkett Papers, NLI, Ms 11,383/1 (12).

creation of a national organisation was, as has been seen, intended to be the last motion of the day. However, on a motion by Seán Milroy, seconded by Michael Collins, it was brought forward from item 11 to item 6. Griffith had been persuaded to propose the resolution on representation at the peace conference, which was item 5, and was taken immediately before lunch.⁶⁵ The expectation was that the afternoon session would begin with the formal amalgamation of all the organisations present at the meeting. What happened instead was that Plunkett announced the formation of a new national political organisation, the Liberty League, of which he expected there would be ‘1000 Parish Organisations’ controlled by a central executive. What happened next is best summed up by the report of the proceedings in the *Irish Independent*:

The meeting...was marked by great order, though at one period, as a result, apparently, of a misunderstanding between Count Plunkett and Mr Griffith, there was some little excitement, but the storm subsided on suggestion by Fr. Ferris, C.C., to refer the matter at issue to Father O’Flanagan and Mr Griffith.

Griffith was quoted as saying, ‘that Sinn Fein would not give up its policy nor its constitution, but would work with every section in Ireland that sought to destroy corruption.’⁶⁶

O’Flanagan was a long-standing member of the Sinn Féin executive. Although Brian P. Murphy depicts O’Flanagan and Plunkett as working closely together in early 1917 to neutralise the influence of Griffith, it is clear that at this moment, when Plunkett had taken the convention by surprise, it was O’Flanagan and Griffith that worked together to minimise the impact of Plunkett’s announcement.⁶⁷ Their joint document, which was put to the convention and adopted, read,

That it is the opinion of this Convention that there is urgent need and ample scope for united action between such bodies as Sinn Fein, the Nation League, the Irish American Alliance, Irish Volunteers and Irish Labour Party: that in order to render such united action possible, and so give effect to the decisions of this Convention, and secure control of the public institutions and elective bodies in Ireland for the well-being of the Irish Nation, a Council to be called the Executive Council of the Irish National Alliance be created. This Council shall consist of five members elected

⁶⁵ Minutes of Mansion House meeting, 19 April 1917, Count Plunkett Papers, NLI, Ms 11,383/3 (17).

⁶⁶ ‘Count Plunkett’s Policy’, *Irish Independent*, 20 April 1917.

⁶⁷ Murphy, *Patrick Pearse*, pp. 79-84.

by this Convention and three members appointed from each National Organisation which enters the Irish National Alliance.⁶⁸

The resolution made no mention of any organisation to be named the Liberty League, nor did the newspaper reports. Since Plunkett (and his wife) were named to the new Executive Council, it must have seemed to all present, and to all who read of the proceedings, that the idea of a brand-new organisation had been shelved.

What Plunkett apparently did at this point was to address a circular letter to people around the country, asking them what the situation was in their area from an advanced nationalist point of view and inviting them to start a Liberty Club. There is no evidence that he informed anybody else of his intention to do so. On the other hand, there is evidence that the effect of the letter was to spread further confusion in an already confused national situation. The reply of a correspondent from Corofin, County Clare, is fairly typical of the response to the circular:

In reply to circular letter of May 3rd, I beg to reply that except a company of Irish Volunteers there is no advanced nationalist organisation in this district...Rev. Fr. Smith CC and Rev. Fr. Hennan CC both of Corofin are wholeheartedly in favour of your policy and have authorised me to say so. Mr P. Sullivan also an influential local merchant is of the same opinion. The Chairman Corofin DC and seven or eight members I can speak for are prepared to join a Sinn Fein organisation...altogether things are rather promising and I shall take steps to form a Liberty Club or Sinn Fein club when I hear further from you.⁶⁹

A number of facts emerge from this letter. Plunkett's approach was in the form of a circular letter – the letter was apparently unsigned.⁷⁰ It tended to be sent to areas where there was no advanced nationalist political organisation in being. It tended to be pitched towards clergy and/or public representatives. And it did not make clear that Liberty Clubs were intended to be set up in opposition to, or at least in parallel with, Sinn Féin Clubs.

An analysis of the replies to this letter is shown in Table 1 below.

⁶⁸ Typed resolution, 19 April 1917, NLI, Count Plunkett papers, Ms 11,383/5 (1).

⁶⁹ H.J. Hunt to Count Plunkett, 13 May 1917, Count Plunkett papers, NLI, Ms 11,383/5.

⁷⁰ Louis Smyth to Count Plunkett, 28 May 1917, NLI, Ms 11,383/7 (7).

Table 1: Responses to Count Plunkett's Circular

Total number of respondents to circular:	93
Has set up a Liberty Club (or Circle):	21
Intends to set up a Liberty Club:	19
Has/will set up 'a club' or 'clubs':	9
Will not set up a Liberty Club, only a Sinn Féin Club:	11
Will not set up a Liberty Club – other reason:	7
Responding to circular – no other action taken:	26
Request to send more information:	23
Appears to think LC and Sinn Féin are the same thing:	21
Asks what is the difference between the two:	5
Suggests that the Mansion House Cttee merges the two:	3
Asks for an organiser or speaker:	5
Priests:	10
Local representatives:	10

Of 93 people who replied, 21 said that they had set up a Liberty Club (or Liberty Circle – there were to be separate clubs for men and women, the women's club being referred to as a Circle), 19 that they were intending to set up a Liberty Club in the near future, and nine that they had set up or would set up 'a club' or 'clubs', without specifying their title. 11 people said that they would set up a Sinn Féin Club, not a Liberty Club, seven that they would not set up a Liberty Club for some other reason, and 26 made no response except to show interest in the proposal, or simply to acknowledge the letter.

23 of the replies – a quarter of all the replies received – contained a request for more information, suggesting that the circular contained a minimum of detail about the proposed scheme. Often this took the form of a request to send a copy of the 'Constitution and rules', and it appears that in most cases this was sent, although one correspondent, who wrote no fewer than seven times, declared in his final letter that he was 'surprised that I have not got the literature that you sayed [*sic*] you would send on.'⁷¹ Five people

⁷¹ Patrick Murray to Count Plunkett, 9 June 1917, NLI, Ms 11,383/8 (11).

requested or suggested that an organiser or speaker be sent to the area. Perhaps the most pertinent query came in a letter from Letterkenny which said, ‘please let me know the address of headquarters, amount of affiliation fees etc. *at once*.’⁷² In fact, there is no reason to believe that the Liberty League ever had a headquarters: all correspondence was sent from and received at Plunkett’s private residence in Fitzwilliam Street, Dublin.

It would appear that the wording of the circular was so vague that many of the recipients were under the impression that the Liberty Clubs and Sinn Féin were the same thing. An example is the letter from Corofin quoted above: ‘seven or eight members I can speak for are prepared to join a Sinn Fein organisation...I shall take steps to form a Liberty Club or Sinn Fein club’. Others are:

- ‘Longford has turned the tide and we will all be Sinn Feiners soon.’⁷³
- ‘We have no Liberty Clubs here but we are all Sinn Feiners.’⁷⁴
- ‘Re Liberty Clubs, I would be only too happy to give all the assistance in my power...the great majority of the people here are Sinn Feiners.’⁷⁵
- ‘I hope the last of the place hunting partitioners will be placed in the hopper of the Sinn Fein mill, to be ground out of existence.’⁷⁶
- ‘Societies attached to the advanced movement are already in existence, members of which are very much in favour of the Sinn Fein policy, complete independence, abstention from Parliament etc. etc.’⁷⁷
- ‘It was decided unanimously to form Sinn Fein Clubs at the various districts...As the Sinn Fein and Liberty Clubs have but one object in view, we have as you see already conformed to your desire. It is splendid to see the unity that exists between all bodies of advanced nationalism in Ireland today.’⁷⁸

The Seán Mac Diarmada branch of Sinn Féin in Belfast wrote to Plunkett inviting him to address them. Plunkett’s response is not extant, but the secretary wrote again a few days later to say,

⁷² Patrick Carberry to Count Plunkett, 8 May 1917, NLI, Ms 11,383/7 (10).

⁷³ John Tuohy to Count Plunkett, 9 June 1917, NLI, Ms 11,383/5 (5).

⁷⁴ Timothy Flanagan to Count Plunkett, 26 May 1917, NLI, Ms 11,383/3 (15).

⁷⁵ John Linehan to Count Plunkett, 21 May 1917, NLI, Ms 11,383/6 (7).

⁷⁶ Felix Leonard to Count Plunkett, ? June 1917, NLI, Ms 11,383/7 (4).

⁷⁷ T. Hennessy to Count Plunkett, 21 May 1917, NLI, Ms 11,383/10 (3).

⁷⁸ Pierce McCan to Count Plunkett, 25 May 1917, NLI, Ms 11,383/12 (19).

I am sorry to learn that a misunderstanding has arisen regarding our invitation... We were under the impression that you were advocating the Sinn Féin policy. Regarding Liberty Clubs, you might kindly furnish us with a copy of Constitution etc.⁷⁹

Five respondents specifically asked Plunkett whether there was a difference between Sinn Féin and the Liberty League, or what the difference was. Several said that they had formed Sinn Féin clubs, under the impression that that was what they had been asked to do. Others said they would not form Liberty Clubs, because to do so might bring them into conflict with Sinn Féin. An old man from Kilnamona, County Clare, wrote,

If unless [*sic*] you wanted to get me killed by the young men of this County I could not attempt to establish a branch of any Club here except Sinn Féin. They are all anxious that you should be President but Sinn Féin must not die at any cost.⁸⁰

(David Fitzpatrick has noted that one Liberty Club and 68 Sinn Féin clubs were formed in County Clare in 1917.)⁸¹ Five of Plunkett's correspondents were of the view that the Mansion House Committee should take immediate steps to amalgamate the Liberty League and Sinn Féin.

