Terms and Conditions of Use of Digitised Theses from Trinity College Library Dublin

Copyright statement

All material supplied by Trinity College Library is protected by copyright (under the Copyright and Related Rights Act, 2000 as amended) and other relevant Intellectual Property Rights. By accessing and using a Digitised Thesis from Trinity College Library you acknowledge that all Intellectual Property Rights in any Works supplied are the sole and exclusive property of the copyright and/or other IPR holder. Specific copyright holders may not be explicitly identified. Use of materials from other sources within a thesis should not be construed as a claim over them.

A non-exclusive, non-transferable licence is hereby granted to those using or reproducing, in whole or in part, the material for valid purposes, providing the copyright owners are acknowledged using the normal conventions. Where specific permission to use material is required, this is identified and such permission must be sought from the copyright holder or agency cited.

Liability statement

By using a Digitised Thesis, I accept that Trinity College Dublin bears no legal responsibility for the accuracy, legality or comprehensiveness of materials contained within the thesis, and that Trinity College Dublin accepts no liability for indirect, consequential, or incidental, damages or losses arising from use of the thesis for whatever reason. Information located in a thesis may be subject to specific use constraints, details of which may not be explicitly described. It is the responsibility of potential and actual users to be aware of such constraints and to abide by them. By making use of material from a digitised thesis, you accept these copyright and disclaimer provisions. Where it is brought to the attention of Trinity College Library that there may be a breach of copyright or other restraint, it is the policy to withdraw or take down access to a thesis while the issue is being resolved.

Access Agreement

By using a Digitised Thesis from Trinity College Library you are bound by the following Terms & Conditions. Please read them carefully.

I have read and I understand the following statement: All material supplied via a Digitised Thesis from Trinity College Library is protected by copyright and other intellectual property rights, and duplication or sale of all or part of any of a thesis is not permitted, except that material may be duplicated by you for your research use or for educational purposes in electronic or print form providing the copyright owners are acknowledged using the normal conventions. You must obtain permission for any other use. Electronic or print copies may not be offered, whether for sale or otherwise to anyone. This copy has been supplied on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.
THE PARLIAMENTARY PARTY AND THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT IN IRELAND 1912-1918
"THE PARLIAMENTARY PARTY AND THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT
IN IRELAND, 1912 - 1918"

A THESIS

submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy to the University of
Dublin

By

GUY CHAUVIN, B.Comm., M.A.
1976

Volume III
PUBLIC OPINION
AND THE IRISH REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT
1911 - 1918

A THESIS

Regarding the influence of the popular support of the
cause of Doctor O'Mahony to the Government of

TRINITY COLLEGE
4 FEB 1977
LIBRARY DUBLIN
The events of 1916 left Irish Nationalist opinion in a state of confusion and tension. Extremist pressure on the Irish Parliamentary Party was increasing and the Party was losing support as it failed to obtain from the British Government any measures to alleviate Irish grievances. The key issue was Home Rule for all Ireland but other issues, mainly of an economic nature, were giving rise to enhanced perceptions of severe relative deprivation among almost every segment of the Irish population. The year 1917 saw the continuance of these grievances with an inevitable increase in tensions as persistent neglect aggravated frustrations. The extremist elements were fragmented but actively engaged in a search for common ground in their stand against both the Government and the Irish Party. In this search they were greatly to benefit from the actions and inaction of the Government. Government actions drove them together and Government inaction provided them with opportunities to coalesce and develop their unified stand. Another significant trend which continued from 1916 into 1917 was the weakening of clerical support for the Irish Party.

The newspapers supporting the Party began the year on an optimistic note forecasting the imminent solution of the Irish question. The Freeman's Journal linked this to the
expectation that the war was about to end.\(^1\) At this time Ireland would still have settled for the Home Rule Act of 1914 provided that it applied to the whole of Ireland. That solution, however, continued to be impossible because of the unflagging opposition of Ulster unionists and their leaders and sympathizers in the Cabinet. In nationalist Ireland the anger and alienation of the separatists presaged difficulties from that quarter if a solution was not found and the growing strength of the Irish Nation League made partition, even on a temporary basis, an unacceptable compromise for the Irish Party to accept even if it had been acceptable to the Ulster unionists. The Irish authorities were not unaware of the ferment among extremist groups and there were moves to prevent the dissemination of extremist groups' propaganda. Meetings where the Royal Irish Constabulary expected separatism to be preached were prohibited.\(^2\) The censor banned a film, "Ireland a Nation", which dealt with various aspects of Irish history from a nationalist point of view and which had received favourable reviews.\(^3\)

The break between the Irish Parliamentary Party and the Liberals which had followed the breakdown of the 1916 Home Rule negotiations with Lloyd George did bring the Irish Party some advantages in terms of public support at home despite

\(^1\)Cork Examiner and Freeman's Journal, 1 January, 1917.
\(^2\)Cork Examiner, 2 January, 1918.
\(^3\)The film had been reviewed in the Freeman's Journal, 5 January, 1917. The ban was announced in the same newspaper on 11 January, 1917.
its adverse effect on Irish influence at Westminster. Dr. Finegan, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Kilmore declared his support for the United Irish League as a body which would now be free to work more effectively for the solution of Irish problems. He coupled these remarks with a strong attack on the British Government's food policy, declaring that "one thing the Irish people may be sure of, except they arouse themselves, that Irishmen will be permitted to die of starvation sooner than the people of England or Scotland should be allowed to feel even the pinch of hunger". The gist of his message was to urge Irishmen to become politically more active which, under the circumstances, could prove a source of difficulty for the Parliamentary Party. A few weeks later Dr. Morrisroe, his brother bishop from Achonry, wrote a letter to a Swinford meeting honouring John Dillon in which he declared his continued support for the Party and for Dillon in particular but in which he also described the Nationalist-Liberal alliance as a "Nessus garment". He also protested against the continued imprisonment of Irishmen convicted by courts-martial following the Easter Rising and he declared, "It is hard to see why one set of rebels - and these more criminal - should be enjoying the sweetmeats of Downing Street, and another, less guilty, condemned to Dartmoor". He concluded by calling for Home Rule, asserting that if it were not granted, "we fail to see how the aims of the Allies

differ materially from those of the Central Powers". 5

Obviously a change in direction on the part of the Irish Party was expected.

When the Government finally got around to do something about the food problem in Ireland and banned the export of potatoes in order to offset the effects of the blight of 1916 the measure was accompanied by a compulsory tillage order which was deeply resented by Irish farmers and which negated any favourable impact of the first measure. 6 The food problem which was central to Dr. Finegan's view of Irish politics in early 1917 would prove an irritant throughout the year and its persistence would favour the growth of Sinn Fein in rural districts. Agricultural statistics reveal that the price of barley and oats in Ireland slipped significantly below the English price during 1917. The higher yield per acre in Ireland allowed farmers to subsist despite the price differential but did nothing to reduce their anger and sense of grievance. 7 Prices allowed to Irish food producers were consistently lower than those allowed to English producers thus inevitably giving rise to discontent. On the other hand, the export ban on potatoes at a time when England was having difficulty feeding herself irritated unionists. Professor Phillips commented:

"The 'clutching-hand' is out to capture our food", was the cry. The maximum meat prices would destroy the cattle-trade; and the export of bacon and butter to England would lead to starvation in Ireland. All this had its effect. The Government, following the traditional policy of humouring Ireland, excluded her from the more drastic conditions of the food-control, forbade the export of bacon and butter to England and allowed the Irish to eat as much as they liked, while England went hungry.8

The views of the Bishop of Kilmore or of Sinn Fein were obviously very different from this unionist perspective and yet there was some truth in both. The better-off Irish were able to eat better than their English counterparts and these were the circles most familiar to unionists. On the other hand the poor, because the cost of living was rising at a much faster rate than wages and because of a higher rate of unemployment than in England, found themselves considerably worse off than their English counterparts. Banning the export of potatoes, bacon and butter might ensure that these items continued to be available in Ireland but people also had to be able to buy them.

The wholesale price index at the end of June, 1917 had risen by 121.9 per cent over that at the same date in 1914.9 The Irish rate of unemployment in the autumn of 1917 was over eight times the English rate and while this was due in part to the absence of conscription, and thus unlikely to win English sympathy, it aggravated tensions in Ireland.10

Starvation and malnutrition in Dublin was becoming a serious problem and in the first three months of 1917 the Dublin death-rate exceeded the birth-rate. 11

A survey carried out in Dublin revealed that there were in the organized trades two thousand unemployed workers and the number among casual and unorganized workers was described as very large but "not definitely ascertainable". The authors of this study found that in many cases wages had not risen during the war and, where they had risen, the average increase ranged between twenty and twenty-five per cent - a figure far short of the rise in the cost of living. The report went on:

There are two considerations which we would like to put to those in authority. One is that the amount of money which, spent on development here, would give employment to a very large class and materially assist the people, would be negligible compared with a day's cost of the war. The second is that in the history of this country, the executive as well as the legislative authority, has always acted in such a way as to put a premium on civil commotion or armed force. A grievance, a want, a hindrance may be brought a hundred times peacefully and constitutionally to the notice of a government without any help or redress being vouchsafed. But the moment that people rise in revolt either by way of the solitary blunderbuss, or the serried rifle, government immediately harkens to the need and admits to armed force the principle which it denied when argued constitutionally.

......

We frankly say to ministers that there are dangerous symptoms in Dublin, economic rather than political, and that it would be wise to take note of them. We have no desire to see riots or risings. Our desire

11 Freeman's Journal, 3 May, 1917.
is so to order things that there will be no occasion for them. It is not enough to see that there is no opportunity. That is not wise any more than it is humane, for when people are starving there are few things which will overawe them. Certainly the fear of pains or death means very little to them. When working women tell you as they have told us, that they thanked God that their children were dead and had not to feel the pain of hunger, you are not a wise man if you do not feel yourself face to face, not only with horror, but with danger. 12

Here certainly was an important factor in the volatility of Irish public opinion. Things had been improving in pre-war Ireland and now misery had succeeded this improvement. The tremendous discontent and anomie brought out by this deterioration were simply ignored by the Government.

In order to understand the events in Ireland in 1917 it is necessary to be aware not only of the purely political discontent attendant on the failure to implement Home Rule and on the executions and repressive measures following the Easter rebellion of 1916 but also of the economic ferment which under these circumstances contributed substantially to the general tension and easily became politicized to the immense advantage of Sinn Fein. Farmers were angered by price discrimination and by compulsory tillage, employers by discrimination practiced against them in the award of war office contracts and by war related difficulties of production, workers by low wages combined with high prices and high unemployment. All blamed the British Government

for their plight and thus could be persuaded of the attractions of a greater scope of political independence than was represented by the suspended Home Rule Act.

The release of Irish prisoners became a matter of increasing concern in early January and both the Cork County Council and Dublin Corporation passed resolutions calling for an amnesty. The Cork County Council resolution read:

That we request the Government to release the prisoners tried and sentenced by courts-martial in connection with the recent rising. We point out that the time has come when England should apply in Ireland those ideals for which she says she is now fighting in Europe. We remind the Government of the Jameson raid and of the lenient manner in which Jameson was dealt with, and of the manner in which Sir Edward Carson and his friends have been treated.13

The Dublin Corporation resolution was more specific and was limited to demanding the release of Corporation members who were imprisoned. It declared:

That the continued imprisonment of these men sentenced for connection with the recent rebellion, was the cause of great irritation to the Irish people, because men charged with rebellion in South Africa were treated in a different manner and released after a very short detention; this council demands as an act of justice their release.14

In mid-January cause for optimism concerning Home Rule was found in the German and Austrian replies to an Allied note demanding unconditional surrender. The Central Powers in their replies took note of the Allied concern over "the principle of nationalities and the free existence of small

14 Freeman's Journal, 9 January, 1917.
states" and then referred to Ireland, Finland, the Boer Republic and the colonization of North Africa as examples of insincerity. The Freeman's Journal rather cautiously endorsed this part of the reply.\textsuperscript{15} The difference on this point between the Allied Powers and the Central Powers was probably due more to a fundamentally different understanding of the principle of nationality than to insincerity, but Irishmen, desperate for a ray of hope, were willing to believe that the British Government would be shamed into granting Ireland self-government in spite of all obstacles. In fact, shortly after the receipt of the Central Powers' notes, the Chief Secretary had declared to the Corinthian Club in London that the question of Home Rule had become a question for Irishmen to settle among themselves.\textsuperscript{16} John Dillon declared at the Swinford meeting in his honour that "The present situation is this: that the settlement of the Irish question has become an Imperial necessity; that the English Government are almost more anxious to settle the question now than we are".\textsuperscript{17} Thus a new effort at a settlement was expected by the Irish Party leaders and by their followers at home.

The developments which buoyed up nationalist spirits naturally had precisely the opposite effect on unionists and the Ulster Unionist Council, also thinking that an attempt

\textsuperscript{15}15 January, 1917.
\textsuperscript{16}Freeman's Journal, 15 January, 1917.
\textsuperscript{17}Ibid., 17 January, 1917.
at a settlement might be made, called for the absolute exclusion of six Ulster counties until such time as they openly and freely chose to go into a Home Rule Ireland. Unionists, however, were divided and the Irish Unionist Alliance, reacting to the pressures in the south, elected Viscount Midleton as its chairman and he immediately declared that southern unionists were willing to make certain sacrifices for Ireland but only on the understanding that there was to be firm government in the country. He went on to say that in any case:

These points were clear - (1) that under no circumstances could the Unionists consent that the Bill of 1914 should be put in force during the war or before a General Election; (2) the exclusion of six counties could not be binding on the Alliance; they objected to the partition of Ireland; (3) they desired the utmost participation of Ireland in the war.\(^{18}\)

It is clear that the unionist camp was divided but because nationalists rejected partition they were in no position to exploit this division. Southern unionists were increasingly isolated by the workings of the Coalition Government which was influenced more by Ulster unionists. The Government had declared its willingness to settle for partition and the southern unionist strategy was now to try and prevent any solution of the Irish question before the end of the war when they hoped to regain some of their lost influence.\(^{19}\)

One action of southern unionists which had long term

---

\(^{18}\) *Cork Examiner*, 18 January, 1917.

\(^{19}\) See Patrick Buckland, *Irish Unionism*, op. cit., Vol I pp. 84 ff.
repercussions which they had not anticipated was their use of their majority in the Royal Dublin Society to expel Count Plunkett from the Society's ranks. Count Plunkett was the father of one of the executed leaders of the Easter rising, a papal Count and a prominent Irish public servant who had become popular among extremists. From a unionist point of view his connexions with the rising, not only through his sons but also as an intermediary between the Military Council of the Irish Republican Brotherhood and Sir Roger Casement, may have warranted his expulsion but it transformed into a martyr a man who already enjoyed considerable sympathy in nationalist circles and who was certainly the most aristocratic figure among the surviving extremists.\(^{20}\) Immediately following the Royal Dublin Society's action it was announced that Count Plunkett would contest the North Roscommon by-election though no platform was put forward.\(^{21}\) The Tipperary South Riding County Council suggested that Count Plunkett should be chosen unanimously as the new member.\(^{22}\)

At the Irish Parliamentary Party nominating convention which met on 22 January, Mr. N. Conway proposed the nomination of the Count as the Party standard-bearer. As Count Plunkett was not a declared supporter of the Party, however, this nomination was not accepted and the convention settled on

\(^{20}\)Cork Examiner, 18 January, 1917.

\(^{21}\)Irish Weekly Independent, 20 January, 1917.

\(^{22}\)Cork Examiner, 22 January, 1917.
Thomas J. Devine, a county councillor from Boyle. These nominating conventions had become an irritant for many Party supporters who saw them as devices whereby the leadership camouflaged its imposition of candidates without much regard for the wishes of local supporters and in this case a local man, Jasper Tully, declared, following the convention, that he would stand as an independent supporter of the Irish Parliamentary Party. 23 It appears that Arthur Griffith was considering the possibility of Eoin MacNeill as the official Sinn Fein candidate but the Irish Republican Brotherhood persuaded him to endorse Plunkett instead. Count Plunkett refused all financial assistance but welcomed campaign workers from all organizations opposed to the Irish Parliamentary Party. Irish Volunteers, Sinn Fein and I.R.B. members, and members of the Irish Nation League all came together to work for his election. 24 The election campaign on behalf of the Count was thus somewhat incongruous in that it brought together groups without any clear common policy other than a hostility to the Irish Party behind a candidate without a declared policy. As so often the case in Irish politics an alliance of forces was consummated on purely negative grounds but this drawing together of anti-Redmond forces and the unbridgeable gap that it opened up between the Irish Nation League and the Party was highly significant for the future.

The Irish Party was having other difficulties, one of its members, Thomas Lundon, was severely beaten by a Sinn Fein group at a meeting in support of the Town Tenants League in Limerick and he was hospitalized for one week as a result. The most disturbing element in this attack was that it took place in public and that no one seems to have attempted to assist the victim. Another indication of the increasing relative popularity of extremism was the unanimous election of Alderman Lawrence O'Neill as Lord Mayor of Dublin. O'Neill had been a prisoner following the Easter rising and he told the Corporation on his election that he had been spat upon by the Dublin crowds when being marched away. Now in that same city he had been chosen as chief magistrate and he declared that:

He trusted that the members would be left to see Dublin arise, phoenix-like, from its ashes, and become the capital, in more than name, of the grandest little country in the world - Ireland a nation - not the palsied, dismantled, mutilated thing some people wanted to make her, but a nation such as Parnell fought for, and for which poor Davis sighed.

This unanimous election and the fact that in breach of precedent a Unionist was denied the second nomination for the shrievalty indicated the changing temper of the city and it presaged difficulties for the Party, particularly when competing with the glamour of imprisonment in connexion with


\[26\] Ibid., 24 January, 1917.
the Easter rising. The *Cork Examiner's* attempt to portray as heroines of Easter week a number of Dublin girls who were credited with saving the lives of British officers and soldiers under fire, one of whom was subsequently decorated, met with no popular response. Ironically one of the girls, a waitress at Woolworth, was named Kathleen Pearse. It was arrest and imprisonment rather than actual bravery which would create popular heroes and heroines.

The outstanding political event of early 1917 was the North Roscommon by-election. The *Freeman's Journal* began its coverage of the campaign on a note of confidence that the Irish Party would emerge victorious. Its first leading article on the contest declared:

> The nominations for North Roscommon took place yesterday, and we are apparently faced with a triangular contest in a constituency in which constitutional Nationalists overwhelmingly preponderate. As usual when some men are found ready to break away from the salutary bonds of national discipline the enemies of the constitutional movement and of the Irish Parliamentary Party immediately bestir themselves in the circulation of misrepresentations with the object of weakening the connection between the Party and the country...The men who were represented so faithfully and so long by James O'Kelly will not consent to be represented by anyone except a man who will honestly and loyally follow in his footsteps.28

The principal misrepresentation referred to by the *Freeman's Journal* was one which had been circulated in a leaflet which said of Plunkett:

27 26 January, 1918.
28 27 January, 1917.
Because he will not associate with Irishmen who cheered in Parliament when his son was shot against a wall for loving Ireland. Will you insult him in North Roscommon, as the Dublin Society did, and tell the British Government that he is not the man you want? No. There are Irishmen in North Roscommon yet.29

It appears that the charge of cheering at the executions levelled at Irish Party members when the executions were announced was a fabrication but it was diligently circulated by Lawrence Ginnell, himself a renegade member of the Irish Parliamentary Party, and regardless of the vehemence with which Party spokesmen refuted the allegation, referring to Hansard, the charge was widely believed and was used to good effect by Sinn Fein in this and subsequent by-elections. As for not associating with Irish representatives at Westminster it is important to note that Count Plunkett himself at no time in the campaign declared that he accepted an absentionist policy despite the efforts of Sinn Fein to persuade him to do so. He stood for election as an independent, as the father of one son who had been executed and two sons undergoing penal servitude. Some of his supporters even urged that his election would in fact heighten the Irish Party's effectiveness at Westminster.30 His one substantive policy was that Ireland should present her case to the Peace Conference which would follow the war. He did represent, however, a strong opposition to partition in any form and many also perceived a vote for him as an anti-conscription protest.

29 Ibid.
The moving spirit behind the Plunkett campaign was Father Michael O'Flanagan, the Roman Catholic curate of Crossna. He held credentials as a Gaelic scholar and he was a strong champion of the small farmers. He brought into active campaigning on behalf of the Count thirteen young priests and they used their intimate knowledge and understanding of the small farmers of North Roscommon to persuade them to support their candidate. Father O'Flanagan called for the same freedom for Ireland as that enjoyed by France and Germany which was standard separatist policy but, as Desmond Greaves noted, "he introduced a new note, essential in the west. He demanded "the land for the people". And it was on this rather than on his somewhat vague national policy that Plunkett won the election". Farmers who had become angered at prices, at British food policy and at compulsory tillage had begun to resort to agrarian outrages in nineteenth century style and the Irish Republican Brotherhood seeing that the Parliamentary Party was unable to relieve the frustrations of farmers made use of them in order to turn farmers away from their old allegiance.