From the responses, it would appear that in general the circular was sent to places where there had previously been little or no advanced nationalist political activity, although there might have been companies of Volunteers. Pierce McCan, Thomas Derrig and the Hales family of Ballindee are among the very few recognisable revolutionary names among the replies. On the other hand, ten replies were written by or on behalf of priests, and ten by or on behalf of local representatives, and other responses gave the names of priests or local councillors who could be of assistance in setting up the clubs. This inevitably gave an opportunity to former home rulers to gain entry into the new movement. The consequence of this can be seen in what happened in Cork city in June 1917, when Plunkett was invited to address a mass meeting there. A date of 10 June was agreed, but the arrangements were taken over by Jeremiah Lane, a town councillor. On 30 May he wrote to Plunkett that the Sinn Féin Club was 'altogether undeserving of...attention', adding,

If the policy of trying to conciliate this little uninfluential clique would hamper the movement of the Liberty League in Cork city and County, then William O'Brien's policy of Conference and Consent will not be wasted by me on them. They waited i.e.

⁷⁹ Domhnall T. Ó Muireadaigh to Count Plunkett, 14 May, 17 May 1917, NLI, Ms 11,383/5 (12-13).

⁸⁰ Owen Hegarty to Count Plunkett, 21 May 1917, NLI, Ms 11,383/5 (14).

⁸¹ Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p. 121.

the “Executive” on me this morning, and I told them I would be glad of their cooperation, but that as the word Sinn Fein is in disrepute with certain classes in Cork city, we must have Liberty Clubs established to rope in all sections.⁸²

This did not go down well with the ‘little uninfluential clique’, which included all the advanced men and women in Cork. William Shorten, an ‘old member of every advanced organisation in this county for many years’, wrote to ‘protest against outsiders, persons who have never been members of any advanced movement in Cork, being the medium by which you convene your meeting.’⁸³ Liam de Róiste, secretary of the Cork executive of Sinn Féin, protested that,

a small group of individuals in the city, who have never been identified with independence organisations...have taken advantage of the opportunity afforded by the supposed differences between the Liberty League and the Sinn Fein organisation to endeavour to split up those forces in Cork City and County. This executive was called into existence by the Volunteers in Cork and is representative of the young men and of the older men who have never given adherence to West Britonism.

Mary MacSwiney expressed herself ‘puzzled’ by the invitation to the meeting as it had ‘not emanated from the usual Volunteer sources, but from certain local politicians, who will only be prepared to act as politicians...’. She advised Plunkett only to trust members of the Volunteers and Cumann na mBan, but said she was ‘informed just now that the “O’Brienites were out to get hold of your meeting.” They are willing to work with the Volunteers but *they* are to be the controlling force.’⁸⁴ The upshot was that the meeting was called off.⁸⁵

In summary, the Liberty League was a poorly thought out and ill-organised institution from the outset. Indeed, as far as central direction is concerned, it seems to have been little more than a one-man operation. Tom Dillon remarked that

Griffith, or rather I should say the Sinn Fein council had an organisation on the road and, as the name of Sinn Fein had become attached to the Volunteers, he had no difficulty in founding more clubs. Money began to come in to the organisation and soon, I believe they had more than one organiser. There was no central organisation

⁸² Jeremiah Lane to Count Plunkett, 30 May 1917, NLI, Ms 11,333/6 (29).

⁸³ William Shorten to Count Plunkett, 31 May 1917, NLI, Ms 11,333/6 (30).

⁸⁴ Mary MacSwiney to Count Plunkett, 30 May 1917, NLI, 11,383/6 (32).

⁸⁵ ‘Count Plunkett Cancels Cork Meeting’, *Cork Examiner*, 5 June 1917.

for the Liberty Clubs and there was therefore no way of accumulating a central fund for the organisation...⁸⁶

It is almost as if he thought it was unsporting of Griffith to organise, or that he did it just to gain an unfair advantage over the Liberty League. In fact, the failure of Plunkett to organise meant that his clubs, once formed, had nothing to do, and neither contemporary newspapers nor later chroniclers report any political activity whatever.

One other remarkable fact emerges from an examination of these letters. The files in the National Library contain about 170 letters, and in all of those the word 'republican' occurs only once. This is in the letter from Corofin quoted earlier, and says, in relation to the election of Joe McGuinness, that 'the event was celebrated here by tar-barrels and the hoisting of Republican flags that still float.'⁸⁷ A rough draft of a Liberty Club membership card stated that its purpose was 'complete independence of Ireland' and 'denial of the right of England to legislate for Ireland.'⁸⁸ The various letters of response indicate that in addition to this, the League stood for abstention from Westminster and a statement of Ireland's rights to representation at the peace conference. A republic, 'The Republic' or republicanism was not adverted to at any time.

Meanwhile, Éamon Comerford of Kilkenny wrote to say that a conference was to be held in Kilkenny Town Hall on the same date, 10 June, 'of all Clubs, Leagues or individuals who are prepared to accept the Declaration of the National Association (Mansion House Meeting) as their basis of action.' Branches of the Liberty League were invited to send delegates.⁸⁹ This convention did take place, and was addressed by Arthur Griffith. It was reported in the *Anglo-Celt* under the headline, 'Mr. A. Griffith to Conduct the Movement.' A resolution was passed 'affirming the declarations made in the Dublin Mansion House on April 19th', and it was announced that a provisional executive of Sinn Féin had been formed 'to carry on the movement, under the presidency of Mr. A. Griffith, until the holding of a National Convention in October.'⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Dillon, 'Arthur Griffith', p. 3.

⁸⁷ H.J. Hunt to Count Plunkett, 13 May 1917, Count Plunkett papers, NLI, Ms 11,383/5 (1).

⁸⁸ Count Plunkett papers, NLI, Ms 11,383/3/5.

⁸⁹ Eamon Comerford to Count Plunkett, 1 June 1917, NLI, 11,383/10 (4).

⁹⁰ 'Sinn Fein Presidency: Mr. A. Griffith to Conduct the Movement', *Anglo-Celt*, 16 June 1917.

The formation of this ‘provisional executive’ was probably a direct result of the debacle in Cork. In his witness statement, William O’Brien (the labour leader) states that on 5 June he was visited by a delegation from the Cork Volunteers, who were dissatisfied with the situation that Plunkett had created. He subsequently learned ‘that an agreement had been reached whereby the Executive of Sinn Féin would be reconstructed.’⁹¹ This agreement followed a meeting at Cathal Brugha’s house in Rathmines, presumably between the 5th and the 9th, which was attended by Griffith, Plunkett, Dillon, Rory O’Connor and Michael Collins. It was put to Griffith ‘that he should hand over Sinn Fein to the Volunteers’; Dillon wrote later that

Griffith replied “Sinn Fein will not give up its name” and again “I was elected president by convention of Sinn Fein and I can only give over the presidency to someone elected by another convention”. Most of us, I think, agreed that these statements were not unreasonable.⁹²

An agreement was reached whereby half the members of the current Sinn Féin executive were asked to stand down and were replaced by representatives of the Nation League and the Liberty League. Dillon wrote in 1967 that what he and Brugha had done that evening was ‘to take over Sinn Fein on conditions with which Arthur Griffith would agree.’⁹³ Dillon’s retrospective view was very likely influenced by the way in which later commentators saw Griffith and his organisation. In fact, Griffith, along with the others, had brought together converts from home rule and hard-line republicans – of whom, necessarily, the former were more numerous, and included Plunkett, O’Connor and Dillon himself – on a policy of complete separation through abstention from Westminster.

During this period, the organisation of Sinn Féin changed as it began to adopt the familiar model established over the decades by the Irish Parliamentary Party.⁹⁴ Some such reorganisation would have been necessary in any case, as Sinn Féin hitherto had been no more than a small propaganda organisation, and needed to organise itself in a very short time into an effective political party. The model that proved so successful for the IPP since the 1880s was the obvious one to adopt. The amalgamation of the Nation League and the Liberty League would have contributed to the process: the ‘seven attorneys’ of the Nation League and the ‘representative men’ of the Liberty League would have been

⁹¹ BMH WS 1766 (William O’Brien), p. 129.

⁹² Thomas Dillon, ‘Birth of the new Sinn Fein and the Ard-Fheis 1917’, *Capuchin Annual*, 1967, p. 396.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

familiar with that form of organisation, and they would have drawn in people of like mind and experience. The new Sinn Féin Clubs, in places where there had not previously been a Sinn Féin presence, would also have been made up of home rule converts, including people with organisational experience.

Meanwhile, there remained over a hundred prisoners in English jails, including a group of prominent Volunteer leaders in Lewes prison, of whom Éamon de Valera was the leader. Sometime in April or May 1917, de Valera succeeded in smuggling out a number of dispatches, sewn into a scapular worn by a released prisoner, which he sent, though he was aware they were already out of date, because they ‘contain some points which may be of interest [so] I let them stand.’⁹⁵ Three of these were dated ‘Easter Sunday 1917’, ‘Easter Monday 1917’ and ‘Easter 1917, Sunday or Monday’. Easter Sunday fell on 8 April. John Phillips, MP for North Longford, had died on 2 April, but the question of Lewes prisoner Joe McGuinness contesting his seat is directly addressed in only one of the three, the one dated ‘Easter Sunday 1917’. In these dispatches, de Valera stresses two facts. The first is that the prisoners were unaware of what was going on politically or organisationally in Ireland. They knew of the main events, but as to what was happening on the ground, their information was ‘meagre and often most contradictory.’ Was Count Plunkett’s policy gaining general favour? Was the reorganisation of the Volunteers being undertaken? They had not ‘enough data here to enable us to rest any solid judgement on them.’ De Valera even invented a code to be used when sending him letters. ‘The tillage campaign is (or is not) a great success’ would mean ‘the Irish volunteers are (or are not) all banded together again throughout the country.’ ‘They have (or have not) taken to the motor plough’ would mean ‘they are (or are not) in favour of Count Plunkett’s tactics.’⁹⁶

The second fact was that the Lewes prisoners felt a special burden of responsibility on them:

We regard ourselves at present as, in a very special way, identified with the cause, the ideals and aspirations for which our common comrades died last Easter. We feel that any important action of ours will too have a reflexive fact on last Easter’s sacrifice.

To do anything which would be liable to be misinterpreted and misrepresented – to

⁹⁵ De Valera to Simon Donnelly, ‘Easter 1917, Sunday or Monday’. Éamon de Valera papers, UCD archives, P150/529.

⁹⁶ De Valera to Simon Donnelly, 23 April 1917, *Ibid.*

create a wrong impression as to the ideals, principles and opinions which prompted last Easter's action would it seems to us be a national calamity.⁹⁷

There is one thing that should be noted at this point. De Valera acknowledged in his dispatch that, although he used the plural, he was not writing at the direction of the other prisoners, but presumed that they were of one mind with him. It is not, therefore, possible to distinguish the collective thought of the prisoners from de Valera's own views, but it is probable that they did see themselves as the leaders of the surviving Volunteers, and that they had debated the general issues raised in the dispatches. De Valera emphasised that what was essential was to get the Volunteers back on a regular footing: 'The safest course for us and in the long run the wisest is to continue as soldiers. I hope that arming, organising and equipping is being gone ahead with in spite of all obstacles.'⁹⁸

De Valera was wary of all politics. In particular, he was sceptical about the tactic of opposing the Irish Party in parliamentary elections. This was not simply because of the danger of defeat – although he believed that defeat would be ruinous – but also because he saw the Party as a declining force, and feared that a series of electoral contests would enable it to regroup and recover its momentum.⁹⁹ When he wrote of 'irrelevant items from the old Sinn Fein political policy, which, whatever their intrinsic merits, tend to alienate a number of Irishmen, who would heartily support the Representation Principle *were it the sole issue*', he was not, as Michael Laffan has suggested, referring to the 'King, Lords and Commons of Ireland', but rather to the general policy of opposition to Redmondism, which certainly had had the effect of alienating ordinary nationalists (Laffan truncates the quote at 'alienate a number of Irishmen', which allows an interpretation that the longer quote, with its added emphasis, makes less likely).¹⁰⁰ The dispatches which de Valera sent to Simon Donnelly were 'originally intended for Charlie Murphy to whom (some time ago) I sent a former dispatch.' Charlie Murphy was one of de Valera's lieutenants at Boland's Mills in the Rising, but he was also treasurer of Sinn Féin and manager of Arthur Griffith's paper, *Nationality*. He was described by the *Irish Press* at the time of his death as 'a lifelong Republican and one of the earliest members of Sinn Féin.'¹⁰¹ It is scarcely believable that de Valera would consider imparting his views

⁹⁷ De Valera to Simon Donnelly, 'Easter 1917, Sunday or Monday', *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ The Earl of Longford & Thomas P. O'Neill, *Eamon de Valera* (Dublin, 1970), pp. 56-7.

¹⁰⁰ Laffan, *Resurrection of Ireland*, p. 96.

¹⁰¹ 'Charles Murphy', *Irish Press*, 29 April 1958.

to the representative of an organisation and a newspaper to which those views were opposed. The reason he sent the dispatch to Donnelly, rather than Murphy, was probably that he was anxious that none of what he said should appear in the press, lest it be used against any person or organisation. He wrote to Donnelly, 'Is Charlie manager of Nationality? As I know what your general views are likely to be I must absolutely depend *on your discretion* to forward any dispatches to him or not or forward such portions as you think fit.'¹⁰²

To de Valera, the main – perhaps the sole – attraction of Plunkett's tactics was the idea of the appeal to the peace conference. He wrote,

it seems to us that if his policy were limited to this one (and *new*) issue it would be endorsed by the majority of the Irish People. Even those who hope to get some adequate measure of Home Rule from the British Parliament in the near future could have no valid objection to it. It would be, for them, only an appeal to a higher and less prejudiced court. If England failed to settle the question as is most probable such an appeal must seem even to our National Imperialists (how many Irishmen are further than skin deep of this class I wonder) the only alternative.¹⁰³

In this he was showing just how far removed the prisoners were from the realities of Irish politics at that moment: the notion of appealing to the peace conference was opposed not only by 'national imperialists' and home rulers, but even by some of the advanced nationalists. Locked away in an English jail, however, de Valera could not see how it could fail as a policy, especially if, as expected, America joined the war:

It is a definite constructive scheme to take advantage of an occasion such as never before presented itself in Ireland's history. All that is necessary for its success it seems to us is careful handling – above all keeping it clear of apanages which would savour of old political parties and party divisions.¹⁰⁴

If Plunkett went down the road of party politics, it would

render precarious what with moderate generalship should be an unqualified victory when the circumstances are taken into account: – the principal so reasonable that all parties could agree to it, the time so opportune.¹⁰⁵

There was one thing, however, that de Valera stressed with regard to the peace conference: nothing less should be demanded or accepted than absolute independence, no

¹⁰² De Valera to Simon Donnelly, 'Easter 1917, Sunday or Monday'.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ De Valera to Simon Donnelly, 'Easter Sunday 1917'. Éamon de Valera papers, UCD archives, P150/529.

compromise should be allowed. This was, to say the least, a somewhat unrealistic expectation: at the peace conference, it would be the major powers, not the supplicant nations, who would make the decisions. But de Valera was emphatic on this point: 'If delegates are sent & admitted they should be given no powers of agreeing to anything less.'¹⁰⁶

The focus on the peace conference, to the exclusion of everything else, was the reason that old-style politics were not to be indulged in. At the least, the Volunteers as a body should not be formally identified with any political scheme. This was the rationale for opposing the candidature of Joe McGuinness in the North Longford by-election. The dispatch dated 'Easter Sunday 1917' contains three separate drafts of a letter of refusal to be written by McGuinness. The draft written by Diarmuid Lynch simply states that he (McGuinness) is convinced he is more useful to the cause as a prisoner than as a candidate. That written by Thomas Ashe is slightly longer. It contends that it was the Rising that staked Ireland's claim to representation at the peace conference, and that it would be unwise 'to have the matter submitted for the verdict of constituencies.' Still, it says that if the question of representation at the peace conference was in jeopardy, and the election of McGuinness might save it, 'I place my nomination unreservedly in your hands.'¹⁰⁷ De Valera's draft is by far the most lengthy, running to some eight pages, with a list of twenty-two names who have 'subscribed' to the letter of refusal, and followed by nine detailed 'reasons' for the refusal. The nine 'reasons' contain a great deal of repetition, and essentially only reiterate what de Valera had said in his other dispatches: that the prisoners lacked sufficient information, that to contest elections was bad tactics and defeat might mean disaster, and that the Lewes prisoners had a special responsibility towards their dead comrades. In regard to the last point, there is a paragraph that might be seen as a precursor of de Valera's position on the peace negotiations of 1921:

By avoiding being formally identified with the Count's movement *we are still left as a reserve* which while it is intact gives hope that though he be defeated all is not lost. *Our* principles have not been defeated and we here are, in the eyes of those at home, more closely identified with our comrades who died than are our comrades even who are now free.

¹⁰⁶ De Valera to Simon Donnelly, 23 April 1917. Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ De Valera to Simon Donnelly, 'Easter Sunday 1917'. Éamon de Valera papers, UCD archives, P150/529.

As with the correspondence with Count Plunkett in regard to the Liberty Clubs, there is one feature of de Valera's dispatches – five in all, equivalent to about sixteen typescript pages – that is highly significant: the complete absence of any incidence of the word 'republic' or 'republican'. Although he refers time and again to 'the cause for which our comrades gave their lives at Easter', or some variation of that, the idea of a republic as opposed to any other form of Irish independence is not alluded to in any way. Whatever discussions or debates were going on among the prisoners in Lewes, the constitutional form of an independent Ireland apparently was not any part of them.