As the campaign progressed the Freeman's Journal confidence in victory diminished and two days after its initial assertion of confidence it posed the choice which faced the North Roscommon electors in these terms:

The issue is: - Whether under present critical circumstances and in the midst of varied and imminent dangers to the peace and wellbeing of

\(^{31}\) C. Desmond Greaves, _Liam Mellows and the Irish Revolution_, op. cit., p. 113.
Ireland Mr. Redmond and the Irish Party ought to be supported and strengthened by the country; or whether, on the other hand, the Party has lost the right to the confidence of the country? Ought the country now to repudiate the Party, break it up, devise a new policy and entrust the execution of it to other hands and other leaders?  

The Irish Party demonstrated that it could respond in kind to Sinn Fein misrepresentation by alleging that Count Plunkett was a disappointed place hunter who had once applied for the post of Under Secretary for Ireland and who had written a letter to apologize for the behaviour of his sons during the rebellion. Party spokesmen claimed to have in their possession copies of this correspondence. Plunkett supporters denounced the smear tactics employed against a man of high character who had suffered intensely and been deported himself in the aftermath of the rebellion but the charges were never denied by Count Plunkett and the Irish Party never produced its evidence. The sinking repute of the Parliamentarians was demonstrated by the fact that on the whole the voters preferred to believe the inferential denial of Plunkett rather than the specific, though unsupported, charges of the Parliamentarians.

In early February the Freeman's Journal was clearly becoming worried about North Roscommon though it still asserted that Devine was certain of election "if the poll is a representative one". The election took place during unusually severe winter weather and Father O'Flanagan's workers,
well disciplined and well organized, laboured hard to ensure that disgruntled small farmers got to the polls despite the snow and ice. Polling day was a miserably cold day with a heavy snowfall and on that day, when it was too late to affect the outcome, the Freeman's Journal admitted that the election would be a close one. The result was nevertheless a severe shock to the Party and particularly to John Redmond, who came close to panic. Count Plunkett received 3,033 votes to Devine's 1,708 and Tully's 687. The discontent fermenting among Irish Party supporters was manifested by Mr. Tully's address to his supporters following the announcement of the result. He declared that "he was especially delighted that Count Plunkett was at the head of the poll because it meant the breaking up of Redmond's Party Machine".

The Freeman's Journal in a leading article sought to explain to its readers what had happened in North Roscommon.

It would be idle and futile to shut our eyes to the fact that the result of the North Roscommon election is a very serious event, a very heavy blow to the Irish Party and to the prospects of a satisfactory Home Rule settlement. According to the information which reaches us from the constituency this outcome of the election, wholly unexpected as we acknowledge it to be, is due mainly, if not entirely, to the appeal made to the sympathies of the people on behalf of an old man who was brought before them as the victim of unjust persecution by the Government, and of the vindictive and wholly uncalled for action of the Royal Dublin Society, and as the father of one of the youthful rebel leaders whose execution as the result of the proceedings of a secret drumhead court

35 February, 1917.
37 Cork Examiner, 6 February, 1917.
38 Quoted in Michael O'Callaghan, For Ireland and Freedom, op. cit., p. 7.
martial, shocked not only the people of Ireland but the entire civilized world. The form which the protest has taken is wholly irrational and calculated to inflict grievous injury on the Irish National cause, but no one who knows the country can have the least doubt as to the cause. It is to be found in the action of the Government and the administrative authorities who, by their policy of wholesale execution of the leaders of the insurrection, of sending flying columns into districts where no disturbances whatever had taken place, of imprisoning thousands of men against whom no charges were formulated, of placing the whole country under martial law and military rule, and of maintaining that system up to the present moment, months after the faintest excuse for it had disappeared, have so outraged the feelings of the people that in the case of North Roscommon, their warm desire evidently was to give expression to them in the most emphatic manner possible.\textsuperscript{39}

It was only following his election that Count Plunkett announced that he would not go to a foreign Parliament and he called on those who were already in Parliament to return to Ireland. He also urged the people to apply pressure on their representatives to remain at home.\textsuperscript{40} This ran counter to the previously elaborated policy of the Irish Nation League but the Sinn Fein organization had proved effective and impressive as a challenger to the old Party and the League formally congratulated the Count on his victory thereby taking a further step towards amalgamation into Sinn Fein.\textsuperscript{41}

However, the platform which had won North Roscommon was still far short of being either republican or even separatist and its most constructive plank for the future remained the appeal

\textsuperscript{39} 6 February, 1917.
\textsuperscript{40} Irish Weekly Independent, 10 February, 1917.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.
to the Peace Conference.

On the day following the declaration of the by-election result an anonymous "Northern P.P." indignantly wrote to the Cork Examiner concerning the political views of Fr. O'Flanagan, the man who should perhaps be seen as the real victor in North Roscommon. The correspondent declared:

Father O'Flanagan for whom Count Plunkett acted as standard bearer in this election, did not regard partition as unthinkable; on the contrary he looked upon it as obvious and almost inevitable. In a letter which he addressed to the "Freeman's Journal", on the 19th June last, he wrote:

If we reject Home Rule rather than agree to the exclusion of the Unionist parts of Ulster, what case have we to put before the world? We can point out that Ireland is an island with a definite geographical boundary. That argument might be all right if we were appealing to a number of island nationalities that had themselves definite geographical boundaries. Appealing as we are to Continental nations with shifting boundaries, that argument will have no force whatever. National and geographical boundaries scarcely ever coincide. Geography would make one nation of Spain and Portugal; history has made two of them. Geography did its best to make one nation of Norway and Sweden; history has succeeded in making two of them. Geography has scarcely anything to say to the number of nations upon the North American Continent, history has done the whole thing. If a man were to try to construct a political map of Europe out of its physical map, he would find himself groping in the dark. Geography has worked hard to make one nation out of Ireland; history has worked against it. The island of Ireland and the national unit of Ireland simply do not coincide.42

This illustrates the diversity of fundamental principles which characterized the supporters of Count Plunkett. The Irish Nation League was in his camp purely out of an anti-

42 7 February, 1917.
partitionist motive, Fr. O'Flanagan and others for different motives altogether. While revelations such as these might have reduced the Count's majority slightly had they been made before polling day there was no alternative for the Irish Nation League. Even if the choice had been between Irish Party partitionists and anti-Party partitionists they would in all likelihood have rallied to an anti-Party candidate. The Count's own attitude towards partition as indeed towards most questions of principle had remained obscure throughout the campaign. It was enough for most voters that he was in some ill-defined way more extreme on the national question than his rivals, but the difference remained one of degree. The dissatisfaction of the Irish Party over the performance of the British Government on the Irish question was no less than that of the extremists but they demanded and expected less. The Party's attitude was reflected in the Freeman's Journal reaction to the Tzar's announcement that the reconstruction of Poland was one of Russia's war aims. This led the paper to draw an unfavourable comparison between Russia and Britain. On the other hand, the idea that the Peace Conference might offer some hope for the settlement of the Irish question was made more plausible.

The Lenten Pastorals of 1917 for the most part continued to avoid taking sides in political controversy. Dr. O'Dwyer of Limerick castigated the British Government for not showing

43 14 February, 1917.
love for its enemies and making peace with Germany but he was largely silent on Irish politics. Dr. Morrisroe, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Achonry, condemned the Dublin insurrection itself but concluded that sympathy with its leaders and with the internees was fully justified. The most political of the Lenten Pastorals was that of Dr. Harty, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Cashel. He began with a review of the year's events:

Since I addressed you my Lenten Pastoral of 1916 sad things have happened in Ireland. Men of great ideals unfortunately raised the banner of revolt during Easter week of last year. In extenuation of their action however unlawful in itself, it should be remembered that they bore in mind many events of Irish history, and, amongst others, recent events like the threatened revolt of a part of Ulster, the supineness of Government in dealing with the threat, the Curragh mutiny, Bachelor's Walk, and the elevation of conditional rebels to positions of trust in the State. After the insurrection came the executions, the Portobello murders, martial law, the deportation of men who had committed no crime, and the resurrection of Dublin Castle.

Having ensured that the grievances of his charges were brought clearly to mind, Dr. Harty went on to affirm the civic duty of obedience and he then declared that:

Over a century ago our country was deprived of its Parliament by fraud, and the Irish race has constantly protested against the injustice. In our national movement for the restoration of our Irish Parliament we assuredly have the blessing of God on our side, and we shall retain it if we employ only the methods which are sanctioned by His law. With this blessing we can confidently hope that success will crown our efforts, and that Ireland so long the victim of misgovernment will be a prosperous and happy nation.

44 Cork Examiner, 19 February, 1917.
46 Cork Examiner, 19 February, 1917.
The Archbishop's position was ideologically closer to that of Sinn Fein than to that of the Irish Party.

The intensification of Sinn Fein activity which followed the renewal of confidence generated by the North Roscommon election victory was met by a wave of arrests and deportations including that of a number of prominent Gaelic Leaguers. Public bodies protested but to no avail.\(^{47}\) The leaders of the Irish Party protested in the House of Commons and John Dillon demanded that those arrested be brought to trial. He referred to the disastrous effect which these arrests were having on the public support for the Irish Party in Ireland and he complained that:

For the last year and a half the Government in Ireland have been manufacturing Sinn Feiners by tens of thousands.

The Government breach of faith last July had poisoned the Irish people against the Party, and young men said, "What is the use of your asking us to trust British statesmen? One blast on Carson's horn is worth all your pleadings".

These young men also said that Sir Edward Carson's argument was the only one that British Ministers understood, and that if the Irish Party had acted in the same way they would be in a better position to-day...Our complaint is this, that you neither govern Ireland decently nor allow her to govern herself.\(^{48}\)

Discontent in Ireland was increased by the refusal of the Chief Secretary to exempt Ireland from the National Service Bill on the grounds that Irish migrant labourers with small farms in Connaught ought not to find employment in munition

\(^{47}\) Freeman's Journal, 24 February, 1917; Cork Examiner, 27 February, 1917, and Irish Weekly Independent, 3 March, 1917.\(^{48}\)

Irish Weekly Independent, 3 March, 1917.
and other war industries thereby releasing English workers for conscription into the armed forces while the Irish remained immune. He naturally feared the possible reaction of British labour in such an eventuality. 49 The Irish, on the other hand, saw this as a further instance of injustice, given that many of these small farmers were unable to extract a decent livelihood from their plots of land. The Government's creation of Sinn Feiners was not part of a deliberate plot to destroy the Irish Parliamentary Party but owed much to the fact that given the requirements of the war, the Party's firm opposition to conscription for Ireland made them appear to be little better than Sinn Feiners to many in Britain who could not excuse the refusal to commit Ireland to an all-out effort to aid Britain in a moment of peril whatever motives might lie behind it. Faced with what they saw as the enormity of such a refusal they were little disposed to favour one section of Irish opinion over another. Events on the Western Front overshadowed events in the western isle.

While Irish migrant workers were being forced back on their poor farms, there to nurse their resentment and cope with an inadequate food supply, import restrictions were driving prices up. 50 Prices at the end of February were reported to be up to 189 per cent of prices on the first of September, 1914 and it was pointed out that:

49 Freeman's Journal, 28 February, 1917.
50 Irish Weekly Independent, 3 March, 1917.
It is important to note that the greatest increase in any quarter in retail prices was in the last, November to February. The rate of increase in those three months was double the rate in any previous quarter since the war began. It was exactly twice the rate in the quarter August to November, and four times that within the previous three months.51

Under all of these pressures the re-emergence of agrarian agitation is hardly surprising nor is the effect of Father O'Flanagan's call of "the land for the people" in North Roscommon. In Dublin the threat of starvation became more real for more people and this economic deterioration, which the Irish Party was unable to check, increased the likelihood that people would turn to another alternative if it became available.

The Irish Party had succeeded in having a day set aside for a House of Commons debate on the Irish question. The motion to be debated had been introduced by T. P. O'Connor and it called for the grant of "free institutions" to Ireland52. When the debate took place it was clear that the Party had no intention of defining "free institutions" and T. P. O'Connor, having reviewed the history of Ireland and the Government policy of recent years which had made violence respectable, declared that the Government was faced with a simple choice between settlement and coercion but he did not elaborate on the lines along which he felt that a settlement would be possible. The Unionist position in the debate was that the

51Freeman's Journal, 27 February, 1917.
52Ibid., 13 February, 1917.
question should not have been raised until the end of the war and Sir John Lonsdale declared that the events of the past twelve months had strengthened Unionist resolve by confirming the fact that Irish Nationalists could not be trusted. The pressures on the Coalition Cabinet were clear. The most urgent pressure was that of winning the war. In Britain it was accepted that political life would not return to normal until war's end and the Government could not afford to allow itself to be diverted from the prosecution of the war by a contentious issue of a primarily domestic nature. One of the major reasons for the Government's consideration of the Irish issue at this time was American and colonial pressure which made a settlement of the Irish question desirable for the war effort. The Unionists were as determined as ever to resist any settlement which sacrificed Ulster unionists to the nationalists of the rest of Ireland. Many of them were most reluctant to sacrifice the southern unionists as well, though it appears that the majority of Unionists could be persuaded to do so if necessary. These were pressures to maintain the status quo.

The Nationalists, however, were clamouring for some form of self-government. The difficulty of their position was that they maintained that Ulster should not be coerced while also maintaining that it could not be excluded from the self-government measure. The Government could see that the

\[53\text{Freeman's Journal, 8 March, 1917.}\]
situation in Ireland was deteriorating and had a solution which promised to reduce conflict within the United Kingdom. It had been apparent the Government would in all likelihood have adopted it, particularly if it promised to conciliate American opinion at the same time as it defused the Sinn Fein powder keg. If that were not possible, however, it was clearly preferable to confine the conflict to Ireland rather than open up a new conflict involving all of the United Kingdom.

The Prime Minister's reply to the O'Connor motion outlined some of the pressures upon the Government and he pointed out that England could not be expected to settle a domestic problem through the use of means likely to split the entire nation into two hostile camps. He then called attention to what he described as fundamental facts of the Irish question. One of these, which he claimed tended to be ignored by the supporters of the Union, was that "centuries of ruthless, and often brutal injustice, and what is worse when you are dealing with a high spirited and sensitive people, centuries of insolence and of insult have driven hatred of British rule into the very marrow of the Irish race".\(^54\) The second fact, tending to be ignored by Irish nationalists, was that there were in Ireland two nations and that the Northern Irish nation was certainly as opposed to Home Rule as the nationalists were to continued British rule. He then affirmed the

\(^54\) Ibid.
Government's willingness to grant self-government to that part of Ireland which desired it. This was the offer which nationalist Ireland had already refused and Redmond was not free to accept it, but he could offer no alternative short of demanding the coercion of Ulster.

Lloyd George had impaled Redmond as the horns of the Irish dilemma. The Irish Party was being offered a solution which was perceived as eminently reasonable and generous in Britain but which could not so be accepted in Ireland and Nationalists were then being pressed for an alternative. It would be argued, with considerable justification, that it is the duty of government to advance policies not that of the opposition, but this device, while an abdication of statesmanship in relation to Ireland, did maintain the unity of the Coalition. On balance this unity was held to be more important to the successful prosecution of the war than trying to solve the Irish question at the expense of unity. Redmond at home found himself confronted by Sinn Fein propaganda calling for an appeal to the Peace Conference and virtually ignoring the Ulster difficulty. Ulster's opposition to any grant of self-government to Ireland as a whole was an unpleasant and intractable fact for the Irish Party, but in the House of Commons it could not be ignored. For Sinn Fein and for most ordinary southern Irishmen the issue was also unpleasant but it could be put aside as a practical problem and

\(^{55}\text{Ibid.}\)
cognitive dissonance would explain the issue being largely ignored. This inevitably increased the perceptual distance between the Irish Party at Westminster and the ordinary Irish people at home. Into this gap stepped Sinn Fein offering the reassuring myth of the Peace Conference and providing sought for confirmation of the irrelevance of Ulster opposition as well as outbidding the Party on Home Rule itself. As Irish public opinion lost its grip on reality, the Irish Party lost its hold on Irish public opinion.

Redmond's reply to the Prime Minister reviewed the recent course of Anglo-Irish relations and the effect on the constitutional movement towards Home Rule of the lengthening delay in its implementation and of the creation of the Coalition Government including Sir Edward Carson. He forecast open revolution in Ireland if the Government did not put Home Rule into operation. His bitterness and sense of betrayal was evident when, towards the end of his speech, he referred to what he interpreted as being the consequences of the refusal to grant Home Rule immediately:

I say, no matter who he is any British statesman who by his conduct teaches the Irish people the lesson that any Nationalist leader who takes his political life into his hands, and endeavours to combine loyalty to Ireland's rights with loyalty to the Empire - anyone who teaches the lesson that such a man is certain to be let down and betrayed by this country - is guilty of treason, not merely to the liberties of Ireland but to the unity, strength and best interests of the empire. That is the course which the Irish people will recognize as having been taken by you, and I warn you of the consequences. How far this action may make constitutional action in Ireland in the future impossible
I cannot now say. Why, does he not make an appeal to the First Lord of the Admiralty. Why should all appeals be made to us?56

Sir Edward Carson was as much a prisoner of his followers as was Redmond. He had made all the sacrifices which Ulster unionists would tolerate when he had accepted as a practical necessity the abandonment of southern unionists to a Home Rule government, beyond that he could not go. The British Government could see no alternative to continuing Home Rule in a suspended state as long as they were caught between the intransigence of the two factions in Irish public opinion. The only other possibility would have been to impose Home Rule on nationalist Ireland excluding the six counties of Ulster and hope that the Redmondites would be unable to resist stepping into the power vacuum thus created. This would have met resistance from southern unionists in particular and risked bringing Ireland closer to anarchy and chaos in the midst of the war. But the policy of doing nothing was undoubtedly destroying the Irish Parliamentary Party. The war had overshadowed the Irish question at Westminster and the Coalition had robbed the Irish Party of the leverage through which in the past the Irish question had often been forced back into prominence whenever it tended to be slighted. There was another established Irish strategy under such circumstances which was to return to Ireland, revitalize the movement and re-inspire the membership. Redmond now resorted to that

56Cork Examiner, 8 March, 1917.
strategy and he led his followers out of the House of Commons.57 In 1917, however, the climate of opinion in Ireland was such that such a withdrawal was "paying a dangerous tribute" to Sinn Fein whose policy towards Westminster called for precisely such a move.58 If withdrawal from the House of Commons was the only response which the Irish Party felt it could make to British policy in Ireland, then Party followers at home might be forgiven for thinking that Sinn Fein was perhaps right about more than merely abstentionism and this, combined with the surge of interest and publicity which followed Count Plunkett's election, provided Sinn Fein with an ideal opportunity to attract new recruits.

Following its walk-out the Irish Parliamentary Party began a publicity campaign of its own by issuing a manifesto appealing to the Irish communities of the United States, Canada, Australia, South Africa and New Zealand for support and for pressure upon the British Government on Ireland's behalf. The manifesto was couched in very pessimistic terms and reflected the growing despair of the parliamentarians. The Prime Minster's position was outlined from an Irish perspective, the manifesto declaring that:

The Prime Minister in his speech in yesterday's debate took up a position which if adhered to, would involve the denial of self-government to Ireland for ever. In it he laid down the principle that a small minority in the north-east of Ulster should have a veto so long as they chose to exercise

57 Ibid.
it on self-government for a united Ireland. That is a position to which the representatives of Ireland can never assent.\(^{59}\)

The despair of the Redmondites was, however, most evident when the manifesto turned to the future prospects of constitutional agitation:

At the outset we must declare that the action of the British Government since the formation of the Coalition in May, 1915, culminating in the speech of the Prime Minister last night, has made the task of carrying on the constitutional movement in Ireland so difficult as to be almost impossible.\(^{60}\)

Some faint hope was held out if Ireland and the Irish communities abroad stood united but it was clear that the Irish Party's self-confidence was on the wane.

The Irish Party's absence from Westminster was of short duration but when they re-entered the House of Commons they officially took up opposition to the Government on all but support for the war effort. In practice this meant very little and only made their impotence even more evident while narrowing the gap which distinguished them from Sinn Fein. John Dillon marked the change by declaring, "Our power is now paralyzed, and my advice to you is - in God's name leave Ireland alone, and let the wounds you have inflicted, and that are now festering, heal".\(^{61}\) What more the Party could offer than Sinn Fein under the circumstances was not clear. To move into impotent opposition and hope that the world-scattered Irish communities would influence the British

\(^{59}\)Freeman's Journal, 9 March, 1917.

\(^{60}\)Cork Examiner, 9 March, 1917.

\(^{61}\)Irish Weekly Independent, 17 March, 1917.
Government was not all that far removed from ignoring the British Government and hoping that the Peace Conference would influence the British Government, the policy which Count Plunkett put forward when he was awarded the freedom of Kilkenny.  

The Irish Parliamentary Party needed some evidence of the usefulness of its continued attendance at Westminster and in late March it seemed as if some justification was about to be provided as rumours became widespread that a new Government initiative to settle the Irish question was imminent. At the same time, however, increased pressures were being felt by the Party as a result of the Independent newspapers' rejection of the existing Home Rule Act. Colonial self-government was being demanded in lieu. This escalation of demands at a time when the Irish Party was unable to obtain any concessions on Home Rule was bound to contribute to an increase in tensions in Ireland.

The Irish Party at this time attempted to persuade the Government to publish the proceedings of the Dublin courts martial. The Independent newspapers and Sinn Fein also pressed this demand. The Freeman's Journal rallied to this new cause and declared:

If the Government has evidence to prove that the insurrection was not an Irish Rising but a German

---

62 Ibid.
64 See for example Irish Weekly Independent, 17 March, 1917.
65 Ibid., 10 March, 1917.
diversion, planned with the connivance of the men executed, let it be produced. Their hesitancy about producing it will be taken by popular opinion in Ireland as a proof that they have no such evidence; that the courts martial were illegal, and the executions criminal. 66

This reflected a considerable change in the paper's attitude in the year since the rising and reflected the shifting opinion among Party supporters. The crime of the rebel leaders had then been accepted even when the punishments had been judged politically unwise. Now that crime had been overshadowed by the crime of the authorities in carrying out these punishments. The executions had always been denounced as unduly harsh by most nationalists but they had been judged to be legal on the part of a regime against which an armed insurrection had been mounted in war time, even if direct enemy involvement was not considerable. The Proclamation of the Provisional Government had after all shown quite explicitly where the sympathies of the rebels lay in the war. Now evidence of direct German involvement if not direct German control was being cited as a necessary precondition to the legality of the executions. The Government's reply to this agitation, as given by the Chief Secretary, was that the Government did not feel warranted in making available a new literature of the rebellion. 67 The authorities were aware that a number of the executed leaders had made idealistic and moving statements of their reasons for rebelling and that

6621 March, 1917.

publication of these was likely to make the temper of Ireland worse.

Towards the end of March the earlier rumours concerning a new effort to solve the Irish question were confirmed when Mr. Bonar Law announced in the House of Commons that the Government was about to advance new proposals for the government of Ireland. He cited American and imperial pressures as a reason for this renewed attempt. The Irish Party strategy seemed to be paying off even though the Party received very little credit for this result but the form of the renewed effort was crucial to the Party's prestige. A quick solution would have been of immense benefit particularly as the Sinn Fein forces were not yet organized. General Richard Mulcahy recalled that:

In March 1917 the world war was still on; a Home Rule act had been passed, but suspended; a decision had been made that an amending act would be passed to partition Ireland; the country was under aggressive police vigilance and interference; active Volunteer work appeared out of the question, and arms were not to be seen. There was little talk or thought of conscription and many months were to pass enveloped in a feeling of warning that "the Volunteer could never be anything but a threat to England, and arms and armed activities could only bring destruction on the people."

An attempt was being made to consolidate the anti-Party forces behind the one elected abstentionist member of parliament, Count Plunkett. Circulars were sent to public bodies throughout

68Cork Examiner, 24 March, 1917.
Ireland as well as to Sinn Fein Clubs, branches of the Irish Nation League and Volunteer units inviting them to send delegates to a Mansion House Conference. The response from public bodies, most of which were still under Redmondite control, was not very encouraging in terms of favourable replies but while most recipient public bodies voted to mark the invitation "read" this was often done only by slim majorities showing that there was an erosive process at work among Redmond's supporters though most of Sinn Fein's support seemed to be coming from the previously apolitical and from those who had been prevented from emigrating by the war.  

The clear link revealed by the invitation between Count Plunkett and Sinn Fein even led some public bodies such as the Swinford Board of Guardians to expunge from their records the congratulations which had been voted to the Count following the North Roscommon election. The final count on public bodies' reactions to the Plunkett circular was 42 acceptances and 262 rejections. The Irish Party's leaders made use of the April parliamentary recess to restore its image in Ireland and with a new attempt to settle the Irish question in the offing they enjoyed some success though not such as to counter the renewed enthusiasm generated by the separatist activities of Easter Week.  

The Party was under attack from many quarters. Predictably

71 *Freeman's Journal*, 12 April, 1917.
72 *Cork Examiner*, 18 April, 1917.
the Irish Presbytarian General Assembly's Committee on the State of the Country passed a resolution declaring that it "feels bound to reaffirm the Church's determined opposition to Home Rule, convinced that it would inflict incalculable injury on Ireland, and prove a source of serious danger to the Empire". On the other hand William Martin Murphy analyzed the existing Home Rule Act from the point of view of Dublin business interests and found it wanting just as Arthur Griffith had in *Nationality*. This meant a drawing together of some elements of the bourgeoisie, hitherto a mainstay of the Irish Party and Sinn Fein, on whose ideology Connolly had failed to leave an imprint. The Party whose major triumph was the Home Rule Act was in the process of being robbed of even that claim to glory.

Partition continued to be a major and a more popular concern in which the Irish Trades Union Congress and Labour Party's protest from the left echoed the *Independent* newspapers more right wing objections. The *Independent* attitude was advanced in a leading article which declared:

Suggestions still continue to be made as to the plan which may be adopted for settling the Irish question, and although in some the word partition is not introduced, it is brought in under the guise of county option or in some other way. Our emphatic answer to all suggestions of this kind is that we

73 Ibid., 21 March, 1917.
74 *Irish Weekly Independent*, 7 April, 1917.
75 *Cork Examiner*, 21 March, 1917.
will not have partition in any shape or form or by any name. We insist on Home Rule for all Ireland, and we say that the Government should not listen to the claim of a small minority to veto the demand of the vast majority of the nation.\textsuperscript{76}

The extremists made use of Easter Week to defy the ban on processions and public meetings in Dublin.\textsuperscript{77} Protests were voiced and the republican flag was raised on the most inaccessible mast remaining on the burnt-out shell of the General Post Office. Volleys of stones which broke windows met attempts by the Dublin Metropolitan Police to lower the flag and a clash between police and demonstrators ensued.\textsuperscript{78}

The Irish Parliamentary Party was in a difficult position, not knowing who its worst enemy really was. It did not know whether to tackle Ulster unionism, Lloyd George, Sinn Fein, the Irish Nation League or England. The situation was chaotic and faced with so many enemies its defences were split and ineffective. Sinn Fein's position was much clearer even if somewhat paranoid, the enemy for them was Great Britain and all manifestations of West Britonism in Ireland. Nothing which emanated from Britain could be good, a position demonstrated by the conviction of most extremists that Britain could not possibly win the war. The refusal in much of Ireland to believe British war propaganda, which has at times been credited to realism, was accompanied by a willingness to

\textsuperscript{76}Irish Weekly Independent, 7 April, 1917.

\textsuperscript{77}Freeman's Journal, 7 April, 1917.

\textsuperscript{78}Ibid., 10 April, 1917.
accept any accusation which discredited Britain. Modern research suggests that under these circumstances the Irish Party was at a serious disadvantage as it tried to react to a highly complex reality for two reasons. First, for many years it had been leading Irish public opinion to demand a simple and exclusive solution to all of Ireland's problems. As James C. Davies pointed out people tend to seek and accept simple solutions to complex problems and when subjected to stress, as they were in Ireland in 1917, "they are far more willing to listen to a person who advocates the simple solution". The point is much the same as Hans Toch's observation that people who have been taught to expect simple solutions look for other simple solutions when faced with the inadequacy of the original ones. Secondly, it has also been found that under such complex circumstances the elite group which offers the least conciliatory programme as a solution is most likely to succeed in capturing popular support. In fact such an observation was made about Ireland in these years when it was said that:

The Irishman, in the mass and at normal times indifferent to separation, could understand the clear-cut Unionist policy of becoming part of the British Empire, even though that Empire meant no

79 See H. V. Dicks, "Intra-Personal Conflict and the Authoritarian Character", op. cit., pp. 92-93 for a discussion of the patterns of reaction to tension between subject and authority.
80 Human Nature in Politics, op. cit., p. 113.
more to him than the Sahara desert. He could understand the policy of separation from that Empire. What he could not understand was that fatal blurring of politics and the political game which told him he was different in psychology and character from the English as the Chinaman is from the Frenchman, and at the same time told him to stay with England. It was this blurring which at the time of the entrance of Sinn Fein upon the Irish stage had made Ireland utterly indifferent to her politicians but had sent her back to the flesh-pots of politics.83

The Irish Party policy had become too complex to be popular and the simpler ideology of Sinn Fein was bound to have considerable appeal. However, Sinn Fein in early 1917 was not yet sufficiently organized to take full advantage of the crisis in Irish public opinion. The first opportunity to begin re-organizing Sinn Fein into a mass political party was Count Plunkett's Mansion House meeting.

The upswing in extremist fortunes was made evident when the Executive of the Irish National Aid and Volunteer's Dependents' Funds, an I.R.B. controlled organization, reported that it had collected £107,000 from Irish communities around the world.84 This fund was important in that it provided funds to keep extremist agitation going as well as an effective and open means of communication. The Plunkett Conference, however, from the Sinn Fein point of view was premature. They were not yet ready to come to the fore and

83Shaw Desmond, The Drama of Sinn Fein, op. cit., p. 127.
84Freeman's Journal, 19 April, 1917.
it is possible that the Count with I.R.B. support was forcing the pace in order to displace Sinn Fein with his own local organizations, the Liberty Clubs. The Freeman's Journal seemed at one point to have found a weapon with which to destroy the effectiveness of the conference when it announced that the Socialist Party of Ireland intended to present a series of resolutions, some of which were distinctly anti-clerical, but on the following day the paper had to admit that it had been misled.  

There remained the possibility that the conference would expose the fragmented nature of the extremist opposition to the Party. The meeting was in fact a stormy one with Arthur Griffith accusing the Count of denying him the floor. Other arguments broke out between Sinn Feiners and the representatives of the Irish Volunteers in particular. The Irish Labour Party was obviously in a very awkward relationship with both Sinn Fein and with the Irish Nation League.

According to Thomas Dillon, who was present at the conference, it was the membership of the various organizations and bodies attending which prevailed upon this respective leaders to arrive at a joint common position. In the end the conference managed to agree on the setting up of an Executive Council to

---

85 Ibid., 16 and 17 April, 1917.
86 Ibid., 20 April, 1917.
87 Ibid.
co-ordinate the activities of Sinn Fein, the Irish Nation
League, the Irish American Alliance, the Irish Volunteers,
the Irish Labour Party and the Liberty Clubs. Elected to
this council were Count Plunkett, Dr. Dillon, Arthur Griffith,
Ald. Thomas Kelly, Stephen O'Mara, Sean Milroy, Fr. O'Flanagan,
Countess Plunkett and C. Brown. The conference also issued
a declaration:

That we proclaim Ireland to be a separate nation.
That we assert Ireland's right to freedom from all
foreign control denying the authority of any foreign
Parliament to make laws for Ireland.
That we affirm the right of the Irish people to
declare their will is law, and enforce their decisions
in their own land without let or hinderance from any
other country.
That maintaining the status of Ireland as a distinct
nation, we demand representation at the coming Peace
Conference.
That it is the duty of the nations taking part in
the Peace Conference to guarantee the liberty of the
nations calling for their intervention, releasing the
small nations from the control of the greater Powers.
That our claim to complete independence is founded
on human right and the law of nations.
That we declare that Ireland has never yielded, but
has ever fought against foreign rule.
That we hereby bind ourselves to use every means in
our power to attain complete liberty for our country.

This was clearly a separatist declaration though just as
clearly not committed to an Irish Republic which the I.R.B.
would have wished.

Sinn Fein was given another opportunity to challenge
the Irish Party's electoral appeal in a South Longford by-
election. Joseph McGuinness, then a prisoner in Britain,

89 *Freeman's Journal*, 20 April, 1917.
90 Ibid.
was nominated by Sinn Fein. The Irish Parliamentary Party was confident of victory and three candidates initially came forward on the Party's behalf.\(^91\) When it became clear, after the Mansion House conference, that the Sinn Fein candidate would enjoy the support of the wide spectrum of organizations which had been participants, the three Irish Party candidates agreed to allow John Redmond to choose one of them to be the official candidate.\(^92\) T. P. McKenna was selected and the Party victory seemed assured.\(^93\) The campaign was low-keyed and the major Sinn Fein slogan was "Get him in to get him out" a sentiment which the Party, then campaigning for the release of Irish prisoners could not very well oppose. McGuinness's supporters were still an uneasy coalition and the campaign on his behalf lacked a unified theme though it was clearly separatist in spirit. Sinn Fein did benefit from a number of factors, however, such as the frustration building up over the prolonged delay in unveiling of the Government's promised new initiative to solve the Irish question. The hope in Redmondite circles was for a plan which would secure the unity of Ireland but prolonged delay gave rise to uncertainty and to a growing conviction that, once again, the Government was not treating Ireland fairly.\(^94\) Dr. O'Dwyer,

\(^{91}\) Ibid., 10 April, 1917.

\(^{92}\) Ibid., 23 April, 1917.

\(^{93}\) Ibid., 26 April, 1917.

\(^{94}\) Ibid., 2 May, 1917.
the Roman Catholic Bishop of Limerick, came to the support
of Sinn Fein with a denunciation of Redmond's leadership
since the day he had agreed to the shelving of Home Rule
for the duration of the war. A few days later the Bishop
wrote to say that his attack had in fact not been directed
at John Redmond but at the continued imprisonment of Irishmen
for political reasons. This in any case did not alter
what he had written of Redmond and merged in well with the
Sinn Fein argument that a vote for McGuinness was a vote for
a general amnesty. The Party attempted to counter the Bishop
of Limerick's influence by having Mr. McKenna nominated for
election by the Roman Catholic Bishop of Ardagh.

As the South Longford campaign drew to a close it became,
as in the earlier North Roscommon election, a "German Gold v
cheering at the executions" type of contest. The Irish Party
sent Dillon and Devlin to support McKenna and Sinn Fein
countered with Mrs. Pearse, Mrs. Clarke, and Miss O'Hanrahan.
Younger clergy were again prominent in Sinn Fein marches as
were well-drilled Volunteers. Dillon and Devlin attacked
the militarism of Sinn Fein but, in the absence of any progress
on the Home Rule front, they found it difficult to support
their attack on the "impossible" dream of an Irish Republic.

95 Cork Examiner, 1 May, 1917.
96 Ibid., 4 May, 1917.
97 Ibid.
98 Freeman's Journal, 5 May, 1917.
99 Irish Weekly Independent, 5 May, 1917.
To many electors it must have seemed as if the major issue in the election was a choice between two impossible dreams and under the circumstances they may have chosen what they regarded as the better dream. Two related events seriously undermined the Irish Party's appeal. An anti-partition drive was launched by Irish bishops, including three Church of Ireland bishops with southern Irish sees. The Party's earlier acceptance of temporary exclusion for the Unionist counties of Ulster meant that such a move would rekindle the hostility it had then incurred and favour the candidate enjoying the backing of the Irish Nation League. Eighteen bishops together with seven prominent laymen addressed a letter to the Irish people which called on the "authoritative voice of the Nation" to make itself heard on the question of "the dismemberment of our country" and it specifically referred to temporary exclusion as being objectionable. It further declared:

Our requisition needs no urging. An appeal to the National conscience on the question of Ireland's dismemberment should meet with one answer alone. To Irishmen of every creed and class and party the very thought of our country partitioned and torn as a new Poland must be one of heart-rending sorrow.

The second factor which undermined the Party's position was a letter written by the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. Walsh, on the eve of polling in South Longford. Dr. Walsh's

100 *Freeman's Journal*, 7 May, 1917.
101 *Cork Examiner*, 8 May, 1917.
letter was written to the press in order to "explain" the bishops' position on partition. He wrote that:

The question may, perhaps, be asked why a number of us, Irish Bishops, Catholic and Protestant, have thought it worth our while to sign a protest against the partitioning of Ireland. Has not that miserable policy, condemned as it has been by the all but unanimous voice of Nationalist Ireland, been removed months ago, from the sphere of practical politics? Nothing of the kind. Anyone who thinks that partition, whether in its naked deformity, or under the transparent mask of "county option", does not hold a leading place in the practical politics of today, is simply living in a fool's paradise.

And in a devastating postscript he added:

I think it a duty to write this, although from information that has just reached me, I am fairly satisfied that the mischief has already been done, and that the country is practically sold.\(^{103}\)

It is clear that only the Party could have been referred to as selling the country and two of the laymen who had signed the anti-partition letter withdrew their signatures in protest at Dr. Walsh's interpretation.\(^ {104}\) Sinn Fein recognized the weapon which had been handed to them and reprinted Dr. Walsh's letter as a pamphlet which they distributed throughout South Longford on election day. The result of the election was a Sinn Fein victory by a margin of thirty-seven votes.\(^ {105}\) There were claims by Party supporters following the election that Sinn Fein had resorted to intimidation of voters on a significant scale but Dr. Walsh's letter remained the single

\(^{103}\)Ibid.

\(^{104}\)Freeman's Journal, 10 and 12 May, 1917.

\(^{105}\)Cork Examiner, 11 May, 1917.
most potent element in the Sinn Fein victory. The victory was a cheering one for Sinn Fein and Volunteer activity almost immediately became bolder and more open. The Government's reaction was to order the closing down of Liberty Hall, a totally inappropriate measure to deal with Volunteer militancy in provincial towns and only likely to drive Irish labour into a closer relationship with Sinn Fein.

Immediately following the South Longford by-election Mr. Bonar Law announced that new Government proposals dealing with the Irish question would be introduced in the House after being circulated to Irish leaders. This tended to confirm the popular impression that voting for Sinn Fein was the only way to prompt the Government to action. The plan was outlined to John Redmond in a long letter from the Prime Minister in which Lloyd George made clear that the Government was looking for a temporary solution which would not endanger the war effort. Short of that they were prepared to confer self-government along the lines of the Home Rule Act of 1914 upon Ireland and, while the measure would formally be applied to all of Ireland, six counties of Ulster would be excluded for five years with a review of the position to take place at that

---

106 This has been the conclusion of people of such differing outlooks as Sean T. O'Kelly and William O'Brien. See "Memoirs of Sean T.", Irish Press, 26 July, 1961 and The Irish Revolution and How it Came About, op. cit., p. 317. See also Sir Shane Leslie, "Archbishop Walsh" in Conor Cruise O'Brien, ed., The Shaping of Modern Ireland, op. cit., p. 103.


108 Ibid., 16 May, 1917.
time. A Council of Ireland capable of assuming such domestic powers as would be agreed by both parts of Ireland was offered as a symbol of Irish unity. Lloyd George went on to say:

The Government feel that a proposal which provides for immediate Home Rule for the greater part of Ireland, while excluding that part of Ireland which objects to coming under the Home Rule Act, for a definite period after which Parliament will consider the matter afresh; which recognizes the profound sentiment existing in Ireland for the unity of the country by creating a common council to consider Irish affairs as a whole; which, finally, sets up a representative Conference to attempt to adjust the most difficult questions involved, is as far as they can possibly go towards effecting a legislative settlement in the crisis of a great war.

After urging Redmond to accept the proposal Lloyd George outlined an alternative should the scheme prove unacceptable. This alternative had originally been suggested by Redmond himself so that it at least was unlikely to be rejected.

The Prime Minister briefly outlined this alternative which was:

... that of assembling a Convention of Irishmen of all parties for the purpose of producing a scheme of Irish self-government.

As you will remember the constitution of the Union of South Africa was framed, despite most formidable difficulties and obstacles, by a Convention representative of all the interests and parties in the country, and the Government believes that a similar expedient might, in the last resort, be found effectual in Ireland. Would it be too much to hope that Irishmen of all creeds and parties might meet together in Convention for the purpose of drafting a Constitution for their country which should secure a just balance of all the opposing interests and finally compose the unhappy discords which have so long distracted Ireland and impeded its harmonious development? The Government is ready, in default of the adoption of their present proposals for Home Rule, to take the necessary steps for the assembling of such a Convention. 109

109 Cd 8573, "Letter from the Prime Minister regarding Ireland". Parliamentary Papers 1917-18 Vol XXXVIII
In contrast to the details of the proposal given in the first part of the letter nothing was said concerning the composition of this Convention or the basis upon which representatives of all interests and parties were to be chosen. This question was shortly to prove of crucial importance.