It is fair to say, as Brian P. Murphy says, that 'the release of the remaining prisoners from English gaols on 16 June 1917 added a new dimension to the nationalist cause and served as a major impetus to the nationalist campaign'; less obvious is Michael Laffan's contention that 'the Lewes prisoners were the natural leaders of the movement which had flourished as a result of the rebellion' – they were the natural *military* leaders, not necessarily the natural *political* leaders – but it would be a mistake to draw the obvious conclusion from Peter Hart's statement that 'a permanent IRB Supreme Council was re-established once the remaining Rising convicts were released in June 1917.'¹⁰⁸ The inference – that the prisoners represented the core of the IRB and were thus the custodians of Irish republicanism – would be difficult to justify; although Thomas Ashe, Harry Boland and Seán McGarry were among those released, de Valera had left the IRB, while other (future) senior IRB figures such as Michael Collins, Diarmuid O'Hegarty and Seán Ó Murthuile were already at home. Special though the prisoners may have been, they were no more purist than their comrades who were at liberty. Neither is there any sense in which the prisoners were the first shoots of 'anti-Treaty' republicanism. Of the twenty-two prisoners mentioned above who subscribed to Joe McGuinness's refusal to be nominated for the North Longford by-election, the vast majority were subsequently elected to the first and second Dálaí, but they were evenly split on the Treaty vote. They included de Valera, Austin Stack, Seán MacEntee, Robert Brennan and Seán Etchingham (voted against) and McGuinness, Pearse Béaslaí, Eamon Duggan, Seán McGarry and Richard Hayes (voted for).¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Murphy, *Patrick Pearse*, p. 88; Laffan, *Resurrection of Ireland*, p. 107; Peter Hart, *Mick: The Real Michael Collins* (London, 2005), p. 141.

¹⁰⁹ De Valera to Simon Donnelly, 'Easter Sunday 1917'.

A number of the released prisoners were co-opted onto the national council of Sinn Féin.¹¹⁰ They included de Valera, Constance Markievicz and William Cosgrave.¹¹¹ Thus, from June onwards, advanced nationalism was represented by one political organisation – Sinn Féin – and one military organisation – the Volunteers – with, as before, considerable overlap between the two. Sinn Féin went on to win by-elections in East Clare and Kilkenny, with the help of armed Volunteers. There is no evidence that in the period between June and October there was any clash within either organisation or between the two. There were, however, serious differences between Brugha and Griffith in the run-up to the Ard-Fheis, scheduled for 25 and 26 October.

Cathal Brugha was described by Geraldine Plunkett Dillon as ‘a small fair man, not clever but kind, hard-working, brave as a lion, stubborn [and] narrowminded’.¹¹² Robert Brennan remarked that Brugha and Griffith were very alike: ‘both unmistakably native Dubliners – a very distinctive type – both small men with extraordinary physical strength, both good and enthusiastic swimmers and both impossibly headstrong at times.’¹¹³ Even before the release of the prisoners in June, relations between the two had deteriorated to such an extent that Brugha ‘threatened that if Griffith stumped the country for Sinn Féin, he would get the Volunteers to stop him.’¹¹⁴ Matters came to a head at a meeting of the national council shortly before the Ard-Fheis. Brugha wanted to change the Sinn Féin constitution; Griffith wanted it left as it was. The Sinn Féin constitution of 1907 stated the object of the organisation as ‘the complete independence of Ireland’, but made reference to the Renunciation Act of 1783, by which the British Parliament recognised the Irish Constitution of 1782, which held that no body could make laws to bind the country ‘save that of the King, Lords, and Commons of Ireland.’ Griffith had written in 1904 that the legitimacy of Ireland’s claim to independence rested on the Constitution of 1782 and on the Renunciation Act, as Hungary’s claim to independence in the 1850s and 60s rested on the Hungarian constitution of 1848 and Austria’s recognition of it. This was a central theme of *The Resurrection of Hungary*, which was the basis of the Sinn Féin policy. Griffith had defended it against Bulmer Hobson ten years earlier and he continued to

¹¹⁰ Dillon, ‘Birth of the new Sinn Fein’, p. 396.

¹¹¹ Laffan, *Arthur Griffith*, p. 106.

¹¹² Geraldine Plunkett Dillon, *All in the Blood* (Dublin, 2006), p. 253.

¹¹³ Robert Brennan, *Allegiance* (Dublin, 1950), p. 215.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 152, quoted in Murphy, *Patrick Pearse*, p. 86.

defend it now. Brugha was having none of this. He had nearly died for a republic and he would accept nothing less than an outright declaration of a republic now.

Why did Griffith remain so obstinate? One possibility is that he simply was not going to be brow-beaten by Brugha. Another is that he would not allow Sinn Féin's constitution to be changed, at one person's bidding, in advance of a national convention. A third, which in retrospect is difficult to imagine, is that he still, in 1917, genuinely believed that the Irish people were not yet ready to accept a republic. Yet it must be borne in mind that in 1917 the people had not had an opportunity to express a preference for a republic. In four by-elections they had voted for people connected with the Rising, but of those, only de Valera in East Clare had explicitly spoken of a republic. Sinn Féin clubs grew massively during the year, but the new members were of necessity converts from home rule, who would always naturally have accepted the king.

Coming up to the October Ard Fheis of Sinn Féin, an 'acrimonious' exchange took place, 'with Arthur Griffith taking the lead on one side and Cathal Brugha on the other.'¹¹⁵ It is not recorded who else was involved on each side, though it may be assumed that Brugha was supported by Plunkett and his colleagues, Dillon and O'Connor, and Griffith by the 'old Sinn Féin' members of the council. Neither is there any indication whether the Nation Leaguers or the ex-prisoners got involved in the discussion, with the exception of de Valera, who acted as mediator. Dillon recalled that 'when people got up and walked out he [de Valera] brought them back again and remained until one or two in the morning.' Agreement was finally reached on the basis of de Valera's famous compromise: that the object of Sinn Féin was to secure international recognition of Ireland as an independent republic, and that when that aim had been achieved the Irish people could choose by referendum what form the government would take.¹¹⁶

De Valera put his formula to the public at an *aeridheacht* held by Sinn Féin in the grounds of St Enda's on 23 September. In his speech he said repeatedly that what the Irish people wanted was 'complete and absolute freedom.' It was necessary that the Irish people should elect men who stood unmistakably for the absolute and complete freedom of Ireland. However, it was also necessary 'to proclaim ourselves in some way that cannot

¹¹⁵ Dillon, 'Birth of the new Sinn Fein', p. 398.

¹¹⁶ Idem., 'Arthur Griffith', p. 4.

be misconstrued by the English Press agents abroad.’ The way to do that was to proclaim themselves ‘Irish Republicans’.

If we are to be consistent and want to make the case properly and unmistakably before the world it is necessary that we should proclaim ourselves Republicans, and that word is understood in France, Russia, and in America in a way that no other word will be understood. Whilst I say that previous to winning our freedom, the Irish people must of necessity range themselves under a Republican flag, but [*sic*] once freedom is won it will be a question which the Irish people will be at liberty themselves to settle what form of government they want...In the long run, the form of government is a mere matter of words. You can have the most autocratic government under a republic, and the most perfect democracy under a king.

This, then, was the republic that was put before the Ard-Fheis as the object of the organisation. It meant complete freedom. It meant separatism. It meant *Sinn Féin*. The four were synonymous. The word ‘republican’ was understood in this way by nearly everybody in Ireland and elsewhere. This is how H.J. Hunt, Count Plunkett’s correspondent from Corofin, could talk in the same letter of people joining ‘a Sinn Féin organisation’ and the ‘hoisting of Republican flags’. It is how the *Butte Independent* could report Plunkett’s Convention, under the headline ‘Convention in Dublin Demands Complete Independence for Ireland’, saying that ‘the tricolour of the Irish Republic was everywhere displayed, and a large number of the delegates waved small Republican flags.’¹¹⁷ Michael Judge’s *Irish Nation* said in a May editorial, ‘It is said the younger generation are practically all Sinn Feiners. Do they know what Sinn Féin means? It is said most of them are Republicans...Are their leaders Republicans?’¹¹⁸

‘Republic’ was merely the least used of the synonyms for independence. In this sense, de Valera was right when he said it was ‘a mere matter of words.’ The fight between Brugha and Griffith was about words, not about ideology. Brugha, having succeeded in having the word ‘republic’ inserted in the Sinn Féin constitution, gave an election address in Irish in County Waterford in 1918, a year after his stormy session with Griffith. In it he talked of the failure of parliamentarianism, and advocated the Sinn Féin policy of abstention and self-reliance. There was no reference to a republic (either *poblacht* or *saorstát*), only to freedom (*saoirse*).¹¹⁹ It was just at the time of the confrontation with Brugha that Griffith, who had always been admired and respected as the man who had given voice to separatist

¹¹⁷ ‘Convention in Dublin Demands Complete Independence for Ireland’, *Butte Independent*, 19 May 1917.

¹¹⁸ ‘Longford Election’, *Irish Nation*, 19 May 1917.

¹¹⁹ Colm Ó Lochlainn (ed.), ‘Sgéal Cathail Brugha’, *Irish Book Lover* XXIII:15 (1935), pp. 144-6.

thought, began to be accused of advocating ‘the King, Lords and Commons of Ireland.’ Robert Brennan says that Griffith ‘always hotly denied his final aim was the Constitution of 1782.’ He describes an occasion when Tom Hunter, Pierce McCan and Tom Dillon teased him about it.

A.G. turned on Pierce. “When did I say that?” He asked, and there was thunder in the air.

“Why, you’ve always said it,” said Pierce, “in every issue of *Sinn Fein* and *Nationality* and in *The Resurrection of Hungary*.”

Was refusing to negotiate until England had conformed to the Renunciation Act not the same thing?