The Freeman's Journal immediately mirrored the only reaction which the Irish Parliamentary Party felt free to make in the light of Dr. Walsh's letter and the South Longford defeat. It flatly rejected the first proposal because of the exclusion of the six Ulster counties and it dismissed the entire scheme as mere window dressing to appease American opinion but it did endorse the Convention proposal.\textsuperscript{110} The Cork Examiner on the other hand gave qualified approval to the Prime Minister's plan and initially did not refer to the Convention alternative.\textsuperscript{111} This marked a significant breach within the ranks of the Party supporters. It was the first time since Redmond's refusal to join the Coalition that the Cork Examiner baulked at the Party's official policy and this disagreement was more fundamental in this case than the earlier one had been. It meant that the quality of Redmond's support was deteriorating and that it would be less united than in the past. The Ulster unionists avoided an immediate commitment by referring the proposals to the Ulster Unionist Council.\textsuperscript{112} A review of the unionist press in the days immediately following the publication of the proposals indicates that broadly speaking

\textsuperscript{110} Cork Examiner, 17 May, 1917.
\textsuperscript{111} 17 May, 1917.
\textsuperscript{112} Cork Examiner, 17 May, 1917.
the first alternative was preferred except among southern unionists and Lord Midleton, on behalf of southern unionists, rejected partition. Ulster unionists continued to oppose Home Rule in any form as being detrimental to the larger patriotism of the United Kingdom or the Empire. In the House of Commons Sir John Lonsdale, representing die-hard unionism, reiterated unalterable opposition to any and all schemes of Home Rule but also expressed willingness to examine the proposals. The proposal can thus be seen to have split both the Irish Party and the Unionists and while the Unionist split was the more apparent, that within the Irish Party had serious long-run implications for its solidarity.

On behalf of Sinn Fein Count Plunkett immediately announced a policy of boycott of the Convention. The Mansion House Committee, seeing the propaganda potential of a more qualified attitude, modified the Count's flat refusal and called for a Convention freely chosen on the basis of adult suffrage and free to declare for the complete independence of Ireland.

The clearest reasoned statement of this stand came from the pen of the Bishop of Limerick. In a long letter, the first half of which was a protest against military censorship, Dr. O'Dwyer wrote:

I observe that Mr. Redmond, on behalf of his followers in Parliament, has summarily rejected the Government's proposed partition of Ireland.

113 Ibid., 19 May, 1917.
114 Freeman's Journal, 18 May, 1917.
115 Ibid., 19 May, 1917.
116 Ibid. 21 May, 1917.
The South Longford election made that decision inevitable, and the very fact that Mr. Lloyd George proposed an alternative to the Home Rule Act which is on the Statute Book shows the depth of his sincerity. But the Home Rule Act has not been a useless measure. It has served the Government's purposes to perfection. For the last eleven years it has been the trump card in the hands of their Irish followers to hoodwink and deceive the Irish people, and we must allow that the British principles and their Irish tools have played their game well. I should like to know if we are to begin again a new phase of the confidence trick. A convention of Irishmen to draw up a scheme of government for their country is an attractive proposal, but we can see how readily it lends itself to the old game of deception.

Let me ask a few questions about it.
(1) Will it be elected by the Irish people?
(2) Will it have statutory power, or will it be a mere consultative body?
(3) Will it decide questions by a majority of its members, or will unanimity be required?
(4) If it decides, as would be inevitable, that the six counties are to come in, will they be required to come in or will it be an axiom that Ulster must not be coerced?

Plain and authoritative answers are wanted to these questions unless we are to be made fools of again, and Mr. Redmond and his followers are to do the work of England in Ireland until the end of the war, as they have done since the beginning. The Irish dupes who trusted the Party will be left the thimble but find no pea.117

The Irish Trade Union Congress and Labour Party initially did not endorse either side in the controversy over the Prime Minister's proposals but its declared opposition to any form of partition was a clear rejection of the first alternative.118 Within a few days the Dublin Trades Council adopted a position which was close to Sinn Fein's and

117 Ibid., 19 May, 1917.
118 Ibid.
declared its opposition not only to partition but also to any non-elected convention.\footnote{Ibid., 28 May, 1917.}

How an elected convention could have represented "all the interests and parties in the country" as the Prime Minister had stipulated in his letter to Redmond was a question to which none of the objectors addressed themselves but it was clear that they were no longer content to allow the Irish Party to act as the representatives of the preponderant part of Nationalist Ireland. It was also in Sinn Fein's interest not to participate and thus to avoid direct confrontation with the Ulster unionists and with the other difficulties which might have required a more complex approach. The convention scheme could easily become a web from which they would have considerable difficulty extricating themselves. The Irish Republican Brotherhood, with Michael Collins at the helm, was preparing for another armed confrontation and participation in the Convention would have posed a threat to revolutionary fervour as the complexities of the situation came into conflict with simple revolutionary solutions.

The Irish Unionist Alliance despite a strong preference for the maintenance of the status quo accepted participation in the Convention while at the same time deploiring the reopening of the question in war time and in breach of the political truce on contentious domestic issues.\footnote{Cork Examiner, 2 June, 1917.}
The statements of Sir John Lonsdale, however, were not encouraging to those who thought that a convention might result in an all-Ireland solution. Without rejecting participation in the Convention he declared:

The Nationalist Party have proclaimed in advance that they will listen to no proposal involving what they call the partition of Ireland. On the other hand, we have decided that we cannot, and we will not, consent to any system of Home Rule which does not exclude from its operation the six counties of northeast Ulster. We regard that as the minimum measure of concession from our point of view.\textsuperscript{121}

This position, while not specifically endorsed by the Government, was given some support by Mr. Bonar Law's declaration that the Government continued to reject the coercion of Ulster. The \textit{Irish Weekly Independent} commented that:

An organization not representing one fifth of the county have got a public assurance that if they insist on partition, a scheme detested by more than four-fifths of the Irish people, the Government will support them against the rest of Ireland. Therefore unless partition is adopted the conference must end in failure. This is a monstrous position for any Government to take up. Let us be told plainly and publicly whether they adhere to it or whether they repudiate it.\textsuperscript{122}

The Government assurances were sufficient to persuade the Ulster Unionist Council to accept the invitation to the Convention though the Council did express doubts about the possible success of the Convention and made clear that its decision to participate was based on the clear understanding that no scheme of self-government would be forced upon Ulster

\textsuperscript{121}Freeman's Journal, 22 May, 1917.

\textsuperscript{122}2 June, 1917.
without the concurrence of the people affected.¹²³

Redmond had clearly not escaped the dilemma of partition yet there seemed no other constitutional route to follow but that of the Convention and it was possible, even though unrealistic, to maintain that a Convention offered some hope of a solution not involving partition. In fact given the circumstances of the time it is hard not to agree with J.J. Horgan that of Lloyd George's two alternatives:

The first proposal was in fact the better. It recognized the realities of the Irish situation and provided a bridge across which national unity might have been reached. Moreover it would have put the Government's bona fides to an immediate legislative test while American participation in the war was still fresh and opinion free. Events in Ireland, however, made its acceptance by the Irish Party impossible.¹²⁴

Dr. Walsh's letter occupies a prominent place among those events in Ireland which influenced Redmond's choice. The letter did generate some heat among Party supporters and one clerical supporter of Redmond, Charles Canon Quinn, went so far as to describe publicly the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin as a liar making false and malicious charges.¹²⁵

Dr. O'Dwyer, meanwhile, mounted another episcopal attack on Redmond and, in a letter to the Cork Examiner, he declared:

As to the few complimentary words which I used a few years ago about Mr. Redmond, I admit they were a mistake, and I beg to withdraw them. I thought at the time that he was an Irishman. I have learned since that he is not even a man. He is a mere figure-head, painted green; but I thought, at that time, that he had some strength

¹²³Cork Examiner, 9 June, 1917.
¹²⁴From Parnell to Pearse, op. cit., pp. 298-299.
¹²⁵Freeman's Journal, 22 May, 1917.
of character, and some national feeling, and I believed that we were on the point of getting Home Rule. But the war has showed what he is made of, and the partition of Ireland, which he attempted to smuggle through, is the best indication of his ability and his patriotism.

John Dillon was also described in unflattering terms as the "poor drivelling bottle holder of the English Liberals". The Irish Party was caught in a trap largely of its own devising and it appears that John Dillon himself was convinced that Home Rule would be even further curtailed if the Convention proved able to secure agreement among all parties.

Another Redmondite organization whose allegiance showed signs of wavering was the National Volunteer Movement. A conference of National Volunteer officers was held at the Mansion House in Dublin at the end of May and intense bickering took place between pro-Redmond and anti-Redmond factions so that very little could in fact be decided. The end result was a resolution which revealed the growing strength of anti-Redmond opinion within the movement. The resolution was silent on the question of the forthcoming Convention reflecting the conviction of one faction that the Convention would be rigged. In the end the resolution sounded more like one from Sinn Fein than from party supporters. It read:

That as the principal work of the Peace Conference must, of necessity, be the confirmation and safeguarding of the rights of small nationalities, we hereby endorse the demand that the right of Ireland to independence shall be considered equally with that of Poland, Belgium, Serbia, Bulgaria, Rumania, and

126 26 May, 1917.

Montenegro; and that as the Irish Volunteers and the Citizen Army were openly raised, and publicly recognized as military organizations, we demand that the members of those bodies now in English convict prisons, if not immediately released, shall rank as military prisoners and be accorded the treatment of prisoners of war.128

Redmond's control over the organization had obviously diminished almost to vanishing point. The organization would nevertheless survive for some months yet as a more moderate and more public military force than the Irish Volunteers.

The Irish Volunteers were also reorganizing in the spring of 1917. The process was surreptitious but in May the members of the Irish Volunteers were informed that a new executive had been chosen. The tactics which were outlined for the Irish Volunteers at this time were hardly to be distinguished from the old Irish Republican Brotherhood approach. In fact Michael Collins was a major influence in both organizations which were being run as secret societies and the advantage of the Volunteers over the I.R.B. was that, at a time when the Roman Catholic hierarchy was turning away from the Irish Party, the ecclesiastical condemnation of the I.R.B. as a secret society had never been extended to the Volunteers, thus making it open for dutiful Roman Catholics. The movement was, however, a potentially violent one and on instructions issued to Irish Volunteers on 22 May, 1917 openly contemplated the completion by force of arms of the work begun by the

Dublin insurrection. The instructions went on to declare that Volunteers

... are at liberty, and are encouraged, to join any other movement that aims at making Ireland a separate and independent nation...

They are reminded, however, of what occurred when Parnell induced the Fenians to fall into line with him - a fusion that resulted in the almost complete abandonment of physical force as a policy. They are warned therefore, against devoting too much time or energy to any movement other than their own, but help them solely for the reason that they may enable them to spread the principles of their own organization, which is the one to which they owe and must give first allegiance.\textsuperscript{129}

It soon became clear that there was little need for the Irish Volunteers to continue to be limited to clandestine activity. The Government promulgated regulations designed to suppress the movement but these were not enforced with any determination and so, as the year went on, parading and drilling openly in uniform became commonplace.\textsuperscript{130}

Economic discontent affected Irish teachers at this time and a meeting was held in Ballaghderreen to protest against the lower salaries paid to Irish teachers within the United Kingdom.\textsuperscript{131} Teachers were turning away from the Irish Party which had been unable to remedy this disparity in salaries. Lack of confidence in the Party's policies concerning self-government and partition were also instrumental in this change of allegiance but there also was being manifested a new critical spirit which took exception at the fact

\textsuperscript{129}Quoted in Florence O'Donoghue, \textit{Tomas MacCurtain}, op.cit., p.126.


\textsuperscript{131}\textit{Freeman's Journal}, 4 June, 1917.
that Irish Party leaders had long connived at the misuse of funds earmarked for education and had diverted these into the construction of light railways, piers, harbours and into land purchase. When the Irish Party had been riding high on the crest of a wave of popular favour such things had been ignored to a large extent but now that public criticism had replaced public adulation these political pecadilloes, common among parties which have been so long unchallenged that they conceive of themselves as having an absolute right to power, were brought out into the open and furthered the process of alienation. The alienation of labour was far more complete than that of the teachers but it was continuing. The Dublin Trades Council called a mass meeting in Phoenix Park to protest against Government restrictions on Irish industries. The meeting unanimously passed a resolution accusing the Government of deliberately attempting to drive large members of Irish workers into unemployment and of seeking to crush Irish industry. These accusations were given wide credence in Ireland and increased perceptions of relative deprivation though in retrospect it may be doubted that such calculated malevolence should have been imputed to the British Government which was much more concerned at this time with the destruction of the German economy. Ireland's economy was certainly being neglected,


133 Freeman's Journal, 18 June, 1917.
however, and the rebellion, diminished recruiting and refusal to accept conscription had extinguished whatever English good-will and sympathy for Ireland there had been. That in itself, without active ill-will, would have sufficed to account for the discrimination noted by the Dublin Trades Council but Ireland was largely insulated against the war's full impact and as public opinion separated itself from the imperial ideology of the Irish Parliamentary Party a growing political solipsism made it difficult to take into account the concerns of the rest of the world. The mood which began to grip Irish public opinion in 1917 has been pithily described in Sylvain Briollay's phrase: "They would set fire to the world to cook their Irish egg".\textsuperscript{134}

Within the ranks of the extremists all was not well either and Griffith had to exert a great deal of pressure to contain Count Plunkett who seems to have been influenced by the Irish Republican Brotherhood. The Count, almost certainly with I.R.B. encouragement, moved in late May to set up Liberty Clubs throughout Ireland. As Sinn Fein already had a vast network of branches throughout the country these clubs were seen as a new challenge which threatened a further split among those whose activities were supposedly being co-ordinated by the Mansion House Committee. The Count's move came to light publicly when he issued a circular in the Cork area reading:

I am calling a meeting on the 10th June at the National Monument, Cork, at 3 o'clock p.m. for the purpose of founding Liberty Clubs and Circles in Cork city and county. The purpose of the Clubs and Circles, as I defined at the Assembly in Dublin on the 19th April, is to make a force of Irish opinion for the defence of Ireland and the securing of her liberties. The members of the Clubs and Circles will be pledged to repudiate the English Parliament, to deny its authority, and to use every available means to attain the complete independence of Ireland. Our claim for the representation of Ireland at the Peace Conference and the demand for the treatment of Irish political prisoners as prisoners of war will be brought forward in resolutions.\textsuperscript{135}

There was clearly nothing in the proposed aim of the Liberty Clubs which was incompatible with the goals of Sinn Fein but the setting up of yet another organization would have been a set-back to Griffith's diligent efforts to unify the nationalist opposition to Redmond under the Sinn Fein umbrella. The Count was persuaded to cancel his Cork visit.\textsuperscript{136}

The weakest element, from an extremist point of view, in the coalition with which Griffith worked, The Irish Nation League, fell into line on 8 June when it was announced that:

\begin{quote}
The Supreme Council of the Irish Nation League joins the Assembly Committee and the Sinn Fein Executive in repudiating the convention proposed by Mr. Lloyd George. A convention to have the authority to draft a constitution for the Irish nation must be elected for that purpose by the Irish people, and must be free to adopt any form of government decided upon by the majority of its members, and such a decision to be final and binding. The convention proposed by Mr. Lloyd George does not
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{135}Cork Examiner, 4 June, 1917.

\textsuperscript{136}Ibid., 6 June, 1917.
fulfil those conditions, and therefore can be regarded by the Council only as an attempt on the part of the English Government to play to the gallery of the World Powers.\textsuperscript{137}

This was a significant move from an organization which was still intent on constitutional means to obtain self-government.

The actions of two Roman Catholic bishops in early June also assisted Sinn Fein though in neither case was this the direct intent. Dr. Hoare, the Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise was reported to have said in reply to addresses of felicitation on his golden jubilee in the priesthood that "they heard a great deal of the afflictions of Belgium and Poland, but they could not be compared to the sufferings of poor old Ireland".\textsuperscript{138} Such sentiments expressed only a few months earlier would have been interpreted as an endorsement of the Irish Party's position and that no doubt was the spirit in which they were made but now Sinn Fein was becoming established in the popular mind as the advocate of "poor old Ireland" and in practice such comments coming from a prelate of the Roman Catholic Church would reinforce Sinn Fein rather than the Party. The action of Dr. McHugh, the Bishop of Derry was more clearly a challenge to the Irish Party's position. Dr. McHugh had already become identified as a relentless foe of partition under any guise and thus of the Irish Party's acceptance of temporary exclusion for six Ulster

\textsuperscript{137}Ibid., 8 June, 1917.

\textsuperscript{138}Ibid., 6 June, 1917.
counties. He now launched a new offensive against the principle of exclusion. On 4 June, 1917 he sent a letter to prominent Irishmen from all walks of life in which he said:

If you would be willing to join a number of prominent priests and laymen in summoning a national meeting in Dublin to protest against the partisan and pro-partition arrangements for the proposed Convention, wire me at the Hamman Hotel, Dublin, on receipt of this, saying simply, "yes".

and he went on to announce that a meeting would be held at the Marlborough Street Presbytery in Dublin on 6 June. Opposition to the Convention which had been John Redmond's brain-child was growing stronger though there can be no doubt that a successful and rapid resolution of the question by the Convention would have restored the Irish Party's prestige and popularity to a significant degree.

John Redmond and the Irish Party suffered a severe blow when Major William Redmond was killed at the front. His death opened up a vacancy for the parliamentary seat in East Clare. William Redmond had been one of the most popular members of the Party and his seat had been uncontested for twenty-three years. There was no Party organization in the constituency and the initial reaction seems to have been not to contest the seat in the face of the obvious determination of Sinn Fein to try and win it. However, when de Valera, then still in gaol, was nominated by Sinn Fein, the Kerry

Freeman's Journal, 8 June, 1917.
Crown Prosecutor, Patrick Lynch, a Party supporter, resigned his office and announced his candidacy. Thus the Irish Party found itself reluctantly dragged into a contest in support of a very poor candidate, as any Crown Prosecutor was bound to be at this time. As one commentator has put it "The Crown Prosecutor was confronted by the Crown Prosecuted, with only one possible result".\textsuperscript{140} Two other events of mid-June, 1917 favoured Sinn Fein. A meeting had been scheduled for Beresford Place on Sunday, 10 June, to demand better treatment for Irish prisoners. The meeting was proclaimed by Dublin Castle and as usual the proclamation was ignored and a large crowd assembled. On this occasion the authorities decided to enforce the proclamation and the Dublin Metropolitan Police faced the crowd. Count Plunkett and Cathal Brugha, who headed the Irish Volunteers, drove up to the meeting and the police moved in to arrest them, a riot ensued and while the Count and Brugha were arrested Inspector Mills of the D.M.P. was killed by a blow from a hurley stick.\textsuperscript{141} This resulted in a great wave of sympathy for the extremists at the same time as it removed from active politics two of Griffith's opponents within the separatist movement. It also resulted in an official prohibition against the carrying of hurley sticks which was openly defied and not vigorously enforced, thus further damaging the Government's authority.


\textbf{\textsuperscript{141}} \textit{Freeman's Journal}, 11 June, 1917.
In this moment of high tension the Government, seeking to ensure that the Convention would start in an atmosphere of good-will, decided to release unconditionally the Irish prisoners who had been convicted of offences connected with the Dublin rising. Southern unionists were disturbed by the Government's decision and Lord Midleton complained that the move would be fatal to the Convention, antagonizing those who were loyal and encouraging the extremists to "trade on the weakness of the government". Professor Phillips has commented that:

This release was unconditional. There was no such "iron-clad" oath as the North had imposed upon the South after the American Civil War. The released Sinn Feiners were free to exercise all the rights of citizenship without first swearing allegiance to the United Kingdom; still less were they required to make a statement before voting or taking office, that in sharing in the rebellion they had been guilty of "treason and felony". It was an act of political generosity without parallel in history. In Ireland it was very generally regarded as an act of political folly equally without parallel. The Lord Mayor of Dublin might, in addressing his Corporation, hail the release as "a happy omen of peace and good will"; but by the mass of the Irish people it was looked upon as yet another victory for Sinn Fein, and the released leaders were quick to proclaim it as the outcome not of generosity but of fear.