“It’s nothing of the kind. When you say you refused to treat with England until they restore a certain kind of regime, it does not mean that that regime is your final aim.”¹²⁰

This did not stop Brennan from stating as fact that the aim of Sinn Féin was the restoration of the Constitution of 1782.¹²¹

Meanwhile, what of the IRB? It, too, was undergoing reorganisation and renewal during 1917. Key figures in this reorganisation were Michael Collins, Harry Boland, Diarmuid Lynch and Seán Ó Murthuile. Collins first came to prominence in the Frongoch internment camp in the latter half of 1916. Peter Hart, in *Mick: the Real Michael Collins*, says that ‘politics in Frongoch were an extension of the conflicts within separatism before the Rising: pro-rebellion vs. anti-rebellion; IRB men vs. those outside the Organisation; insiders vs. outsiders.’ The implication is that the former and the latter in each case was a single homogenous group, that is, that IRB men were pro-rebellion and insiders, and those outside the organisation were anti-rebellion and outsiders.¹²² Of course, nothing could be further from the truth. IRB men were divided before the Rising between pro-rebellion and anti-rebellion, just as non-IRB men were, and there is no evidence that there was friction in the prisons between those two parties, who were, in any case, virtually all retrospectively pro-Rising. Hart also describes friction *within* the IRB in Frongoch, when a group of the younger members, including but not led by Michael Collins, formed their own circle, ignoring all the rules of the organisation governing the establishment of circles. IRB leaders in the camp – including Eamon Dore, Eamon Price and Martin

¹²⁰ Brennan, *Allegiance*, p. 217.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

¹²² Hart, *Mick*, p. 101.

Murphy – criticised the move, and in turn more established members of the IRB were excluded from the new circle.¹²³ In Hart’s words, the group, who besides Collins included Richard Mulcahy, Gearóid O’Sullivan and Seán Ó Murthuile, ‘were only following the example set by their mentors Plunkett and MacDermott, who had manipulated or ignored the IRB Supreme Council and constitution in order to get their way.’¹²⁴ The resentment this caused was still apparent after their release when Collins and the others returned to the IRB. Collins ran for election as centre of the Fintan Lalor circle, but was defeated by Eamon Price, one of the officers who had reprimanded the maverick group in Frongoch.¹²⁵ Some time afterwards, at a meeting of the Dublin Centres Board, it was proposed that two new circles be admitted, made up of the members of the ‘Frongoch circle’. This was vehemently opposed by several speakers, but on a secret ballot was narrowly passed by nine votes to eight, theoretically giving Collins a majority on the Dublin Centres Board, but in effect leaving it hopelessly divided.¹²⁶ Collins and Seán Ó Murthuile subsequently joined the Supreme Council, as well as Diarmuid O’Hegarty, a friend of Collins’s from the Keating branch of the Gaelic League. Collins was secretary.¹²⁷ He was by no means universally popular within the IRB; he was accused of excessive drinking and misuse of the organisation’s funds by respected IRB men such as Barney Mellows, Leo Henderson and Eamon Martin.¹²⁸ To say, then, as Hart does, that ‘the rebels were manoeuvring to reconstitute both the Volunteers and the Brotherhood with their old structures intact, but with themselves in full control’, is to oversimplify.¹²⁹ It would be truer to say that some of the younger and more headstrong rebels were trying to gain control of the movement. Similarly, by saying that ‘one battle remained: the constitution and leadership of Sinn Féin’, Hart gives the impression of a monolithic IRB, already in control of the Volunteers, forcing a separatist constitution on a reluctant political movement, an impression that is at odds with the established facts.¹³⁰

Collins and Boland both having died in 1922, the most authoritative account of IRB involvement in Sinn Féin must be that of Diarmuid Lynch. The IRB, Lynch says, was

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

appalled to learn that Griffith was holding out for the ‘King, Lords and Commons’, but that problem was resolved by de Valera’s compromise. Nevertheless, the IRB was determined to ensure that the right people were elected to the executive, and was criticised by the Ard-Fheis for doing so. But when Griffith stood down in favour of de Valera as president, that question also became moot.¹³¹ If Lynch’s account is true in its essentials, it means that the IRB was taking its cue from Brugha and de Valera, two men who had left the organisation. At the Sinn Féin Ard-Fheis of October 1917 an attempt was made, principally by Michael Collins and Diarmuid Lynch, to have members of the IRB elected onto the Sinn Féin executive. The plan failed because the majority of the meeting protested after the conspiracy became known; Collins himself came joint last of the 24 members voted onto the executive.¹³²

The delegates who assembled at the Mansion House on 25 October 1917 included ‘old’ Sinn Féin members, IRB members, Volunteers, former UIL and AFIL members, Hibernians, and people who two years previously had belonged to no nationalist organisation. They were all fired with the new separatist spirit, and they all – or nearly all – went into the Ard-Fheis in a spirit of unity to adopt a constitution, elect a president and executive, and get on with the business of securing Irish independence. That the biggest news of the day was the issue of whether or not MacNeill ought to be censured for his actions in Holy Week illustrates how uncontroversial the constitution was seen to be. Even Tom Dillon admitted that, apart from the ‘Kings, Lords and Commons’ clause, there was nothing in the Sinn Féin constitution that his party could find fault with.¹³³ P.S. O’Hegarty wrote in 1919 that ‘The policy of Sinn Fein today is the old Sinn Fein policy...with two alterations. In the first place it is frankly based on separation, with no mention of the Constitution of 1782; and in the second place its immediate objective is the Peace Conference.’¹³⁴

Griffith, therefore, lost his battle with Brugha, and Sinn Féin became an overtly republican political party. Griffith also stepped down as president in favour of de Valera. He did not, however, lose his prestige in the process. He was elected Sinn Féin vice-president (at the expense of Plunkett); he was nominated as candidate in the East Cavan

¹³¹ BMH, WS 4 (Diarmuid Lynch), pp. 10-11.

¹³² David Fitzpatrick, *Harry Boland's Irish Revolution* (Cork, 2003), p. 103.

¹³³ Dillon, ‘Birth of the New Sinn Féin’, p. 397.

¹³⁴ P.S. O’Hegarty, *Sinn Fein: An Illumination* (Dublin, 1919), p. 53.

by-election in June 1918 – the first candidate apart from Plunkett who was not directly involved in the Rising – which he won; and in 1919-20, while de Valera was in the United States – he was acting president of the Dáil.

Election leaflets, 1917-18

Table 2 shows the occurrence of key words or phrases in election leaflets produced by Sinn Féin or individual candidates in the period February 1917 to December 1918. The 1917 leaflets cover the North Roscommon, South Longford, East Clare and Waterford City by-elections. The 1918 leaflets comprise the South Armagh, Tullamore and East Cavan by-elections, a numbered series of leaflets produced by the party during the general election campaign (shown in a separate column, but part of the total for 1918) and leaflets produced by individual candidates in the general election. The figures in the last column are the weighted average of the figures in the first two i.e. the percentage of the total number studied.

Table 2: Appearance of key words and phrases in all election literature

	1917	1918	Series	All
Number of pamphlets	58	177	102	235
Parliamentarianism/ Irish Party	34%	41%	47%	39%
Independence	7%	29%	27%	23%
Freedom	10%	20%	22%	18%
1916 Rising/leaders	29%	11%	11%	16%
Conscription	10%	15%	12%	14%
English Government/Army	14%	11%	12%	12%
Peace Conference / Council of Nations	21%	7%	3%	10%
Earlier fights	12%	8%	7%	9%
The Pope/bishops	9%	8%	6%	9%
Prisoners	19%	5%	2%	8%
Small Nations	0%	10%	10%	7%
Taxation	3%	8%	6%	7%
Partition	9%	7%	1%	7%
English Army/War/slaughter	10%	6%	5%	7%
Sinn Féin policy	2%	7%	8%	6%
Irish Republic	0%	7%	6%	5%
Absolute/complete independence/freedom	2%	6%	6%	5%
Abstention	3%	5%	5%	5%

It will be seen that in 1918, the two most common topics of the leaflets were the failure of parliamentarianism (or the shortcomings of the Party or of certain named Party leaders) and independence and/or freedom. The numbers for parliamentarianism and independence or freedom are roughly equal, as 'freedom' and 'independence' appeared on the same leaflet in eleven instances overall, five in the numbered series. What is most striking, however, is that the word 'republic' or the phrase 'Irish Republic' appeared in only 5% of all pamphlets (7% in 1918), below such issues as conscription, taxation, partition and recruitment. A second striking fact is that, in 1917, 'independence' and 'freedom' appeared in only 17% of leaflets (ten times in 58 leaflets) compared to 43% (76 times in 177 leaflets) in 1918, and that the more emotive 'freedom' was used more often in 1917, while the more cerebral 'independence' was used more often in 1918. The phrase 'Sinn Féin policy' *per se*, as opposed to elements of the Sinn Féin policy such as abstention, and the decrease in taxes and the growth of native industry that would follow the taking over of Irish affairs by the Irish people, appeared as often as 'Irish Republic'. This bears out the suggestion that 'freedom', 'independence', 'Irish Republic' and 'Sinn Féin' were, for most people, all synonyms, and that the frequency of their use was in proportion to their likely impact on the voters. In 1917, the cry of 'freedom' was more a shout of defiance than anything else; in 1918, following four by-election victories and a triumphal Ard-Fheis, and again after they had bounced back from three successive by-election defeats to win three successive by-elections, independence for Ireland had become a real possibility – for many Sinn Féiners a virtual certainty. A measure of their confidence is the fact that there was no obvious change in the wording or tone of the leaflets after the three losses, except perhaps for an increase in the use of 'independence'. A vote for Sinn Féin meant a vote for independence, for freedom.