In this instance it appears as if the unionist analysis of the situation was fairly accurate. In the mood of discontent prevailing in Ireland the released prisoners were welcomed with enthusiasm. Countess Markievicz's announcement that

142Cork Examiner, 16 June, 1917.
she planned to become a Roman Catholic made her the darling of Ireland. Republican flags were flown and republican songs were heard as first Dublin and then provincial cities and towns greeted the heroes of the rising and no police interferences took place.\textsuperscript{145} The released prisoners included Eamon de Valera, the Sinn Fein candidate in East Clare. As the senior officer surviving the Easter rising he enjoyed great prestige and to him fell the task of pulling closer together the disparate groups which were united behind his candidacy. As Desmond Greaves has observed:

The release of the prisoners marked the commencement of a new phase in the Irish struggle. The entire surviving leadership of the national movement was now free. Throughout the country Sinn Fein membership grew with a fresh impetus. In the week immediately following the return eighty newly established clubs sought affiliation. But the prisoners, for all their greater prestige, were no more politically homogeneous than those outside, and differences had already revealed themselves among them.\textsuperscript{146}

It was vital to Sinn Fein that its supporters find common ground from which to oppose both the British Government and the Irish Parliamentary Party without disrupting their growing popular following. One of the first steps in this process of consolidation was the signing by twenty-six returning prisoners of a letter to the President and Congress of the United States. The letter was signed in Dublin on 18 June, 1917 and significantly the signatures included those of both de Valera and Eoin MacNeill, whose status as a leader

\textsuperscript{145}\textit{Cork Examiner} and \textit{Freeman's Journal}, 19, 20, 21, 22, June, 1917.  
\textsuperscript{146}\textit{Liam Mellows and the Irish Revolution}, op. cit., p. 135.
in the new Sinn Fein was in doubt. The United States had now declared war on Germany and this appeal to the President and Congress meant a distinct toning down of the pro-German orientation of Irish extremism opening the way over for many alienated Irish Party supporters who had been repelled by the earlier stance. The letter itself lectured President Wilson on the implications for Ireland of some of his pro-nouncements concerning the sovereignty of small nationalities. Significantly, both for its appeal abroad and for home consumption, it couched its demands in defensive rather than aggressive terms. In relation to the President's call for remedies to the denial of freedom to smaller nations it said:

    We trust that such remedies - in preference to any governmental professions whatsoever - will be held to include the right of each people, not merely to rely on other peoples to support their claim to national liberty, but what the Governments and peoples of other nations will, we trust, regard as even more sacred, the right of each people to defend itself against external aggression, external interferences and external control. It is this particular right that we claim for the Irish people, and not content with statements of principles, though these themselves may be made a pretext for our oppression, we are engaged and mean to engage ourselves in the practical means for establishing this right.

Here was a vindication of Lord Midleton's apprehensions, such sentiments were certainly likely to strengthen the Ulster determination to have nothing to do with a Dublin government.

The inclusion of Eoin MacNeill among the signatories of this letter was a significant step in coalition building within

148 Cmd 1108, "Documents Relative to the Sinn Fein Movement", Parliamentary Papers, 1921, Vol. XXIX.
the extremist camp. MacNeill's interference with the preparations for the rebellion and his refusal to join it when once under way had made him highly unpopular among the more militant segments of the Sinn Fein movement but as Robert Brennan pointed out:

Dev, at this time was forming a platform wide enough to hold us all together and he had early decided to bring MacNeill back into the ranks, to the dismay of all who thought the Professor should be ostracised for the part he played in Easter Week. "Don't forget", said Dev, "that the clergy are with MacNeill and they are a powerful force". Similarly, Dev was working night and day to get Brugha and Griffith in step. They had been at loggerheads before Dev came out of prison, so much so that Brugha had threatened that if Griffith stumped the country for Sinn Fein, he would get the Volunteers to stop him.149

De Valera also courted the favour of the Roman Catholic Church by refusing to rejoin the Irish Republican Brotherhood because of the hierarchy's ban on secret societies.150 The need to conciliate the Roman Catholic hierarchy became more pressing following the arrest of what seemed a growing commitment to anti-Redmond forces which followed the announcement that four Roman Catholic Bishops were to be invited to sit in the Irish Convention.151 The day after the announcement the bishops unanimously accepted the invitation.152 It is a reflection of the political climate of Ireland at this time

151 Freeman's Journal, 20 June, 1917.
152 Cork Examiner, 21 June, 1917.
that the *Freeman's Journal* should have found it necessary
to point out that it was the appointment of the four bishops
which ensured that the Convention would meet.\textsuperscript{153} The Irish
Party's endorsement was no longer sufficient and the Roman
Catholic hierarchy was being looked to for active political
leadership by many who, alienated from the Party, were not
ready to cast their lot with Sinn Fein; another factor not
likely to reassure unionists. William O'Brien's All-for-
Ireland League meanwhile rejected the Convention as unrep-
resentative and unlikely to produce anything but partition.
O'Brien, as the long time advocate of small round table
conferences to solve Irish problems, was awkwardly placed in
this instance but he declared that the Convention scheme
was a "specious" adoption of the conference method and that
he continued to favour a small conference of notables.\textsuperscript{154}

Dr. McHugh's anti-partition and anti-Convention movement
among prominent men in Ireland, now bereft of the Bishop of
Derry's leadership because of the hierarchy's decision to
accept participation in the Convention, had nevertheless
managed to get going and it scheduled a Phoenix Park meeting
for 1 July. The announcement of this meeting read in part
that:

> We have reached a momentous crisis in the nation's
> history. From the signs in the times and the
> whisperings in the air, we may gather that the Plot
> for the Partition of Ireland is now matured. Hopes

\textsuperscript{153} 20 June, 1917.

\textsuperscript{154} *Freeman's Journal*, 21 June, 1917.
were raised by Mr. Lloyd George's proposal of a national Convention. Ireland could have no fear when her cause would be in the keeping of her own sons freely elected and assembled in deliberative untrammelled council. To secure the cordial union of North and South she was prepared to sacrifice much, and her generosity of concession would be limited only by the line of her national conscience. But Mr. Bonar Law has opened our eyes to the peril to the National Demand if Ireland were to recognize the proposed Convention. A leading member of what claims to be a constitutional Government, he has given an assurance that a minority will have a controlling influence in whatever scheme the Convention may propose for the government of Ireland, and his assurance has not been withdrawn or qualified.\textsuperscript{155}

This declaration was signed by an impressive array of baronets, knights, parish priests, aldermen and councillors none of whom, however, were outstanding political figures. This was clearly an attempt to replicate the Irish Nation League which had now gone too far into an identification with Sinn Fein to attract such substantial representatives of the Irish bourgeoisie. Yet when the meeting was held it did attract, according to one estimate, between thirty and fifty thousand people.\textsuperscript{156} It was a highly successful meeting but in the end it was almost indistinguishable from a Sinn Fein rally. Patrick White, the Irish Party Member of Parliament for North Meath was there and publicly broke with the Party and condemned the Convention as unrepresentative.\textsuperscript{157} Had Dr. McHugh remained at the head of this new movement Sinn Fein might have been held at bay but with acceptance of places in the Convention the

\textsuperscript{155}Ibid., 23 June, 1917.
\textsuperscript{156}\textit{Irish Weekly Independent}, 7 July, 1917.
\textsuperscript{157}\textit{Freeman's Journal}, 2 July, 1917.
hierarchy now began to attempt to control active clerical involvement in anti-Party politics. Cardinal Logue, speaking on behalf of the Roman Catholic hierarchy of Ireland, issued a warning to priests to stay out of politics. His greatest concern he asserted was with the lack of Christian charity manifested by those clerics who were becoming involved in the struggle between the Irish Party and Sinn Fein. This warning certainly did not eliminate clerical involvement in politics but, combined with Convention membership, it did for a time exercise a restraining influence, particularly upon bishops.

The amnesty for Irish prisoners has generally been treated as if it had been highly popular with all groups in Ireland outside unionist circles. Yet it is clear that there was one group drawn from the ordinary nationalist population which also resented their release and this was made up of the wives and relatives of men at the front who still looked upon Sinn Feiners as pro-German. Their resentment was such that when the released men arrived in Cork there was a serious riot in which one man was killed and several wounded. There were in fact a number of instances of violence in which Sinn Feiners were attacked by women or in which they attacked the homes of wounded soldiers on leave. On the whole, however, the releases had revitalized Sinn Fein and the East Clare by-election provided a centripetal impetus for anti-Redmond forces. Despite

Cork Examiner, 30 June, 1917.

Ibid., 25 June, 1917.
occasional set-backs, these forces were consolidating their position and, as the defection of Patrick White indicates, they were now making gains at the very centre of the Irish Parliamentary Party. Colonel Moore, who had done much to further Redmondism in the National Volunteer Movement, declared that he favoured nothing short of Dominion Home Rule. Professor Gallagher, speaking on behalf of Patrick Lynch in Ennis, declared that he "heartily desired an Irish Republic - if practicable". Such pronouncements on the part of Party supporters, who then went on to conclude that a republic was impracticable, opened the way for people who had become convinced that the old notion of Home Rule was inadequate to try a new movement which was showing itself constitutional to the extent of participating in elections. Sinn Fein retained the allegiance of the "physical force" men and de Valera campaigned in East Clare in his Volunteer uniform while Volunteers held frequent parades and displays with hurley sticks throughout the campaign. As one of the participants described the events of this period:

Into the defensive organization set up to secure success in the east Clare election, a definite element of defiance had entered. The Volunteers in Clare were, therefore, now going to continue their parading and their other activities, and they were going to do so quite openly. Systematic public drilling was instituted in many places in Clare, particularly after Mass on Sundays when their activities could not but be seen; and a good place for such activity was thought to be in front of a police barrack.  

161 Cork Examiner, 3 July, 1917.
The milder, more constitutionally oriented Sinn Feiners were somewhat disturbed by these activities but de Valera, by campaigning in a regular parliamentary by-election, was playing the game in accordance with Griffith's old Hungarian policy rules and their allegiance was also retained.\footnote{163}

Sinn Fein was not yet an irresistible force in southern Ireland and it is often forgotten that there was another by-election called at the same time as the one in East Clare in South County Dublin where Sinn Fein did not venture to contest the seat. South County Dublin was a middle-class area where there was a substantial Unionist element and this had in the past compelled the Irish Party to maintain a strong organization in the constituency. In 1917 the Unionists did not contest the seat and Michael Louis Hearne was returned unopposed on behalf of the Irish Parliamentary Party.\footnote{164} The Party on the other hand had little hope of winning East Clare, a constituency where there were large numbers of unemployed young men sullenly dissatisfied with their lot who found in Sinn Fein a release from their frustrations. The Irish correspondent of the \textit{Daily News} was reported to have sent to his newspaper the following account of the mood of the constituency:

\begin{quote}

During the past few days I have seen and heard sufficient to convince me that not Dublin Castle, the Government, not the Ulster Unionists yet realize fully how deeply rooted in the young life of the country are the ideas loosely described as Sinn Fein, which vaguely express hostility to
\end{quote}

\footnote{163}{See Dan Breen, \textit{My Fight for Irish Freedom}, op. cit., p. 27.}

\footnote{164}{\textit{Freeman's Journal}, 7 July, 1917.}
English rule, distrust of the Irish Party, and a conviction that Irish freedom will not be won until it has been fought for.\textsuperscript{165}

If it could be argued that Ulster unionists did not realize what were the feelings of rural southern Ireland there was little evidence in turn that Mr. de Valera had much of a grasp of the strength of Ulster unionist determination. He declared during his campaign:

Let Ulster Unionists recognize the Sinn Fein position which had behind it justice and right. It was supported by nine-tenths of the Irish people, and if those Unionists did not come in on their side they would have to go under. Were Nationalists in a minority they would be ready to fall in with the majority. Ulster was entitled to justice, and she would have it but she should not be petted, and the interests of the majority sacrificed to her.\textsuperscript{166}

Such arguments were unlikely to impress Ulster unionists who felt no less strongly that justice and right were on their side and who counted themselves as part of the majority of the United Kingdom but the statement had the desired effect in East Clare, providing a contrast with Irish Party policy which was perceived in comparison to be "soft" towards Ulster.

De Valera carried East Clare with more than twice his opponent's votes in an election with very high participation. Over eighty per cent of registered voters turned out and de Valera obtained 5010 votes to Lynch's 2035. The victory was overwhelming and whereas the "sympathy vote" argument could be used to explain Party defeats in North Roscommon and in

\textsuperscript{165}Freeman's Journal, 6 July, 1917.

\textsuperscript{166}Ibid.
South Longford; it simply could not be persuasive in Willie Redmond's old constituency. Agrarian discontent, irritation over the long delay in calling the Irish Convention as well as the previous employment of the defeated candidate no doubt explained some of the Sinn Fein vote but the major lesson for the Party could only be that nationalist Ireland was losing its trust in the parliamentarians and turning to others. The Party's failure to secure the benefits it had so triumphantly proclaimed in 1914 was a major element in the change of allegiance.

The Freeman's Journal reaction was panic and it described the result as a vote for revolution and a repudiation of O'Connell, Butt, Parnell and Davitt. It went on to forecast conscription and all sorts of other baleful consequences. The Cork Examiner's leader writer on the other hand was more analytical and declared:

The result of the East Clare election is probably the most surprising since the ballot was instituted to arrive at the true opinion of the voters. A victory for Mr. de Valera was regarded as not unlikely, but even the most enthusiastic follower of the new policy never expected the overwhelming support its standard-bearer had received - that in fact he polled rather more than two to one for his opponent. It marks the passing of the old order, which is apparently to be replaced by men until recently little known and inexperienced in State affairs, advocating a policy that changes day by day.

It is a serious outlook, and grown men must look with apprehension on a future that is fog-bound and full of hidden dangers, for we cannot deny but what has happened yesterday in Clare would, if the voters were put to the test, be repeated in most of the constituencies which have heretofore returned

167 12 July, 1917.
supporters of the Irish Party ... The absence of cohesion and coherence which characterizes the policy of the new movement lends strength to the belief that the desire for change rather than any other motive is responsible for a result that will be regarded everywhere as astounding. 168

This amounted to a recognition that the Irish Parliamentary Party was at that moment no longer representing majority Irish opinion. It remained possible that the Convention, which had not yet been called, would provide an opportunity for the Party to regain its ascendancy. On the other hand, the prospect of the Convention was also a constraint on the Party: it could not afford to attempt to outmanoeuvre Sinn Fein by adopting an equally radical stance since that would antagonize other participants. In the wake of the East Clare election, the sitting member for Kilkenny, Patrick O'Brien, the Party's Chief Whip, died, opening up another electoral contest for which the Clare result would be a dangerous precedent from the Party point of view. 169 The significance of East Clare is that it broke through the psychological image which Irish people had of the Party as the sole representative of Ireland. Roscommon and Longford had been mere protests at the performance of the representatives of Irish opinion but East Clare involved a clear and deliberate choice not for the republic as has been asserted by some commentators but for different representatives for the nation. As F.S.L. Lyons pointed out "...the East Clare result did show beyond a shadow

168Cork Examiner, 12 July, 1917.
169Ibid., 13 July, 1917.
of doubt that the old party could no longer claim to speak for nationalist Ireland as a whole and to that extent its stock was fatally weakened both at home and in the House of Commons". Laurence Ginnell who had been supporting the Sinn Fein position for some time, despite being a Redmondite Member of Parliament, announced his intention to withdraw from the House of Commons and to join Count Plunkett, Joseph McGuinness and Eamon de Valera in their abstentionist policy. The demoralization in the Irish Party was indicated by the circulation among Nationalist members of parliament of a remonstrance which in part declared:

For the aspirations which now stir the young men and women of Ireland and their desire for the complete independence of our country, rather than that it should remain in its present humiliating position, we have full admiration. We believe that the manifestation of their indomitable determination to win for Ireland her true place in the sun is the most hopeful sign of recent years.

The effects of the East Clare victory were profound, not only for the Irish Party, but also for Sinn Fein morale. Demonstrations of jubilation were seen all over the south of Ireland, in some cases these provoked riots as in Limerick where women in particular who had relatives at the front attacked Sinn Feiners, but on the whole Sinn Fein acquired increased confidence and its disparate elements were drawn into closer unity. Mr. de Valera's personal ascendancy over the movement was consolidated and he also began to take

---

170 *Ireland Since the Famine*, op. cit., p. 383.
171 *Cork Examiner*, 16 July, 1917.
a more intransigent position towards Ulster unionism. Returning to Dublin from East Clare he declared that if Ulster stood in the way of Irish freedom then it must be coerced.\(^\text{174}\) This was a new departure among nationalists of any kind and de Valera reiterated it a week later during the Kilkenny campaign when he declared that "In the election they stood for absolute separation from England. They said to the minority in Ireland if you stand in our way to freedom we will clear you out of it".\(^\text{175}\) A week later in Ballaghderreen he declared:

...They stood for the old cause, and Parnell's principles were theirs. They stood for an absolutely free and independent Ireland. Ulster must be coerced if she stood in the way, and they should not go on their knees asking favours from England. They were not pro-Germans, and had no love for Germany any more than France. They were not dreamers and meant to get what they wanted. They were not as great dreamers as those who thought they would get Home Rule. If the Irish Party came home from the House of Commons the empty benches would speak to the world more eloquently than either Mr. Dillon or Mr. Redmond. They were no more anarchists or red revolutionists than O'Connell when he won Catholic Emancipation. With regard to the Ulster question he would say: "Give us two months' freedom and we will settle it".\(^\text{176}\)

Enthusiasm in Sinn Fein ranks was marked by the frequent display of republican flags, in one case in King's County an R.I.C. sergeant who was climbing a tree in order to bring down one of these flags was shot at with a shot gun and had fourteen pellets removed from that part of his anatomy most

\(^{174}\)Freeman's Journal, 13 July, 1917.
\(^{175}\)Ibid., 20 July, 1917.
\(^{176}\)Cork Examiner, 27 July, 1917.
prominent when climbing trees. The Sinn Fein performance was unlikely to enhance the chances of success for the Irish Convention which at long last was to be held in Trinity College's Regent House.

The Ulster unionists were aware of the growing popularity of Sinn Fein and this made them more unlikely than ever to agree to commit themselves to any scheme of self-government even under the leadership of John Redmond who might be replaced by a Sinn Feiner who would be even less well disposed towards them. One unionist reaction to de Valera's victory, though not one from Ulster, was expressed in a letter to the press from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle who wrote:

The record of the Sinn Fein Party during the few years of its existence is a remarkable one. It has brought about the destruction of part of its own capital city; it has driven a wedge through the solid South; it has immensely strengthened the position of the North, by justifying all its fears, and it has so far as it could, thrown away the fruits of fifty years of patient Constitutional reform. It only remains for it now to open a civil war against a perfectly united Empire which has shown that it can put five million men in the field, and would do so again before it would consent to having a foreign republic between it and the oceans of the world. When it has achieved this result its cycle of insanity will be complete. Meanwhile I would ask whether any British party has ever, in the whole course of history, injured Ireland so much in so short a time?

The Irish Convention was not beginning under very propitious auspices. Not only were the absent Sinn Feiners growing more popular and more credible as an alternative to

---

177 Ibid., 16 July, 1917.
the Irish Parliamentary Party but other sources of discontent were emerging at this time. The first of these was the appointment of Sir Edward Carson to the War Cabinet.¹⁸⁰ This was again a clear indication of the Irish Party's lack of influence over British political life and was bound to benefit Sinn Fein. Also disturbing and of greater import for the non-politicized masses was the continuing rise in prices. In mid-July it was pointed out that prices had now risen ¹⁹⁴ per cent since the outbreak of the war.¹⁸¹ Yet in spite of this it was proving impossible to mobilize the masses of working class Dubliners into a genuinely proletarian party. A Phoenix Park meeting of the Socialist Party of Ireland calling for "an industrial commonwealth in Ireland, based upon common ownership of the land and instruments of production, distribution and exchange, with complete political and social equality between the sexes "failed to attract much more than a hundred people".¹⁸² Clerical opposition, the opposition of all nationalist forces as well as the close ties of most of the Dublin working class with a peasant proprietary and their insecurity in the face of the threat of conscription goes far towards explaining this apathy but it was no boon to the Irish Party. The Dublin working class had long before lost all faith in the Party and their alienation would eventually benefit Sinn Fein. Another Phoenix Park meeting which was

¹⁸⁰ [Freeman's Journal](https://example.com), 18 July, 1917.
¹⁸¹ [Freeman's Journal](https://example.com), 17 July, 1917.
¹⁸² Ibid., 9 July, 1917.
considerably more successful than that of the Socialist Party of Ireland, was held to protest against new brewing restrictions which were damaging to Irish brewing. England's determination to crush a great Irish industry was roundly condemned and so close to the Irish heart was this issue that this meeting was described as one of the largest meetings ever held in Ireland.183 Other employers were also dissatisfied and the All Ireland Munitions and Supplies Committee convened a meeting at the Mansion House were a call was issued to the Prime Minister demanding that he fulfil his promise to set up a Receiving Depot in Dublin.184

Another Mansion House meeting, of more immediate political significance and also reflecting considerable discontent exploited by Sinn Fein, called for the return to their families of the remains of the sixteen men shot following the rebellion. Dr. O'Dwyer who had kept out of politics since the hierarchy's acceptance of membership in the Convention found this an instance warranting his renewed involvement and he declared that:

The action of the Government in denying Christian burial to the poor fellows whom it did to death in May 1916, would be utterly unintelligible if there was anything of reason in its whole treatment of Ireland. Only a few days ago they liberated the brave fellows who fought side by side with Pearse, MacDonagh, and Colbert, and they will not liberate the dead bodies of the men.185

183 Ibid., 21 July, 1917.
184 Ibid., 19 July, 1917.
185 Ibid., 17 July, 1917.
A further element to the sense of outrage over this was contributed by an Irish Party Member of Parliament, J.D. Nugent, who revealed that compensation had not yet been paid to the relatives of the North King Street victims of the rebellion. Even the unionist Dublin Chamber of Commerce found cause to protest because of trade and industrial discrimination against Ireland though their solution of closer integration of Ireland into the United Kingdom would not have found favour among the other discontented groups.