The election manifesto had stated that Sinn Féin was giving Ireland the opportunity of 'pursuing...the path of national salvation by rallying to the flag of the Irish Republic. Sinn Fein aims at securing the establishment of that Republic.'¹³⁵ De Valera had said that the only means of achieving freedom was as a republic. It was not necessary to labour the point.

¹³⁵ Sinn Féin, 'General Election manifesto to the Irish People', NLI ephemera collection, EPH F202.

Of 235 leaflets studied, the words ‘Irish Republic’ appeared in eleven. Three of those were leaflets dealing with finance, and referred to an Irish Republic almost, as it were, in passing. ‘Can Ireland stand alone?’ was a comparison between Ireland and the small independent nations of Europe, ending with, ‘The hour for freedom and the Irish Republic has struck.’¹³⁶ ‘You are now paying £35,000,000’ compared taxes in wartime Ireland and neutral Switzerland, finishing, ‘For a little more than a fifth of what we pay every year to England we could have – as the Swiss have – an Independent Republic.’¹³⁷ And ‘Hard Facts’ also dealt with the rise in taxation, concluding, ‘An Irish Republic means less taxation and more money for Irish development.’¹³⁸ A further three leaflets were directed specifically at the Labour vote; they praised James Connolly and emphasised that he and Sinn Féin shared the aim of an Irish Republic. Thus, ‘The Workers and the Election’ said, ‘[Connolly] died fighting for an Irish Republic...’¹³⁹ ‘Labour and Irish Freedom exhorted the worker to ‘Vote for the man who bears the flag of the Republic’,¹⁴⁰ and ‘Staines’ Record and Nugent’s’, playing on Michael Staines’s involvement in the Rising and his rival’s virulent opposition to trade unionism, said, ‘Those who want an Irish Republic for which Connolly and Staines together fought, will subscribe.’¹⁴¹ Only one leaflet, ‘Do you want another war?’ – which blamed the war on the oppression of subject nations by empires and said that Russia, Germany and Austria were now republics that had freed their oppressed peoples – said explicitly, ‘Sinn Féin stands for an Independent Irish Republic.’¹⁴² One leaflet referenced an Irish Republic only by saying that the home rulers were not in favour of it. It showed a facsimile of a UIL membership card, with a picture of Wolfe Tone on it, and contrasted Tone’s expression of a desire ‘to break the connection with England’ with John Dillon saying he would like to see a national convention ‘to definitely forswear an Irish Republic.’¹⁴³ Another leaflet, ‘Do Not Be Misled by Words’ quoted Pope Benedict XV as welcoming the new Polish Republic and as saying that a people might ‘choose whatever form of government they please’, from which it concluded that ‘A Republic is as honourable a form of government as any other form. Ireland can be as Christian a country under an Irish president as she can be under an

¹³⁶ ‘Can Ireland Stand Alone?’, NLI, ILB 300 P 1 [item 1].

¹³⁷ ‘You Are Now Paying £35,000,000’, NLI, ILB 300 P 1 [item 46].

¹³⁸ ‘Hard Facts’, NLI, ILB 300 P 9 [item 37].

¹³⁹ ‘The Workers and the Election’, NLI, ILB 300 P 1 [item 95].

¹⁴⁰ ‘Labour and Irish Freedom’, NLI, ILB 300 P 1 [item 96].

¹⁴¹ ‘Staines’ Record and Nugent’s’, NLI, ILB 300 P 9 [item 104].

¹⁴² ‘Do You Want Another War?’, NLI, ILB 300 P 1 [item 61].

¹⁴³ ‘Do You Stand by Wolfe Tone?’, Frank Gallagher papers, NLI, Ms 18,388.

Irish king.’ It ended, ‘When you are told it is wrong to have an Irish Republic remember the Pope’s definite words.’¹⁴⁴ In 1907, as was seen in chapter 1, republicanism got a bad press in Ireland partly because of the conflict between the pope and the French Republic. This leaflet was intended to show that the current pope was favourable towards republics.

One unlikely champion of an Irish Republic was Robert Barton, a man who had worn a British Army uniform on the streets of Dublin in Easter Week, 1916.¹⁴⁵ Barton reproduced, in pamphlet form, a letter from Moya Llewellyn Davies, daughter of the Fenian James O’Connor, in which she said that her father ‘would welcome the rise of an Irish Republican party today.’¹⁴⁶ Another of his leaflets, ‘No Foreign Government’ contained well-known quotes from Charles Stewart Parnell, Thomas Davis, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, Theobald Wolfe Tone, James Fintan Lawler, and Robert Emmet, with the words ‘Long Live the Irish Republic’ at the bottom.¹⁴⁷ Of all the leaflets studied, this was the only one that showed an emotional attachment to ‘the Irish Republic’, as opposed to mere support for ‘an Irish Republic’.

While Plunkett in North Roscommon campaigned mostly on the fact that he was the father of Joseph Plunkett – largely accounting for the higher incidence of references to the Rising in 1917 than in 1918 – and McGuinness in South Longford largely on his status as a prisoner, de Valera’s campaign in East Clare in July, even though de Valera himself was a hero of the Rising, was mostly fought on a combination of traditional Sinn Féin policies – abstentionism and opposition to the Irish Party – and the policy of putting Ireland’s claim before the peace conference which would follow the war.¹⁴⁸ This was the first campaign attended by uniformed Volunteers, and de Valera, in his speeches, unashamedly used the word ‘Republic’, but, surprisingly, his leaflets did not. Like McGuinness, his literature emphasised his status as newly-released prisoner, or ‘felon of our land’, and like Plunkett, there were frequent references both to the Rising and to the peace conference, but five of 32 leaflets studied (16%) referred to, and four specifically dealt with taxation, compared to four that referred to prisoners, and three each referring to ‘independence’ or ‘freedom’.

¹⁴⁴ ‘Do Not Be Misled by Words’, NLI, ILB 300 P 1 [item 110].

¹⁴⁵ Burke Wilkinson, *The Zeal of the Convert*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1976), p. 150.

¹⁴⁶ Robert Barton election leaflet (letter from Moya Llewellyn Davies), author’s private collection.

¹⁴⁷ ‘No Foreign Government’, NLI, ILB 300 P 9 [item 2].

¹⁴⁸ Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p. 119.

'How the English Parliament Taxes Ireland', which said that taxes had risen from £1 8s 2d per head when the Parliamentary Party was formed in 1881 to £5 6s 1d per head in 1917, was re-issued a number of times in the following months, each time with the current tax rate revised upwards.¹⁴⁹ 'A Business Proposition' asked whether it made more sense to pay £35 million a year to be held captive or £10 million to be free; 'Peace and Prosperity or Red Ruin' dealt with one of Griffith's recurring themes, the Financial Relations Commission of the 1890s; and 'Farmers! Your Turn Now' told farmers that they were going to have a new tax imposed on them as soon as the war was over and sufficient men had been demobilised to collect it. The last was also re-issued in later by-elections, and in the general election campaign.¹⁵⁰ By contrast, two of the four leaflets that made reference to prisoners were songs or poems. 'The Lawyer and the Vote (Air: The Peeler and the Goat)' contained the lines 'The man whose spirit England failed / To break beyond the water O', but also with lines condemning the Irish Party as 'scheming place-men [who] build their nest / 'Mong carrion crows and ravens O', a common Sinn Féin theme since the early 1900s.¹⁵¹ Similarly, 'De Valera and East Clare' contained themes that included 'Put the felon in for Clare' and 'We're tired of jobbery and talk'.¹⁵² Of the other two, one, 'The Bishop of Limerick speaks', was a copy of one of McGuinness's leaflets, itself a copy of a letter by the bishop of Limerick, Edward O'Dwyer, to the papers condemning the treatment of the Lewes prisoners (and also criticising the policy of parliamentarianism), and the other, 'Sinn Fein Releases the Prisoners', said that it was 'the uncompromising attitude of Sinn Fein' and its appeal to the peace conference that compelled the government to release the prisoners. It went on to say that 'Sinn Fein never failed and never can fail'.¹⁵³

'Peace and Prosperity' was also one of the three leaflets using the word 'freedom'. The other two were cartoons. 'You'll Never Get It Across' showed a virile young man with 'Sinn Féin' on his jersey carrying a package labelled 'Ireland' across a river from the near shore, labelled 'Subserviency', to the far shore, labelled 'Freedom', by means of stepping-stones labelled 'Roscommon', 'South Longford' and 'East Clare', and other, as

¹⁴⁹ 'How the English Parliament Taxes Ireland', NLI, LO P 116 (47); ILB 300 P 9 (8, 38).

¹⁵⁰ NLI, LO P 116 (62-64); ILB 300 P 9 (34); ILB 300 P 1 (12).

¹⁵¹ NLI, LO P 116 (40).

¹⁵² NLI, LO P 116 (41).

¹⁵³ NLI, LO P 116 (67); Frank Martin Papers, Ms 32,695/1 (78); LO P 116 (69).

yet unlabelled stones. He answered the old men in suits and overcoats who told him, 'You'll never get it across', with 'Won't I?'¹⁵⁴ 'Ireland at the Cross-roads' showed two road-signs, one pointing to 'Lynch, the Convention, Humbug &', with a barrister's wig hanging from it, and the other to 'De Valera, the Peace Conference &', with 'Freedom' in a sunburst at the end of the road.¹⁵⁵ Of the three mentioning independence, one was a message from the Sinn Féin Clubs of Limerick City and County, and another simply proclaimed 'Ireland never has and never will surrender her claim for complete national independence'.¹⁵⁶ The third, 'A Little Bit of Dalcassian History', drew on the history of East Clare as the territory of Brian Boru by telling how Brian won the votes of the Dalcassians, 'won the fight on their own ground first, and the Independence and prosperity of Ireland afterwards.'¹⁵⁷ If these leaflets were low on republican rhetoric, 'Dalcassians! Do You Want a Hero to Represent You?' reflected the classic Sinn Féin view when it said, 'Mr. Lynch, being a lawyer, must know that England's laws, inasmuch as being founded on the illegal Act of Union, should not have legal or moral force in Ireland.'¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁴ NLI, LO P 116 (66).

¹⁵⁵ NLI, LO P 116 (71).

¹⁵⁶ NLI, LO P 116 (65, 55).

¹⁵⁷ NLI, LO P 116 (56).

¹⁵⁸ NLI, LO P 116 (57).

Table 3: Appearance of key words and phrases in Éamon de Valera's by-election literature, compared with all literature for 1917 and 1918.

	De Valera 1917	Total 1917	Total 1918
Number of pamphlets	32	58	177
Parliamentarianism/ Irish Party	25%	34%	41%
1916 Rising/leaders	25%	29%	11%
English Government/Army	22%	14%	11%
Peace Conference / Council of Nations	25%	21%	7%
Taxation	16%	3%	8%
Prisoners	13%	19%	5%
Independence	9%	7%	29%
Freedom	9%	10%	20%
Conscription	9%	10%	15%
Earlier fights	6%	12%	8%
The Pope/bishops	6%	9%	8%
Partition	6%	9%	7%
English Army/War/slaughter	6%	10%	6%
Sinn Féin policy	3%	2%	7%
Absolute/complete independence/freedom	3%	2%	6%
Small Nations	0%	0%	10%
Irish Republic	0%	0%	7%
Abstention	0%	3%	5%

It may be argued that de Valera was not in a position to control his own election literature, having been told of his candidature only on the day of his arrival in Dublin after his release, but the fact that some of his leaflets, such as those on taxation, were re-used in election campaigns the following year, after he was elected president of Sinn Féin, seems to show that he was content to accept what had been issued in his name. In other words, his assumption of the presidency did not result in any change of emphasis in Sinn Féin policy.

By-election literature typically addressed issues that were local or topical. In Patrick McCartan's South Armagh campaign, for instance, five of 27 leaflets (19%) dealt with partition, and six (22%) dealt with conscription. Conscription was topical because a unionist MP, Edward Archdale, had proposed an amendment to the Military Service Bill, that there should be no further demands on manpower in Britain until conscription was

imposed in Ireland. The amendment was defeated by 136 votes to 48, but a leaflet, 'Conscription', claimed that only seven of 68 IPP members voted against it.¹⁵⁹ Another claimed that members of the Irish Convention were travelling to London to discuss conscription, and quoted Michael Fogarty, bishop of Killaloe, as saying 'Ireland is menaced with conscription'.¹⁶⁰ When he stood for Tullamore two and a half months later, while the conscription crisis was at its height, two of eleven leaflets dealt with conscription.¹⁶¹ Arthur Griffith was arrested in May as part of the 'German plot' while he was contesting the by-election for East Cavan, and this is reflected in two leaflets, both of which linked Griffith's imprisonment with his role in the conscription campaign. One of them quoted Denis Hallinan, bishop of Limerick, as saying that 'Sinn Fein is evidently on the right road to freedom; hence the activities of the government', but also, on a darker note, quoted John Sweetman as saying that anyone who voted against Griffith was 'voting that he thinks England is right in locking him up in prison and perhaps in bringing him to the scaffold.'¹⁶² Surprisingly, although the 'German Plot' prisoners still had not been released by the end of the year, they were not a major topic of general election literature.

Prior to the general election in December 1918, Sinn Féin printed a series of over 100 different leaflets that were numbered with a letter and a number. The letter designated a particular topic, and there were between two and 33 leaflets for each letter. 35 of the leaflets concerned the Irish Party, but were of two kinds. The eighteen leaflets numbered A1 to A17 (there were two leaflets numbered A8) dealt with the futility of the parliamentary policy, with headings such as 'You Have Been Represented at Westminster for 118 years', 'What Other People Think of Westminster' (containing quotes from Gladstone, Parnell, Herbert Samuel, Dillon, Devlin and others on the impossibility of achieving anything in parliament), and 'The Powerless Party'.¹⁶³ The traditional Sinn Féin message was carried by a leaflet which quoted press reports headed 'Poland Is Now Sinn Fein', which told how Austrian Polish delegates had withdrawn permanently from the Austrian parliament and called a constituent assembly in Warsaw.¹⁶⁴ T1 to T14 and U1 to U3, on the other hand, attacked the Irish Party members.

¹⁵⁹ 'Irish Conscription Defeated', *Cork Examiner*, 18 January 1918; NLI, LO P 116 (95).

¹⁶⁰ NLI, ILB 300 P 9 (30).

¹⁶¹ NLI, LO P 116 (94, 96).

¹⁶² NLI, ILB 300 P 9 (6, 9).

¹⁶³ NLI, ILB 300 P 1 (19-43).

¹⁶⁴ NLI, ILB 300 P 1 (33).

The T series painted them as tools or agents of the government, often in response to attacks on Sinn Féin in Party literature, with headings such as ‘Who Are the Traitors to Ireland’, ‘Who *Are* the English Agents’, ‘The Loyal Party’ and ‘How the Government “helps” Sinn Fein’ (which alleged that ‘English aeroplanes’ and ‘English motor lorries’ were distributing Irish Party literature while a man was arrested for carrying ‘seditious literature’ in the form of a Sinn Féin election manifesto); the U series painted them as spineless, pursuing a policy of ‘conciliating’ the government.¹⁶⁵

The largest single series was F1 to F33, which dealt with the subject of freedom.¹⁶⁶ These relied heavily on the coming peace conference, the emergence of new nation states and the comparison of Ireland with already independent nations such as Belgium, Holland and Switzerland. Some were short and to the point, such as ‘Look at the Map! God Made Ireland Separate’, while others were lengthy tracts on seven hundred years of Irish history. There were six leaflets (C1 to C6) on conscription, six (B1 to B6) on taxation and six (N1 to N6) on ‘endorsements’ of the party, either sincere endorsements by Irish bishops or tongue-in-cheek references to ‘tributes’ by Irish Party members, but apparently only one (H1) on partition and no series specifically on prisoners. Other topics covered were labour (G1 to G6) and land (I1 to I2). ‘Don’t Be Misled by Words’, referred to above, was numbered L1 and was apparently the only leaflet on the topic of the Republic.

In addition to the numbered series, individual candidates also produced leaflets, often directed at the local people or at specific interests. Robert Barton, who obviously had the means to run an individualistic campaign, produced leaflets invoking Michael Dwyer and Myles Byrne, two Wicklow heroes of 1798. He also, interestingly, produced a leaflet showing how much County Wicklow had prospered under the constitution of 1782, thus being probably the only candidate to distribute republican and ‘1782’ leaflets side by side.¹⁶⁷ Richard Mulcahy produced a leaflet on the importance of having women elected to an Irish parliament.¹⁶⁸ In short, the study of Sinn Féin election leaflets shows that the campaign was fought on a wide variety of issues, that most of the issues were ones that would traditionally have been considered Sinn Féin planks, and that the Irish Republic, though a stated aim, was not given great prominence.

¹⁶⁵ NLI, ILB 300 P 1 (125-140).

¹⁶⁶ NLI, ILB 300 P 1 (62-94).

¹⁶⁷ NLI, ILB 300 P 9 (1, 5, 4).

¹⁶⁸ NLI, ILB 300 P 6 (75).

The revival of Sinn Féin in 1917 was due to the (not unreasonable) association of the organisation with the Easter Rising in the minds of Irish nationalists. For the most part, Sinn Féin grew as a result of the creation of Sinn Féin clubs around the country, but it also absorbed the new organisations that arose following the Rising, such as the Irish Nation League and the Liberty League. At its Ard Fheis in 1917, it became for the first time an overtly republican political party. But its republicanism, at this stage, was not the uncompromising republicanism later espoused by many Sinn Féiners. De Valera, on his election as president, informed the delegates that ‘we are not doctrinaire republicans.’¹⁶⁹ Michael Collins would later write, ‘The British form of government was monarchial. In order to express clearly our desire to depart from all British forms, we declared a Republic. We repudiated the British form of government, not because it was monarchial, but because it was British.’¹⁷⁰ The election literature of 1917-18 bears that out.

¹⁶⁹ Tim Pat Coogan, *Michael Collins: The Man Who Made Ireland* (London, 2002), p. 72.

¹⁷⁰ Michael Collins, *The Path to Freedom* (Dublin, 1922), p. 71.