It was thus in a tense atmosphere that the Irish Convention opened, John Redmond was greeted with silence by the crowd which watched the delegates gather. This neutral reception marked the calamitous decline in Redmond's popular appeal. He was in fact in full retreat having just resigned the presidency of the National Volunteers. On leaving the Regent House Redmond was even booed and groaned by youths. This must have made clear to him the magnitude of the crisis in the leadership of nationalist Ireland. Redmond's leadership would have ended soon in any case, he had been in harness for a very long time and he was ill. The change-over was likely to involve a crisis if only because there had always been a crisis on such occasions in the past because of the nature

---

186 Ibid., 25 July, 1917.
187 Ibid., 27 July, 1917.
190 Irish Weekly Independent, 28 July, 1917.
of the national cause which encouraged a single issue mass party domination of nationalist political life, but the question was whether he could win Home Rule first. If, through the Convention, a satisfactory measure of Home Rule could be won the leadership struggle might be postponed and occur within the Irish Parliamentary Party but, if the Party was to survive as representatives of majority opinion, it could not sustain any more defeats on the Irish question. If it failed now the likely prospect was a return to the fragmentation of political opinion which had characterized the years following the downfall of Parnell. Of course what happened was an abrupt eclipse of the Party as a political force but that owed more to the conscription crisis of 1918 than to the failure of the Irish Convention. The Convention was the repository of all the Party's hopes as well as its prison. While it lasted Redmond could not engage in an all out propaganda battle with Sinn Fein without endangering the delicate negotiations in which he was involved. Sinn Fein by refusing to participate in the Convention were staking their future on the Ulster unionist determination not to accept the only solution which could be satisfactory, but as long as the Convention lasted they could attack the more or less defenceless Party.

There was so much suspicion of British good will in calling the Convention and in structuring it as had been done, a suspicion fostered by Sinn Fein, that even its opening could
not be counted on to effect much of an improvement in Party chances in the Kilkenny by-election. At the end of July John Magennis was selected as the Party candidate.\footnote{Cork Examiner, 27 July, 1917.} But once again the Government did little to help Redmond when it imposed a ban on the wearing of military type uniforms, a ban which as usual was not vigorously enforced.\footnote{Freeman's Journal, 30 July, 1917.} The Government also took steps at this time to prevent cigarette companies from giving away cards displaying Royal Navy ships. The move was explained on security grounds but as most of these cards were printed in Dublin the move was interpreted in Ireland as a deliberate attempt to ruin yet another Irish industry.\footnote{Ibid., 2 August, 1917.} Neither of these moves was of great import but their impact was more serious because of the climate of opinion prevailing in Ireland at this time. The ban on military type uniforms was defied with impunity in early August when a large gathering assembled to mark the anniversary of Casement's execution at the fort where he had been captured.\footnote{See Sean O'Luing, I Die In A Good Cause, op.cit., pp.137-138.} As on many other occasions no official notice was taken.

The Kilkenny campaign saw the Irish Party soliciting support on the basis of its record of achievements over the past twenty-five years. The problem with this approach was that very few of these achievements could be claimed...
for recent years other than a Home Rule Act on the Statute Book which was not in effect and which was increasingly seen as inadequate or as a sham. Sinn Fein on the other hand was quick to point out that taxation had been increasing in Ireland despite the presence at Westminster of the Irish Party members. 195 This ignored the effects of the war but Sinn Fein in any case played down the problems of the United Kingdom. The Sinn Fein candidate, William Cosgrave, declared at a meeting that:

This country had been sold and fooled by a succession of English Governments and the Irish people to-day had no more confidence in English promises and undertakings. What was exactly meant to be Constitutionalism? Did it mean, as the Irish knew it the battering ram and pitching the Irish peasantry on the roadside? Was submitting to one-fifth of Ireland's population when four-fifths demanded their rights constitutional? Did it mean that the Irish people had not a right to appoint their own delegates to settle Irish affairs? 196

The Freeman's Journal tried to capitalize on the confusion which was evident in Sinn Fein ranks between those who were advocates of evolutionary development towards self-government and independence, such as many of those who had come into the movement through the Irish Nation League, and the revolutionary posture of the Irish Republican Brotherhood men. 197 Against this Sinn Fein speakers maintained that they were in fact united behind the concept of independence which had been pursued by Parnell; clearly implying that Redmondites

195 Cork Examiner, 3 August, 1917.
196 Ibid., 6 August, 1917.
197 See leading articles of 7 and 10 August, 1917.
had abandoned it. Sinn Fein also made use the spectre of conscription which Sean Milroy linked with the Party declaring that:

If Mr. Magennis was returned he would become pledged to vote for conscription as a loyal member of the party led by Mr. Redmond who stated if England's requirements in the present war necessitated it he was prepared to agree to conscription.\(^\text{198}\)

Sinn Fein won the election 772 votes to 392 and on his return to Dublin the victor commented on the *Freeman's Journal's* part in the campaign saying that:

The *Freeman's Journal* had used its influence to get the electors to vote for Mr. Magennis owing to what the Irish Party had done. That paper was published in Dublin and should have known the economic conditions of the city. It should have known that through English orders the output of the breweries was largely curtailed and a number of employees had been dismissed, while there was no curtailment of English beer, which was largely sold in Dublin. It should have known that in Dublin they had two of the largest workhouses in Ireland, or in England, or even in the world, and that therewere 80,000 people who were the worst housed in the world. This was the result of English misrule, and it was because they put these facts and others connected with the state of the country before them that the electors of Kilkenny returned him.\(^\text{199}\)

This statement is of interest because it is one of the few which recognized the importance of socio-economic factors to the success of Sinn Fein rather than concentrating on myths and ideals as forces molding public opinion. This difference was ideologically a crucial one between practical revolutionaries counting themselves as responsible to the

\(^{198}\) *Freeman's Journal*, 8 August, 1917.

\(^{199}\) Ibid., 13 August, 1917.
people as had Eoin MacNeill and Bulmer Hobson and those who counted themselves responsible to a tradition or to a mythical Irish soul. Since the Easter rebellion these ideological differences even among the so-called physical force men were masked by their common hostility to British rule as then exercised in Ireland but they would surface again once direct British rule was removed.

Meanwhile the National Volunteers, no longer under the direct control of John Redmond, were moving towards Sinn Fein and at the end of July a National Volunteer Convention had been announced for 4 September. At this convention it was decided to reaffirm allegiance to the original Volunteer declaration and a committee was appointed to investigate the possibility of re-uniting the entire Volunteer movement. Later in the week John T. Donovan and Lawrence J. Kettle, the joint honorary secretaries of the National Volunteers, declared that the convention, which had been called by Colonel Moore, was irregular and not sanctioned by the Executive Committee. The convention, however, had alarmed the military authorities and the army carried out widespread arms raids on National Volunteer premises. Two factors about these raids served to increase tensions. First they involved searching parochial halls which tended to offend the clergy and in the second place no seizures of Ulster Volunteer arms

201 Ibid., 6 August, 1917.
202 Ibid., 8 August, 1917.
203 Freeman's Journal, 15, 16 and 17 August, 1917.
took place. Inevitably these moves increased the level of alienation among the National Volunteers and while the Executive Committee did sanction an official National Volunteer Convention for the 28 September presumably to reverse the decision to seek re-unification of the Volunteers that idea was gaining popularity. The death of Thomas Ashe before this new Convention could be held marked the end of the National Volunteers, they then either moved into the Sinn Fein camp or out of Volunteer activity.

The price restrictions being imposed at this time by the Food Controller alienated farmers. The Irish Parliamentary Party once again failed to react to this new source of discontent while the North Leitrim Sinn Fein Executive demonstrated its solidarity with the farmers and its sympathy with their grievance by urging the setting up of a freely competitive cattle market. Sinn Fein was increasingly taking over the function of articulating Irish grievances from the Irish Party whose entire energies seemed bound up in the Irish Convention. Disastrous weather throughout August meant that crops were very poor in 1917, but even when a former high sheriff of Dublin, Mr. W. P. Delaney, forecast famine by January unless immediate steps to avert it were taken, the Party did not

205 Cork Examiner, 7 September, 1917.
206 Freeman's Journal, 17 August, 1917.
207 Ibid., 3 September, 1917.
While it cannot be argued that Sinn Fein was taking effective action to help farmers they were demonstrating concern while the Irish Party still seemed able to do no more than repeat its old refrain that all would be for the best when Home Rule came about, only now as a result of the deliberations of the Irish Convention. This offered little immediate comfort to those whose crops were failing and the seeming indifference of the Party was bound to be resented.

In the wake of the Kilkenny by-election the Government had finally moved to arrest a large number of prominent Sinn Feiners, many of whom it had only recently released from gaol. This was done despite the assurances given to a Cork audience by Countess Markievicz that Sinn Fein was a constitutional movement, though the fact that she then proceeded to advise the Irish people to follow in the footsteps of Pearse and Connolly was less reassuring to constitutionalists. The new wave of arrests was not accompanied by any effective action to prevent the holding of Sinn Fein meetings which allowed maximum exploitation of this renewal of coercion. The new prisoners gained further publicity by refusing to recognize the authority of the courts-martial before which they were tried. The arrests had the effect of stimulating interest and fervour in the Sinn Fein movement rather than

210 Ibid., 14 August, 1917.
211 Cork *Examiner*, 3 August, 1917.
212 Ibid., 29 August, 1917.
discouraging its spread. Fr. Devine from Rathcoole, Co. Dublin, declared to a Sinn Fein inaugural meeting in Newtownards that "they had come together to perform a sacred duty - a duty which they owed to the God of Justice - and to link up their forces with those of their fellow-countrymen who had made heroic sacrifices to restore to their Fatherland the many rights of which it had been deprived."\(^\text{213}\)

De Valera and Griffith, less lyrically than Fr. Devine, used Sinn Fein meetings to launch a new campaign against Ulster unionists. At a meeting in Omagh de Valera declared that:

> If Orangemen are Irishmen they will come into this movement, but, if they still continue to be the tools of England and the English garrison in Ireland, we must make up our minds to fight them. We don't believe that Orangemen, whom Carson would sell as fast as Redmond would sell our side, are insincere Irishmen. We say to them: Come into our movement as your forefathers did in '98; be a part of the Irish nation, and though you have been planted in the land inhabited by your ancient Irish people, we are ready to forget that, and if you are men you won't ask us to forget any man.\(^\text{214}\)

Clearly such sentiments were more likely to persuade nationalists that they had offered Orangemen a fair chance to join them than to persuade Orangemen to transfer their allegiance. Arthur Griffith speaking in Belfast was even more bellicose, declaring that "Ulster Unionists must decide whether they would throw in their lot with the Irish nation, or else stand out deliberately as an English garrison. If

\(^{213}\) Ibid., 24 August, 1917.

\(^{214}\) Freeman's Journal, 10 September, 1917.
they did the latter, the Irish nation would deal with them within six months."\textsuperscript{215} The major theme of Sinn Fein propaganda, however, continued to be the Peace Conference and de Valera at a Bruree aeridheacht assured the audience that support for Sinn Fein would ensure Ireland's representation at the Peace Conference where Britain, whose death knell had sounded, would be powerless to interfere.\textsuperscript{216} Griffith for his part assured a Newry audience that the fate of Ireland would dominate the Peace Conference.\textsuperscript{217} This kind of propaganda was having an impact on Irish public opinion as demonstrated by the fact that at this time three thousand people were reported to have attended a meeting in Roscommon calling on the sitting member, Mr. J. Hayden to resign.\textsuperscript{218}

The death of Dr. O'Dwyer at the age of seventy-five was a setback for Sinn Fein which lost its firmest ecclesiastical ally.\textsuperscript{219} De Valera paid tribute to "the greatest Irish bishop" declaring that:

\begin{quote}
All Ireland owes a debt of gratitude to Dr. O'Dwyer, and she will never forget that debt, and his name will live in history and be a model for Irish bishops who wish to win the hearts of their flocks. As long as there are bishops such as Dr. O'Dwyer there will never be anti-clericalism in this land. Let those who are afraid of anti-clericalism find us bishops in touch with the sympathies of the Irish people and we will follow them.\textsuperscript{220}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{215} Ibid., 14 September, 1917.
\textsuperscript{216} Cork Examiner, 17 September, 1917.
\textsuperscript{217} Ibid., 18 September, 1917.
\textsuperscript{218} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{219} Freeman's Journal, 17 August, 1917.
\textsuperscript{220} Cork Examiner, 20 August, 1917.
Sinn Fein values were taking precedence over episcopal interpretation of Christianity and the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland was at a crucial junction but many bishops had already given indications of abandoning the political outlook of the Irish Parliamentary Party. They could attempt to provide political leadership independent of both the Party and Sinn Fein or they could move into Sinn Fein and act as a moderating influence on the "physical force" element of the movement. The virtual disappearance of the Irish Nation League was an encouragement to opt for the second course which was to follow Dr. O'Dwyer's example. One bishop who gave clear indications of making this choice in favour of Sinn Fein was Dr. Fogarty, the Bishop of Killaloe. In a lengthy panegyric on the late Bishop of Limerick he said:

For the crisis is soon to come which will test to the core the stuff that Irishmen are made of. When brave and heroic Irishmen were being shot in Dublin with unmerciful brutality, when poor Irish emigrants were being kicked and spat upon in the streets of Liverpool, when the whole country was being raided of its manhood, and dragooned into terror, the one man in the land who had the courage to raise his voice in Christian protest and challenge the march of tyranny, is the anti-Irish Bishop of Limerick.221

He is now in his 73rd year, but he answers the cry of his agonizing country with the heart of a young lion. Never was Ireland in a more helpless or critical condition than she was on the day when the intrepid bishop ran to her rescue. Her national life was almost unrecognizable, with the green flag turned red in the hands of her so-called leaders. But his powerful trumpet from the walls of Limerick roused her to life again; or rather his courageous

221 The reference to "anti-Irish" here is to accusations resulting from Dr. O'Dwyer's opposition to the Plan of Campaign and to the Land League. Dr. O'Dwyer was an arch-Conservative who had always opposed change and his sympathies with Sinn Fein while profound were engaged primarily by its reactionary cultural nationalism.
voice, like the creative spirit of Genesis, broke up the waste of waters, called Young Ireland from the abyss and gave her the life, shape, and independent movement she has today. In a moment the great Bishop of Christ becomes the Father of his country.222

This kind of propaganda from a bishop was difficult to offset and the Freeman's Journal could do no more than point out Dr. O'Dwyer's conservatism his life-long opposition to liberalism and his pro-Hapsburg stance during the war but none of these were counted as faults by Sinn Fein.223

Another Roman Catholic Bishop made remarks indicating the drift towards the Sinn Fein position within the hierarchy. Dr. Mulhern, the Bishop of Dromore, speaking at the Newry Gaelic Festival called for Irish independence and economic self-sufficiency. He declared that:

They claimed the right to govern themselves according to their own ideals, but they saw also now, from the necessities of the times, that not only could they govern themselves, but that they could support themselves if they went practically about it. And they there that day, as a result of their deliberations - as a result of what they saw around them in that small way - ought to go away with the idea that they had got to build up an Irish Ireland and build it up materially, and in every other way.224

The clear politicization of the Gaelic League, however, did arouse some clerical opposition and Cardinal Logue, in a letter to the Secretary of the Leinster College of Irish, wrote that:

The Irish Colleges give the only hope that anything effectual will be done for the Irish language. As for the Gaelic League, since it

222_Freeman's Journal, 19 September, 1917.
223_Ibid.
224_Ibid., 16 August, 1917.
has been turned into a political machine, I fear it will prove quite barren as far as promoting the revival of Irish is concerned.\textsuperscript{225}

Canon O'Leary also denounced the Gaelic League as a political society, in a letter written to the Secretary of the Fermoy branch of the League in which he declined an invitation to attend a meeting on the grounds that the advancement of the Irish language was no longer the major object of the movement.\textsuperscript{226} The Roman Catholic hierarchy in Ireland had by no means yet reached the point of legitimizing Sinn Fein but enough support was being manifested to encourage persistence in efforts to win further support.

John Dillon was carrying on a vigorous campaign on behalf of the Irish Party throughout Ireland and his efforts were beginning to bear fruit. He was greatly assisted by rumours current in the British press that the Irish Convention was making progress towards Dominion Home Rule, a significant extension of the Home Rule principle beyond that already on the Statute Book.\textsuperscript{227} Even the \textit{Independent} newspapers in early September manifested cautious optimism or at least modified their earlier pessimism. Improvement in the Party's popular image was revealed by the rejection of a motion protesting against the arrest of Austin Stack by the Tralee Urban Council.\textsuperscript{228} The Youghal Board of Guardians defeated a motion for a vote of thanks to Kilkenny for returning William Cosgrave and also refused to pass an address of welcome to Countess Markievicz

\textsuperscript{225}Cork Examiner, 15 September, 1917.
\textsuperscript{226}Freeman's Journal, 17 September, 1917.
\textsuperscript{227}Cork Examiner, 8 September, 1917.
\textsuperscript{228}Ibid., 18 September, 1917.
and other Sinn Fein leaders.\textsuperscript{229} Party meetings were once again described as well attended and enthusiastic, a significant improvement over the Party's performance for some months.\textsuperscript{230} This certainly did not amount to a reversal in Party fortunes but it marked at least a slowing down of the erosion of Party support and it did seem that if the Convention continued to sit and give rise to optimistic forecasts of its outcome the Party could hope to hold its own and perhaps even reverse the trend if no further grounds for dissatisfaction emerged.

The Party's hopes for a recovery were dashed, however, by the death of a new martyr to the Sinn Fein cause. Thomas Ashe, who had been arrested for subversive speeches, became involved in a protest against the treatment of Irish prisoners as criminals. Despite the fact that British penal legislation recognized no such category, the Sinn Fein prisoners demanded treatment as "political" prisoners. Initially the protest took the form of furniture and fixture smashing later followed by a hunger strike. The prison authorities were unwilling to give in to these tactics but they were also unwilling to allow the Irish prisoners to die on hunger strike and they resorted to forcible feeding. The process was an extremely unpleasant one even in the hands of a skilled and experienced physician. In Thomas Ashe's case the feeding was administered by an inexperienced doctor who was not aware that Ashe had been

\textsuperscript{229}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{230}Freeman's Journal, 24 September, 1917 reported some of these meetings.
deprived of blankets and boots because of the damage done to his cell, including the smashing of the window glass. Shortly after being fed, Ashe had collapsed and been removed to the Mater Hospital where, on 25 September, he died. 231

The death of Thomas Ashe profoundly shook Ireland and brought a great accession of support to Sinn Fein. The Freeman's Journal immediately grasped the import of the event and in a leading article on the day following the death it declared:

Affairs in Ireland drift from tragedy to tragedy and from confusion to confusion. The "hunger strike" in Mountjoy Prison among the Sinn Fein prisoners against their treatment as common criminals has ended in the death of Mr. Thomas Ashe...his death will make a painful impression. It will greatly increase the flood of bitterness which was the legacy of the Maxwell régime to Ireland, and which threatens to make any rational and peaceful settlement of the Irish question impossible. The passions that it will rekindle and arouse needed no fresh fuel to keep them burning, and the tragedy is a most deplorable climax to a long course of official obstinacy and callousness. 232

It was also unfortunate for the Irish Party that the Chairman of the Prisons Board, who was ultimately responsible for conditions in goals, was at this time Max Green, John Redmond's son-in-law. Sinn Fein naturally made use of this fact to the disadvantage of the Party. 233 The fact that forcible feeding was continued after the death of Thomas Ashe increased tensions and the Freeman's Journal protested that:

232 26 September, 1917.
Perseverence by the Administration in the present course can have but one result. It must jeopardize the public peace and render all chance of a return to the conditions of a sane patriotism remote. There is something more than deplorable, something like a malevolent fate, in the fact that at a moment when events seem to be shaping themselves towards a peaceful settlement this tragedy should have been enacted in our midst.\textsuperscript{234}

The Roman Catholic Bishop of Killaloe intervened in a manner reminiscent of the late Dr. O'Dwyer and wrote to the \textit{Freeman's Journal} saying:

\begin{quote}
Permit me to thank you in your columns for your worthy protest against what I cannot otherwise designate than the slow killing of poor Thomas Ashe.

It is horrible that the country has to stand silently by listening to the moans of the decent Irish boys who are being slowly done to death behind the walls of Mountjoy Prison by brutal tyrants; or to see them thrown in their last gasp to die like dogs outside the jail door.

They may die as poor Thomas Ashe had died, but with other results than Dublin Castle has dreamed of. Their deaths will sanctify them in the memory of Ireland and surround their heathen torturers with inextinguishable hatred and ignominy.

This is the sort of cruelty we were accustomed to hear of as possibly only in the ancient Bastille, or the dungeons of Naples, or the black prisons of Russia; but altogether impossible under English rule. We have no need to wait for the future to inform us; the world sees already in these hideous atrocities what the triumph of English culture means for small nationalities.\textsuperscript{235}
\end{quote}

To unionists or to the Government, conscious only that an attempt had been made, albeit perhaps clumsily, to keep Sinn Fein prisoners alive, such accusations were bound to seem sheer emotionalism running wild but to the ordinary Irishman

\textsuperscript{234} 28 September, 1917.

\textsuperscript{235} 29 September, 1917.
of nationalist sympathies they were a confirmation of feelings which had been only partially displaced by the parliamentarians' new policy of trust in Britain.

The Coroner's inquest into the death of Thomas Ashe, which lasted from 27 September to 1 November, became a Sinn Fein drama with applause from the spectators whenever anything discreditable to the Irish Administration was revealed. But it was the funeral, held on the Sunday following the death, which drew nationalist Ireland together in a massive protest and demonstration against all the accumulated frustrations of the recent past. The *Freeman's Journal* declared that:

> The unprecedented scenes at the funeral of Thomas Ashe yesterday conveyed a message and a warning which no Government, however blind, could misread. It was not only a tribute of sympathy with the victim of insensate methods of barbarism; but a direct challenge to the whole spirit of latter-day English policy in Ireland. That challenge was backed, not by Sinn Fein alone, but by every Nationalist whose belief in Nationalism is real.\(^{236}\)

By then the treatment of Sinn Fein prisoners had been modified and forcible feeding discontinued but hunger striking, a weapon which had served the suffragettes well, was enthusiastically adopted by Sinn Fein and within two months it was reported that Sinn Fein prisoners were being released as a result of hunger strikes at a faster rate than they could be tried.\(^{237}\) On the day of the funeral, de Valera was

\(^{236}\) 1 October, 1917.

\(^{237}\) *Freeman's Journal*, 22 November, 1917.
addressing in Ennis a meeting described as the largest ever held in that town. Dr. Fogarty had been invited to attend and while he declined the invitation he said in his letter:

I cannot come to your meeting, but I join you and the people in giving a warm welcome to the brave and honourable representative of East Clare, Eamon de Valera. He stands for the honest policy of Irish independence, which should have behind it, and, please God, will soon have behind it, the whole manhood of Ireland, both North and South.\(^{238}\)

The funeral itself was an extraordinary display of nationalist solidarity. Twelve bands took part and thousands of Irish and National Volunteers as well as many more thousands of trade unionists and most significantly Dr. Walsh, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, who had written to the Lord Mayor that he felt it his duty to join in the public protest of the funeral and requesting a place for his car in the cortege.\(^{239}\) One hundred and fifty other clerics marched in the procession. The death of Thomas Ashe accelerated the process of the accession of clerical opinion to Sinn Fein, a transfer of allegiance all the easier to make at a moment when all factions of nationalist opinion were united in sentiment. There was still some clerical suspicion of Sinn Fein, however, and Dr. Foley, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin, condemned rebellion in the circumstances existing in Ireland as well as the emotional rhetoric being used in Irish politics.\(^{240}\) On the whole there was remarkable

\(^{238}\) Ibid., 1 October, 1917.

\(^{239}\) Sean O'Luing, _I Die In A Good Cause_, op. cit., p. 187.

\(^{240}\) _Freeman's Journal_, 5 October, 1917.
unanimity in condemning those who were held responsible for Ashe's death, requiem masses were extensively used as a form of protest and the public bodies of Ireland poured out protest resolutions. The Gaelic League announced that a hall to be named for Thomas Ashe would soon be erected, and, in a move which would soon be widely imitated throughout the south of Ireland, the Balrothery Rural Council expunged from its minutes the resolution condemning the Easter rebellion which it had passed the previous year.

The unionist view of the death of Thomas Ashe was naturally quite different. He tended to be described as a suicide rather than as a victim and the Northern Whig argued that hunger strikers should be left to starve to death and it declared:

> It is surely better that these men should be allowed to kill themselves than that treason should be given a free hand to destroy the Empire ... The death of Thomas Ashe has had one notable result in the way of revelation. It has shown that all sections of the Nationalist Party can be trusted to unite in defence of disloyalty. Sedition, popular and widespread as it is at present, is going to be much more popular in Ireland now that it is to entail nothing more at the worst than a temporary stay in a prison where there are to be all sorts of privileges for the so-called "political" prisoners.

That their view was substantially that of the Irish administration was driven home to nationalist Ireland by a letter to the Lord Mayor of Dublin from Sir William Byrne, the Irish Under-Secretary, in which he protested against the

---

241 Ibid., 9 October, 1917.
242 Ibid., 10 October, 1917.
243 3 October, 1917.
Dublin Corporation's participation in the Ashe funeral. He commented "I am surprised that the Chief Magistrate of the city should identify himself with manifestation of disorder, and sympathize with a criminal and suicide". This description of Thomas Ashe by the Under-Secretary was bitterly resented and the Lord Mayor denied the charge on the grounds that Ashe was no criminal but a patriot and martyr, furthermore, he was certainly no suicide since Dr. Walsh had attended his funeral.

The death of Thomas Ashe momentarily brought together the various factions within the nationalist camp and this worked to the detriment of the Irish Parliamentary Party as some of its supporters were brought into co-operative contact with the more vital and enthusiastic Sinn Feiners. Thomas Ashe's biographer wrote:

How many of those that had followed Redmond now transferred their allegiance to the cause of the dead man is not easy to estimate, but that a massive transfer of support and sympathy did take place was indicated by the size of the funeral and the radically changing mood of the press and public bodies. People remembered that Sir Edward Carson had uttered rebel sentiments not unlike those of Thomas Ashe. So did people contrast the treatment which brought Sir Edward high into the councils of the British government and brought Thomas Ashe to his death. They drew the obvious moral, which was grim in its implications.

It is clear that the death of Thomas Ashe put an end to the Irish Party's recovery of prestige which had followed the summoning of the Irish Convention and on the other hand by

---

244 _Freeman's Journal_, 20 October, 1917.
245 Ibid., 6 November, 1917.
246 Sean O'Luing, _I Die In A Good Cause_, op. cit., pp. 184-185.
widening the emotional gulf which separated Ulster unionists and nationalists generally it made a favourable outcome of the Convention even more remote. The Castle authorities had not interfered with the Ashe funeral which would clearly have led to a major explosion of violence but they had been sufficiently alarmed to step up the arrests of Sinn Feiners thus initiating another round of the vicious circle of militancy, followed by coercion, followed by greater militancy so familiar in Irish history. Yet as usual the coercion was lacking in determination and far from breaking Sinn Fein it added to the lustre of its image. It was little more than an irritant and did not effectively disrupt its activities.

The Irish Party did try to regain some of its vanishing prestige and it introduced into the House of Commons a resolution, that this House deplores the policy which has been pursued and is being pursued, by the Irish Executive Government and by the Irish Military Authorities, at a time when the highest interests of Ireland and the Empire demand the creation of an atmosphere favourable to the successful result of the deliberations of the Irish convention. 247

British politicians had largely lost interest in Ireland and the debate was lacklustre and produced no change of attitude. There was, however, much substance to the charges which Redmond brought against the Government. Specifically he charged that:

They have gone out of their way over and over again to challenge the Sinn Feiners, and they have allowed themselves to be defied by the Sinn Feiners.

They have irritated the public by tactless, unnecessary, and perfectly silly measures of repression, until finally they have succeeded in inflaming passions in Ireland to probably a worse pitch than at any time since the rising in 1916. They have arrested men up and down through the country, mostly unknown and insignificant men, and trying them on trivial charges before military tribunals, mostly for silly speeches made here and there at public meetings in the country, thereby turning these men into martyrs.248

The Prime Minister manifested no sympathy for Redmond's position and his declaration that "Anything which is part and parcel of organizations for rebellion must be stopped", was indicative of a firmer purpose than were the actions of the authorities in Ireland. The Chief Secretary, however, did announce that henceforth arrests would only be for substantial grounds of being a threat to public safety but he also expressed the frustration which the Cabinet felt towards Ireland. He contrasted London, intimately engaged in the most terrible war, with Dublin, safe and prosperous where political irresponsibility had led to the present state of tension.250 Clearly by the latter part of 1917, the war which had drawn England and Ireland closer than they had been for many years was dividing them once again. As George Bernard Shaw observed in a letter to the Daily Express at this time, "Sinn Fein really does think that the world consists

248 Ibid.
249 Ibid.
250 Ibid.
of Ireland and a few subordinate continents". Increasingly, however, that observation could be applied to the Irish Parliamentary Party as well. The labour of the Irish Convention, the continuation of martial law, the ever present threat of conscription and above all the challenge posed by Sinn Fein had forced the Party to play down the imperial facet of its policy and to devote itself to the more parochial politics of its home front.

It was soon apparent that the Irish Party's resolution had not accomplished anything. Despite the assurances of the Chief Secretary concerning the arrests of Sinn Feiners these continued and for no more substantial reasons than in the past. The Freeman's Journal in a leading article entitled "A Tragic Farce" complained that:

Mr. Duke announced in the House of Commons that there would be no further arrests save for incitement to violence or deliberate infringement of public safety. But, despite his promise, courts-martial are still busily engaged in trying men who, on the admission of the police who arrested them, are not guilty on either of these counts. If it were not tragic it would be farcical to find, as happened at a Cork court-martial the other day, a sergeant of police stating that if the prisoner whom he was prosecuting were allowed to remain at home the peace of the district would be better preserved. But this confession was beaten in the case of Mr. O'Neill, a teacher in Rockwell College. The President of the court-martial demanded to know what was Mr. O'Neill's character as a citizen apart from his political views. He received the reply, no less naive than astounding, that Mr. O'Neill was in every respect an excellent citizen. If good citizens are to be kept under lock and key because the Government in power does not like their politics, the sooner jail building on a record scale begins the better. And the crime for which these men are haled before the military courts were not crimes,
but patriotic virtues, when Sir Edward Carson was receiving the royal salute from the massed bands of the Ulster Volunteers, and the present Attorney-General of England was winning his spurs as "Galloper" Smith. Does Mr. Duke, in his sane moments, think that prosecuting a man for wearing a cap and belt is the right way to avert the danger of disorder in Ireland? We imagine he knows better than this, but if he does, why is Maxwellism given a free hand when even the officers called on to administer it are compelled to demonstrate to the world its absurdity no less than its futility.251

Another futility which this demonstrated once again was that of the Irish Parliamentary Party's presence at Westminster. The lesson would not be lost on an Irish public opinion increasingly aware of the existence of Sinn Fein as a plausible alternative object of political allegiance.

The various factions which had so far been loosely united in opposition to the Irish Parliamentary Party were drawn much closer together at the Sinn Fein Convention held in Dublin in late October. A unified Sinn Fein would now face the Party but there would remain differences among groups and individuals who had found their way into Sinn Fein through such diverse routes as the Irish Republican Brotherhood and the Irish Nation League. The latter was closest to the Party, their major disagreement with the Party being over partition. Even in the united group the 'physical force' men felt a great deal of contempt for those who still had hopes for non-violent action.252 It was due to Arthur Griffith that the Sinn Fein Convention achieved any kind of unity at all. He chose to consider the Convention as the tenth Ard Fheis of 31 October, 1917.

Sinn Fein thus establishing the continuity of the movement which was pre-eminently his, but at the same time he gave up his claim to dominate the movement by withdrawing in favour of Eamon de Valera in the election of the president of Sinn Fein. Count Plunkett, the third contender for the post also withdrew and de Valera was unanimously chosen. De Valera's prestige as a leader of the rebellion made him the favourite of the 'physical force' men yet his refusal to join the Irish Republican Brotherhood made him acceptable to the more moderate and constitutional elements. He was made even more acceptable to these elements by his public defence of Eoin MacNeill when the latter was attacked by a group led by Countess Markievicz. Griffith further helped to promote harmony by accepting the vague but clearly republican declaration of the aims of Sinn Fein which went beyond what he had always promoted and allowed the ideological divisions within Sinn Fein to be papered over. As C. Desmond Greaves pointed out

The establishment of the unitary Sinn Fein political party was an event of considerable importance. There was now one centre to which all who had previously hesitated could adhere. But this was no monolith. The republicans had come in hesitatingly; Fr. O'Flanagan maintained afterwards, mistakenly. Their militants were growling in the background. The workers and small farmers whose interests demanded an assault on the entire colonial system found no place in the organization whose leaders were to establish their constituent assembly. They supported the liberation front for what it was, and for what it was not flocked into the trade unions and Volunteers. 253

253 Liam Mellows and the Irish Revolution, op. cit., p. 141.
The wording of the new Sinn Fein constitution was left deliberately vague so that readers could see in it a firm commitment to independence but not necessarily to a republic and not necessarily to the resort to violent means to achieve this independence. In fact the question of violence was a controversial question at the convention. Fears were expressed that crime or outrage might be encouraged by Sinn Fein. Both Griffith and de Valera were at pains to point out that they would not contravene the moral law. De Valera declared specifically that they would use against England only means "justly available in the minds of all Irishmen". De Valera was here clearly using "Irishmen" in an exclusivist sense reminiscent of Pearse's for there were Irishmen, and not only unionists, for whom the very existence of Sinn Fein would not have been a justly available means. These assurances were, however, satisfactory to those who feared violence on the part of the new Sinn Fein. The Irish Volunteers also held a Convention at this time where de Valera was chosen as president of the Irish Volunteers thus bringing the two movements together. Naturally this body was somewhat more militant than Sinn Fein and this was manifested by the exclusion of Eoin MacNeill and Bulmer Hobson but even here de Valera's emphasis was on the need for an army to back up the Sinn Fein claim rather than to undertake a renewal of the Easter rebellion.

254 Irish Independent, 26 October, 1917.
255 Ibid.
Under the surface, however, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, led by Michael Collins, was moving into influential positions in both Sinn Fein and more particularly in the Irish Volunteers.

Sinn Fein emerged from its convention as a considerably more credible alternative to the Irish Parliamentary Party than it had been so far. The authorities had done nothing to interfere with the meeting of either convention and yet they were continuing to round up individual Sinn Feiners for comparatively trivial offences exhibiting to all a hopelessly confused policy towards Ireland and further damaging whatever remnant of authority they had in the minds of the Irish people. The Government was becoming discredited in the eyes of both the population with nationalist sympathies and with unionists but whereas the unionists had no alternative object of political allegiance, nationalist Ireland did.

After the consolidation of the separatist movement in the autumn of 1917 the major barrier to Sinn Fein's progress and growth remained the Roman Catholic Church's condemnation of violence. A few days after the Sinn Fein and Volunteer conventions Dr. Gilmartin, the Bishop of Clonfert, reiterated the theological justifications for rebellion pointing out that rebellion was not justified under the conditions prevailing in Ireland. Mr. de Valera, speaking in Loughrea, County Galway, tried to put to rest any apprehensions on that score which might trouble members of the hierarchy. He rejected the use of any immoral means to win Irish independence. He specifically
declared that the interests of Ireland could never clash with the interests of religion. Sinn Fein, he argued, merely continued the earlier tradition of the Irish Parliamentary Party which had been abandoned in recent years and he quoted Dillon, Redmond, and Devlin in support of his argument. This was well calculated to be acceptable to the hierarchy long uneasy about the Liberal alliance of the Irish Party. He then went on to say that

Total and complete separation from England was necessary both on national and moral grounds. Did anyone say that it was good for Ireland — a nation that had some hopes besides the materialism of Pagan England — to be dragged in at the tail of English Socialism which was coming along? He did not want to say anything against the amelioration of the conditions of the working man, but if they remained tied to England they would have the same conditions as under English Socialism, and the moral and physical corruption as they saw it in Dublin today.257

This speech was well conceived to appeal to two vital elements in the public support of the Irish Party; the Church and the bourgeoisie. The working class could safely be alienated as long as it did not build up an independent political force capable of challenging both Sinn Fein and the Irish Parliamentary Party. The absence of Larkin and the death of Connolly left Irish labour without leaders capable of translating its alienation into class conscious political activity and the small size of the urban proletariat made a successful challenge to the two socially conservative nationalist parties extremely unlikely. Ernie O'Malley has pointed out

257 Freeman's Journal, 2 November, 1917.
that "the Volunteer spirit in essentials was hostile to Labour, afraid that any attention to its needs or direction would weaken the one-sided thrust of force". Labour was well aware of this hostility but it was faced with equal hostility on the part of the Irish Party and thus had nowhere to turn. The exasperation felt by labour had been expressed in September when Dublin Corporation members of all parties had acted in unison to support a non-labour candidate in a municipal by-election. The Dublin Trades Council had then passed the following resolution:

That we protest against the grabbing of the representation of Kilmainham Ward, which when last contested was won by Labour, and we note that this same Corporation which denied Labour its rights, on the grounds of supporting a man who suffered by the recent upheaval, rejected two other men from South Dock and Drumcondra Wards, both of whom also suffered. In our opinion this co-option emphasises the fact that Sinn Feiners, United Irish Leaguers and Tories all combine when Labour has to be defeated, and we expect the workers to take note.

Sinn Fein enjoyed the prestige of the Connolly and Mallin martyrdoms and, while the living Connolly may not have been unreservedly popular in the labour movement, their memory, sanctified by martyrdom at English hands, exerted a strong pull on much of the working class. Despite the realization by labour that no party cared about the interests of the proletariat, that both parties as well as the Church were likely to oppose them; Sinn Fein tended, on the whole, to

258 On Another Man's Wound, op. cit., p. 52.
259 Cork Examiner, 17 September, 1917.
benefit from working class support. Instrumental in this support was the fact that Sinn Fein was clearly the more militant foe of conscription and Irish workers joined the Volunteers in order to resist the military compulsion measure which unionists and the British press kept urging for Ireland.

When the verdict of the inquest on Thomas Ashe was published in early November it confirmed the perceptions of those who saw in him a further victim of English brutality and this meant virtually all of nationalist Ireland. The jury censured the Castle authorities, condemned forcible feeding and censured the Deputy Governor and through him the Prison Board which was also condemned for its lack of co-operation during the inquest.260

John Dillon was labouring hard at this time to recover grass roots support for the Party but he had himself become so hostile to the British Government that his campaign largely consisted of supporting Sinn Fein aims while condemning their means, and at a time of high tension the subtlety of this distinction risked being lost. Speaking to the Dublin Ancient Order of Hibernians' Literary and Debating society he declared:

The country is swept by a wave of passion which is, I frankly recognize, patriotic, intensely patriarch, and I must add, in my opinion extremely brave and gallant and inspired by the spirit and readiness to make sacrifices. And we must recognize, in considering and forming a judgement, that is to say, any valuable judgement, on the events which are going around us today rapidly - developing so rapidly around us to-day - that this movement in Ireland is a movement of bitter reaction against bad government.261

260 See Sean O'Luing, I Die In A Good Cause, op. cit., p. 197.
261 Cork Examiner, 5 November, 1917.
What he feared from Sinn Fein was renewed armed conflict but he was unable to inspire much hope on the basis of continued parliamentary activity and nationalists were unwilling to surrender what they thought they had won in 1914. To compound the Party's difficulties Dr. Walsh at this point launched a new attack on John Redmond condemning his willingness to continue accepting parliamentary representation for Trinity College, Dublin in any scheme of self-government. Redmond's acceptance of this representation was based on his desire to mollify southern unionists by offering them the prospect of at least four secure seats in any new Irish Parliament, but Dr. Walsh depicted it as one more instance of discrimination against Roman Catholics since no similar provisions were being made for the other colleges dominated by the Church. The fact that there was at this time a redistribution scheme under consideration which would have reduced nationalist strength in County Tyrone in particular added to the perception of discrimination.