Conclusions

The questions posed in the introduction of this thesis are easily answered. Political acts by advanced nationalists during the period 1910-1917, with the exception of minor acts such as the tarring of a shop window, can be associated with individual organisations. Thus, Sinn Féin held a public meeting in 1912 to discuss the Home Rule Bill, and again in 1914 to protest against partition; Volunteer organisers held meetings between August 1914 and April 1916 to discourage recruiting to the British Army during the First World War; members of the Supreme Council of the IRB founded the newspaper *Irish Freedom* in 1910; and senior members of the Gaelic League met in Wynn's Hotel in November 1913 to plan the formation of the Volunteers. Political activity was indeed coordinated between these organisations and individuals. This is seen most clearly in the campaign of opposition to an address of welcome to King George V in 1911, as described in Chapter 3, but can be seen elsewhere as well. *Sinn Féin* and the IRB paper *Irish Freedom* criticised the Home Rule Bill in very much the same terms, as did Patrick Pearse's *An Barr Bua*, as seen in chapter 4; and opposition to recruiting after the outbreak of war was carried on simultaneously, and in the same terms, in the *Irish Volunteer*, *Sinn Féin*, *Irish Freedom* and the *Irish Worker*, as seen in chapter 6. There was considerable overlap between organisations: even Tom Clarke, one of the most extreme IRB members, was chairman of a Sinn Féin branch in 1910;¹ Sinn Féin members were naturally attracted to the Gaelic League, and some of the most active Gaelic Leaguers were Sinn Féin members;² and the Volunteers were founded by members of the Gaelic League, the IRB, and Sinn Féin. And it has been shown in chapter 6 that Volunteer political activity ran in parallel with military preparation for the Rising, creating a climate in which ordinary nationalists found themselves in sympathy with the future insurrectionists.

The several advanced nationalist organisations and individuals can therefore be said to have formed a network, and it is reasonable to refer to this as 'the Sinn Féin movement.' *Irish Freedom*, in an early editorial, said that 'the Irish Nation must be built on Sinn Féin principles';³ Patrick McCartan, at a public meeting in 1911, used the phrase 'Sinn Féiners

¹ Above, p. 48.

² Above, p. 39.

³ Above, p. 40.

and Hibernians' to refer to advanced nationalists and parliamentarians, respectively;⁴ and a 1911 report of an incident in Cork was described by police as 'probably the work of the Sinn Feiners.'⁵ The widespread use of 'Sinn Féin Volunteers' as an appellation of the Irish Volunteers was discussed in depth in chapter 7, where, amongst other things, the Royal Commission on the Rebellion was quoted as saying that the expressions Irish Volunteers and Sinn Féin Volunteers were synonymous from the end of 1914.

The question of whether the Sinn Féin organisation exerted a greater influence on both political and militant republicanism is inextricably linked with the question of whether it advocated a 'dual monarchy'. This was dealt with at length in chapter 1, where it was shown that the 'King, Lords and Commons' was not a core argument of *The Resurrection of Hungary* (the phrase was omitted altogether from the third edition), that it formed no part of the *Sinn Féin Policy*, and that it was never pushed in any Sinn Féin document, including the several newspapers that were published by Griffith between 1899 and 1917. The policy of Sinn Féin was criticised by a small number of individuals, who saw it as *allowing* for a continued link with the crown, but all the evidence points towards the policy being seen by the great majority of Sinn Féiners, as well as both home rulers and unionists, as clearly separatist and republican in nature. The contention that Sinn Féin was monarchist in character entered the historiography of the revolutionary period sometime after 1922, and became dominant from the 1970s onwards. Its corollary is that the policy was a fringe idea that could not be taken seriously by advanced nationalists, and consequently that the Sinn Féin organisation, and Griffith in particular, were treated as marginal, insignificant and somewhat absurd during the critical years leading up to the Rising. The evidence does not bear that out. This thesis has demonstrated the centrality of Sinn Féin within the movement on issues such as the 'loyal address' to King George, the fitness for purpose of the Home Rule Bill, the founding of the Volunteers and the expulsion of the Redmondites a year later, opposition to recruiting during the war, the by-elections of 1917 and, indeed, the unanimous acceptance of the new constitution at the 1917 Ard Fheis. Griffith, for his part, is found at the heart of the action throughout the entire period: present at the 1914 meeting at which it was decided to stage the Rising; invited by the IRB in 1915 to edit their new paper *Nationality*; brought in by Eoin MacNeill in 1916 to discuss whether the Rising should be stopped; selected in 1918 to

⁴ Above, p. 90.

⁵ Above, p. 94.

contest the East Cavan by-election, at a time when the progress of Sinn Féin seemed to be slowing; given high ministerial office in the First Dáil from 1919; acting president while de Valera was in America; and of course leader of the plenipotentiaries who negotiated the Treaty.

In *The Victory of Sinn Féin*, P.S. O’Hegarty said that ‘as Ireland became pro-insurrection she became Sinn Féin, without knowing what Sinn Féin was, except that it stood generally for Irish independence in the old complete way, the way in which the Irish Party had not stood for it.’⁶ It is argued in this thesis that Irish people had always known what Sinn Féin was, that they associated the Volunteers and – insofar that they knew of its existence – the IRB with the ‘Sinn Féin movement’, and that the actions of the Volunteers and the IRB led them finally to see the Sinn Féin policy as a viable alternative to parliamentarianism.

Although Count Plunkett stood in the North Roscommon by-election of February 1917 as the father of Joseph Plunkett and his brothers – thus a ‘Rising’ candidate – his election was seen as a victory for Sinn Féin. In the three by-elections that followed, although the candidates were veterans of the Rising, they were progressively seen as Sinn Féin candidates. By the time of their respective conventions in October 1917 Sinn Féin and the Volunteers were already seen as ‘organically linked’, to use a 21st-century expression.

The Irish Volunteers were shown in chapter 5 to have been more advanced from the start than is often supposed. Certainly, the men who first met in Wynn’s Hotel in November 1913 were all advanced men – Eoin MacNeill’s claim to be a ‘follower of John Redmond’ notwithstanding. MacNeill’s article, ‘The North Began’, which led directly to that meeting, envisaged the Volunteers joining forces with the Ulster Volunteers to wrest independence from Britain. The manifesto issued at the launch of the Volunteers on 25 November, while written in such a way as to appeal to supporters of home rule, studiously avoided supporting home rule itself. As a result, probably most of the early recruits were supporters of home rule, and this would be all the more so after the effective takeover of the organisation by Redmond in July 1914. But the split of September 1914 crystallised the situation. Those who supported Redmond and home rule joined the

⁶ O’Hegarty, *Victory*, p. 8.

National Volunteers; those who remained in the Irish Volunteers looked for more than home rule. With the coming of war, the Irish Volunteers aligned themselves with Sinn Féin, even taking on Sinn Féin's traditional task of opposing recruitment into the armed forces. The IRB maintained a strong presence in the smaller organisation, including at the top level, with Patrick Pearse, Thomas MacDonagh, Éamonn Ceannt and Joseph Plunkett all being senior IRB members. It was regularly reported in the papers that the National Volunteers were regarded as 'loyal' by the authorities, and the Irish Volunteers as 'disloyal'. Rank-and-file volunteers can have been under no illusion that their organisation was anything less than separatist.

The IRB in the late 1900s and early 1910s was still a vital force in Irish republicanism and influential in republican policy, but as an organisation it was neither large nor coherent. Within the Supreme Council, by 1910 there was a clear division between the physical force people, represented by Clarke, MacDermott and Hobson, and the older people who wanted to continue to mark time, as before. Even after the younger men took over the Supreme Council, there were senior members who were not in favour of an insurrectionary policy. At the lower levels, circles remained small, and only loosely controlled, if at all, by the senior men, as Ernest Blythe discovered in Clare in 1915 (see chapter 2). The idea of 'infiltration' by the IRB ignores the fact that people who were ideologically inclined to join the IRB were already attracted to the Gaelic League, the GAA, Sinn Féin etc. The majority of Gaelic League and GAA members were home rulers, but a disproportionate number were advanced nationalists, or 'Sinn Féiners'. Such organisations fed into the IRB, rather than the IRB planting people in them. In the 1900s, for instance, Seán MacDermott was a paid organiser for the Dungannon Clubs initially, and then national organiser for Sinn Féin, while at the same time he was an unpaid organiser for the IRB. He travelled the country, attending branch meetings of the Gaelic League or the GAA, and from them he recruited people into both Sinn Féin and the IRB.

The IRB were central to the planning of the Rising, but it would be a mistake to over-emphasise its role. In theory, a secret society such as the IRB could infiltrate the leadership of a body such as the Volunteers, and exercise such iron control that thousands of men and women were willing to take on the might of the British Empire against all the odds, but in practice the IRB did not have that kind of reach, or that kind of control, and it is unlikely that they could do it by persuasion, unless those men and women had already

been conditioned by years of advanced nationalist propaganda. Many of those involved in the Rising came to the movement through publications such as *Sinn Féin* and *Irish Freedom*.⁷ The combined political activity of the IRB, Sinn Féin and the Volunteer leadership itself created the conditions that allowed Pearse and his colleagues to lead their men into action against the express orders of their chief of staff.

The result of the Rising was a surge of support for Sinn Féin, and Sinn Féin was by far the most active of advanced nationalist groups in 1917, absorbing the Irish Nation League and Count Plunkett's Liberty League before its Ard Fheis of October 1917. Despite the quarrel between Griffith and Brugha on making Sinn Féin an overtly republican party, and despite the circulation of lists of preferred candidates by two equally small groups, the atmosphere at the Ard Fheis was one of unity and harmony. It is the contention of this thesis that, throughout the previous seven years, if differences of opinion between individuals at certain points had not been given undue prominence by historians, this unity and harmony would be seen to have been prevalent.

⁷ Fearghal McGarry, *Rebels: Voices from the Easter Rising* (Dublin 2011), pp. 10-12.

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