Fear of renewed violence was Sinn Fein's greatest handicap in the quest for popular support and John Dillon was touring Ireland attempting to capitalize on it. If the Irish Convention could come up with a broadly acceptable scheme the Irish Party might be in a position to compete successfully with Sinn Fein on the continued value of constitutional activity. In fact

262 Freeman's Journal, 15 November, 1917.
263 Ibid.
in mid-November Sinn Fein pronouncements were being toned down. Even Mr. de Valera in Mohill, County Leitrim, appeared willing to offer the Government a quid pro quo. He declared:

In connection with the call for conscription made in the House of Commons last week, he said when the Allies had given earnest of their sincerity on behalf of small nationalities by freeing Ireland they would find that Irishmen were not only ready to defend their own land, but ready to give a helping hand to the oppressed.264

The fear of violence was such that Sinn Fein speakers were reported to have been stoned in Green Castle, County Donegal265 and Cardinal Logue wrote a letter which was read at Sunday mass throughout the Archdiocese of Armagh and in which, having called for world peace, he went on:

Nor is it for the general peace of the world only that we should sue. We have troubles and unrest and excitement and dangers here at home, which render domestic peace necessary. Whether it be due to the democratisation which this world-war has brought to almost every country, or to the fate which seems to hang over our own unhappy country, blasting her hopes when they seem to brighten, an agitation has sprung up and is spreading among our people which, ill-considered and Utopian, cannot fail, if persevered in, to entail present suffering, disorganization, and danger, and is sure to end in future disaster, defeat and collapse. And all this in pursuit of a dream which no man in his sober senses can hope to see realized: the establishment of an Irish Republic, either by an appeal to the potentates of Europe seated at a Peace Conference or an appeal to force by hurling an unarmed people against an empire which has five millions of men under arms, furnished with the most terrible engines of destruction which human ingenuity could devise. The thing would be ludicrous if it were not so mischievous and fraught with such danger, when cleverly used as an incentive to fire the imagination of an ardent, generous, patriotic people.266

264Ibid., 19 November, 1917.
265Ibid., 21 November, 1917.
266Ibid., 26 November, 1917.
Dr. Morrisroe, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Achonry, ordered Cardinal Logue's letter read in his diocese as well and one parish priest complained that Sinn Feiners had attempted to drown out his voice when he read the letter at Sunday mass.\textsuperscript{267}

At the close of the year John Dillon seemed to be holding the support of the north of Ireland for the Irish Parliamentary Party. Ulster nationalists were on the whole more aware of the need to conciliate Ulster unionists than were those of the rest of Ireland. While the \textit{Freeman's Journal} accounts of solid Irish Party support throughout the north were likely to be somewhat embellished the paper made no such claims for any other part of Ireland thus suggesting a larger measure of support in that area best able to assess the likelihood of civil conflict.\textsuperscript{268} De Valera and Sinn Fein generally continued to maintain a bellicose attitude towards Ulster unionists which was bound to appear threatening to the nationalist minority in Ulster. Speaking in Dundalk he offered to welcome unionists as the prodigal son was welcomed but he warned, "if they do not return we would find an Abraham Lincoln who would know how to deal with them".\textsuperscript{269} On the other hand, despite the undeniable gain in popularity of Sinn Fein in the south of Ireland some urban councils were refusing to pass addresses of welcome to de Valera as he travelled about the country.\textsuperscript{270}

\textsuperscript{267} \textit{Ibid.}, 4 and 13 December, 1917.
\textsuperscript{268} 3 December, 1917.
\textsuperscript{269} \textit{Freeman's Journal}, 3 December, 1917.
\textsuperscript{270} \textit{Cork Examiner}, 13 December, 1917; \textit{Freeman's Journal}, 14 December, 1917.
and the Cork Corporation defeated by a vote of 15 to 9 a proposal to reinstate Kuno Meyer as a freeman of the city. 271 While Sinn Fein had not yet established its claim to represent nationalist Ireland it had clearly destroyed the Irish Party's claim to do so and the nationalist camp was deeply divided as the year ended with a very minor victory for the Party when Parliament postponed the parliamentary redistribution scheme for Ireland because of Irish Party objections. 272

It is highly improbable that at this stage the Irish Party could have recovered the full measure of its former support but it was not yet a spent force. Its chances rested with the Irish Convention and with the willingness of the British Government to respond to Party pressures while resisting Sinn Fein's demands. It badly needed a practical demonstration that its policy offered success whereas Sinn Fein's led only to defeat, but so far all that it could convincingly demonstrate was that both policies led to deprivation for Ireland. War Office contracts, promised since 1915, were not forthcoming, the brewing and distilling industries together with their subsidiary enterprises had suffered as a result of Government regulations and the Dublin Receiving Depot had not yet been set up. The crops had been bad and the Compulsory Tillage Order together with the Food Controller's orders were deeply resented in rural Ireland. The loyal elements among

271Cork Examiner, 22 December, 1917.
272Freeman's Journal, 7 December, 1917.
nationalists were conscious that the war efforts of Ireland were not receiving due recognition. Taxes were rising, the wholesale price index as of 31 December, 1917 had risen by 37 per cent since the same time in 1916 and while this was not as great an increase as in 1916 it was still staggering in a country where wages had remained almost static and where unemployment was still a problem. Martial law continued but the moral authority of the Government was being challenged on a large scale. The policy of prosecuting minor Sinn Fein figures while allowing the movement to organize without interference contributed to the further discredit of the Government. It provided grounds for charges of coercion, repression and tyranny without seriously attempting to make repression effective.

The one item which could be cited as evidence of Irish prosperity during the war was a substantial increase of deposits in Irish banks but some of this represented crushing debts incurred by farmers in particular and were loans rather than deposits. It was also noted that in late 1917 control over Irish banking was increasingly passing into the hands of London banks and that the availability of Irish capital for Irish industry was in fact becoming more restricted. This raised apprehensions among the Irish bourgeoisie that this trend would continue following the war and make the recovery of Irish industry impossible. Sinn Fein's appeal was thus

---

broadening to all classes even to labour for whom Sinn Fein's major attraction was its uncompromising anti-conscriptionism as indeed it was for many "farmers' sons", but Sinn Fein's most significant gains in 1917 were among the middle class, the traditional mainstay of the Irish Parliamentary Party whose demonstrated impotence opened the way for a change of allegiance. The Roman Catholic hierarchy, however, was still to be won over as a group, the Irish Convention having put an end to what had seemed a trend towards Sinn Fein earlier in the year.
CHAPTER XIII

1918

The Irish Parliamentary Party's hopes in early 1918 were bound up with the fortunes of the Irish Convention then still in session. The deliberations of this body were hidden from the public eye and public opinion seemed to be in a state of suspension. Sinn Fein had made remarkable gains in popular support in 1917 but now the prospect that the Irish Convention would come up with a plan for Irish self-government was fuelling a sense of cautious optimism which was to the advantage of constitutionalists. It is now apparent that in November 1917 the Convention came close to a breakthrough when the Ulster unionists actually offered to put forward proposals for an all-Ireland constitutional structure which would have been satisfactory from their point of view. These proposals would in all likelihood have been unsatisfactory to the other parties but they might have begun discussion recognizing the principle of self-government. In what has been described as "the major blunder" of the Convention the offer was not taken up and the delegates went on to discuss the extent of the powers of an Irish parliament without settling on the nature of the parliament itself. After this blunder the possibility of securing a substantial measure of agreement on the powers of an Irish Parliament was remote. This, however,

was not widely realized in Ireland. The contest between Sinn Fein and the Irish Party went on during these uncertain days. De Valera engaged in myth making when, in a Galway address, he referred to Ireland's glorious past declaring that, "Ireland was a sovereign independent state 117 years ago. She was a nation among the nations and one of the four or five Powers in Europe". A few days later J. G. Swift MacNeill quoted Wolfe Tone to refute the vision then conjured up by the Sinn Fein leader. But Sinn Fein did not confine its activities to myth and propaganda and two hundred Sinn Feiners armed with pikes and revolvers were reported to have broken up a Redmondite meeting in Killaville, Co. Sligo. Such incidents were an embarrassment to the Sinn Fein leadership, particularly as they jeopardized the movement's growing support from the Roman Catholic Church - a support predicated on the non-violent character of the movement. It seems clear that these incidents were not endorsed by the leadership but in early 1918 the Sinn Fein chain of command was weak and local branches of the party and of the Irish Volunteers tended to act independently on purely local issues.

In mid-January nationalist Ireland breathed a sign of relief when the new military service Bill passed by Westminster once again excluded Ireland from its provisions. Unionists

2Freeman's Journal, 2 January, 1918.
3Ibid., 7 January, 1918.
4Cork Examiner, 3 January, 1918.
5Freeman's Journal, 15 January, 1918.
voiced strong protests at this continued differential treatment of Ireland and the Northern Whig was quoted as saying that "we find it impossible to understand the mental attitude of those who say that the cure for disloyalty is to give the disloyal what they want". The unionist protest made it clear that there would continue to be strong pressure on and within the Cabinet to impose conscription upon Ireland.

Dr. Fogarty, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Killaloe, made reference to this continued threat in a letter to the chairman of the Clare County Council in which he commented,

Ireland is menaced with conscription, as was Australia, with this difference, that Australia was a free country and could protect itself. Ireland is not free, but it is just as well that the "Morning Post" and the "Irish Times" and all the class they speak for, should clearly understand at once that any attempt to force conscription on this country will be attended with the most disastrous results. Not one of these young Irishmen will fire a shot under compulsion in this war of plutocrats. They will die in their own yards first. May God protect us from such a tragedy.

The resignation of both Sir Edward Carson and Colonel James Craig from the Government on the grounds that the cabinet might be forced to act on the recommendations of the Irish Convention lent support to expectations that a solution was about to emerge. The Cork Examiner interpreted the resignations as signifying that the Government was preparing to act on the basis of a compromise solution being worked out

6 Irish Weekly Independent, 19 January, 1918.
7 Cork Examiner, 26 January, 1918.
in the Convention. Some of the issues involved in the Convention's deliberations became public with the resignation of one of the Government appointees to the Convention, Mr. E. Lysaght, who had been chosen because of his Sinn Fein sympathies. His resignation came over the issue which eventually proved the immediate cause of the convention's failure, financial arrangements. Redmond had moved acceptance of a compromise put forward by Lord Midleton, the southern unionist leader, which would have granted a measure of fiscal autonomy to a self-governing Ireland but which would have left the imposition of customs duty to the Imperial Parliament. Ulster unionists were unlikely to vote in favour of any scheme in the absence of a decision on the structure of the proposed Irish Parliament but there were indications that, with the removal of the prospect of tariffs against Great Britain destructive to Ulster industry, they might abstain on the Redmond motion.

Redmond's motion to adopt the Midleton proposal contained a proviso that acceptance be conditional on the British Government accepting the scheme and giving it legislative effect "forthwith". Here was the crux of the difficulty which Dr. O'Donnell, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Raphoe, had with the motion. He and two of his brother-bishops were unwilling to support the motion in the absence of firm official

---

8 22 January, 1918.
9 See David W. Miller, Church, State and Nation in Ireland 1898–1921, op. cit., pp. 376 ff.
10 Ibid., p. 376.
guarantees to act on the proposal if supported by a majority in the Convention. Joseph Devlin, one of Redmond's principal lieutenants, joined them in refusing to support the motion, which would mean expressing a willingness to abandon the claim to full fiscal autonomy, without firm guarantees, and these were not forthcoming. Redmond desperately needed to achieve a settlement of the Home Rule question in order to restore and indeed to save the Irish Party. He knew that the end of the war would be followed by a general election and that, if the Party failed to achieve a solution, Sinn Fein was likely to trounce them. On the other hand, if a solution emerged, Redmond and his Party would form a major part of the first Irish Government and be in a strong position to face Sinn Fein opposition. The risk was that the Government would again fail to act and its performance in the recent past made that a considerable risk but one which Redmond had to take. The rub was that if Lloyd George failed to act Redmond would be on record as having been willing to compromise on fiscal autonomy as he was on record as being willing to compromise on temporary exclusion of Ulster. But in refusing to so compromise Redmond would surely fail and the Party would be destroyed in any case. Dr. O'Donnell was not subject to the same pressures, and as D. W. Miller pointed out in his analysis of the crisis:

O'Donnell would still be a bishop after next general election even if Redmond and his friends were no longer M.P.'s, and he could, unlike Redmond, hope to exercise influence within some new political synthesis
similar to that which, for the past eighteen years, he had exercised in the party's organization. For O'Donnell, therefore, it made sense not to risk being politically discredited by accepting the compromise without a guarantee of legislation, but to wait for a new, more favourable situation in the unpredictable future.  

The bishops who had resisted any proposals to give Ulster Home Rule within Home Rule, together with Joseph Devlin, had thrown over Redmond's leadership and though the Convention would carry on for some time it was doomed and, as we can now appreciate more fully, so was the Irish Party. Unionist fears of Home Rule in any form of self-governing Ireland had been revived and any hope that the Ulstermen would make concessions was at an end. Redmond's bitter disillusionment was evident in his comment that:

It is well that we should understand the situation. We are offered a Parliament for the whole of Ireland, with full and complete control over every purely Irish affair, both legislative and administrative, including land, education, local government, old age pensions, insurance, police, judiciary, and everything else, with full and complete control over all internal taxation, both its collection and its imposition, including excise, that is to say, a Parliament infinitely better than was ever suggested by Butt, Parnell, or Gladstone. And, because we are not getting the immediate control of the imposition of customs (we are offered the collection of them), which we all declare we would not and could not put into force against England, even if we got it, we are going to face the future with a wrecked Convention and, apparently, with a light heart.  

This of course ignores the element of risk which was crucial

11 Ibid., p. 383.
12 Quoted in Denis Gwynne, The Life of John Redmond, op. cit., p.592.
to the difference between O'Donnell and Redmond but the
latter had made a pretty fair assessment of the consequences
for the Convention of the Bishop of Raphoe's stand.

Edward Lysaght's resignation revealed to the public that
a compromise solution involving continuing imperial control
over customs was being mooted in the Convention. It was
widely assumed in Ireland that control of customs by the
British Parliament was the root cause of the parlous state
of Irish industry and this revelation of continued British
control, which might have been widely accepted as part of a
self-government grant, was upsetting to many. Dr. Fogarty
of Killaloe immediately wrote an open letter to Mr. Lysaght
where, with rhetorical flourishes, he showed himself far
more intransigent than Dr. O'Donnell, rejecting compromise
under any circumstances. He asked,

Can it be possible that they are contemplating,
above the heads of the people, another tragedy
for Ireland in the shape of sham Home Rule?

A country without control of its own trade would
be like the Irish farmer in the past, who could
not get his daughter married without the permission
of his landlord.

If the great advocate of "self-determination" for
all the nationalities of the world has nothing for
Ireland but feudal slavery of that kind, then he
had better leave the Irish deputation at home. The
country is sick of all this huxtering when the path
of national interest is so clear to every honest mind. 13

Another Roman Catholic prelate who expressed concern for what
was happening at the Convention was the Bishop of Cork, Dr.

13Cork Examiner, 4 February, 1918.
Cohalan. In an address to the Cork Catholic Young Men's Society, Dr. Cohalan also singled out for special praise the Gaelic revival movement

... which, since taken up by the new force - the Volunteer Sinn Feiners - had brought to perfect discipline the development of sobriety in Ireland and the revival of everything that was good in the old Gaelic civilization.

As Catholics these young men were admirable, and the contrast between their obedience to legitimate church authority and the civil authority of the land was rather strange. Why the same respect for the Government under the civil order did not obtain was because there was no such proper government in this country. 14

The Bishop of Cork was here moving in the direction of denying the legitimacy of the Government, and thus endorsing the Sinn Fein position. On the subject of the Irish Convention he said,

If during the present state of disruption, the present question of framing a Constitution is to end in disappointment; if nothing is to result from the Convention of the Government that will satisfy the national idea generally, then I would say that a party like Mr. De Valera's would surely sweep all before it. 15

The Roman Catholic hierarchy's attitude to Sinn Fein and to the British Government owed something to the fact that, following the establishment of the National University, the Church had no further demands of major import to make. From the Church's point of view Sinn Fein had an unfortunate tendency towards violence, at least of the verbal variety, but under de Valera's leadership it seemed more dutiful than the Irish

14 Irish Weekly Independent, 16 February, 1918.
15 Cork Examiner, 11 February, 1918.
Party. John Dillon had always been viewed as something of an anti-clerical and this tended to cool relations between Church and Party. The Irish parliamentarians were also worldly men, corrupted by London's sinful atmosphere, whereas the Sinn Fein leaders tended to be closer to the soil and to the simple piety favoured by the Irish Church. It was also clear in 1918 that, even should the Irish Convention achieve success and produce a solution which restored the Party leaders' position, Sinn Fein was there to stay and would have to be reckoned with. A substantial body of the country's youth would adhere to Sinn Fein regardless of the success which the Irish Party might achieve and it was in the Church's long run interest to establish and maintain close ties with this new force in Irish politics.

A by-election in South Armagh in early February reflected the alignment of forces in nationalist Ireland. Sinn Fein was still making much use of the Peace Conference argument but as long as the Irish Convention continued to sit there were high hopes of a more proximate solution and the Peace Conference tended to be seen as a reserve alternative. Countess Markievicz was telling the country that James Connolly's last words to her as he left Liberty Hall for the General Post Office had been, "It is all right, Madam; Ireland's case will go to the Peace Conference", but other appeals had to be made. Large contingents of Irish Volunteers were drafted

\[16\] *Cork Examiner*, 21 January, 1918.
into the constituency to maintain "order". Mr. McGuiness, the elected member for South Longford, observed that Sinn Fein was having considerable difficulty persuading older voters to support them and Sean McEntee suggested a familiar Irish remedy for this problem - "that young men should refuse to plough or sow or reap for fathers who would be so base as to betray Ireland". These means of persuasion, however, failed to sway enough of the electorate, and Mr. Donnelly, the Party candidate defeated Dr. MacCartan of Sinn Fein, 2,324 votes to 1,305. The size of the Sinn Fein vote was nevertheless such as to indicate that the party was well established. Joe Devlin greeted the result as a major set-back for Sinn Fein but his interpretation of the verdict did not square well with the possibilities which had been discussed in the Convention. He declared:

I take the verdict of South Armagh to represent the feelings of Nationalist Ulster in relation to the present political situation in Ireland. If that verdict means anything it means that there must be conceded to this country a measure of the widest form of Self-Government. South Armagh demands such a measure of liberty for Ireland as is enjoyed by Canada, Australia and South Africa. If the Government is not prepared to harken to the voice of the national-minded people of Ireland, as reflected by the decisive result of this election, then it must be prepared to see this country handed over to the forces of extremism and disruption.

This was to raise the price of settlement far higher than any unionist could then accept and even if Lloyd George could be pictured as carrying through some form of self-government

17 Ibid., 31 January, 1918.
18 Freeman's Journal, 4 February, 1918.
19 Cork Examiner, 4 February, 1918.
on the Midleton scheme in the Convention he would never have carried his Unionist Cabinet colleagues on the basis of Dominion Home Rule. A solution on some such basis, however, was capturing the imagination of Irish Party supporters and had already been advocated by the O'Mahony, who deprecated a republican solution, declaring that "Great Britain would have as great a right to prevent our secession from the Empire as the Northern States of America had to prevent the secession of the Southern states from the Union", but who saw no similar difficulty in Dominion status. This alteration in the Party position also had the effect of pushing the Sinn Fein policy towards a greater extremism in competition with the Party's stance.

In view of the elaboration of this new position by Irish Party leaders it is now clear that any hope for an agreement in the Convention was growing ever more illusory, but some hope survived as long as the results of the Convention were not made public. It is indicative of that climate of hopeful uncertainty that the 1918 Lenten Pastorals steered clear of political questions. Dr. Gaughran, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Meath, deplored the breakdown of the Irish language which permitted a deluge of English literature to engulf Ireland and Dr. MacRory, his colleague from Down and Connor, whose performance in the Irish Convention had offended unionists and embarrassed most of the others, attempted to extend an

21 David W. Miller, *Church, State and Nation in Ireland 1898-1921*, op. cit., p. 363.
olive branch to the unionists and wrote that,

> If our Unionist fellow-countrymen will only join us in making what is surely not an unnatural claim, the claim that they and we together should be left our own affairs in our own way in our own country, then I think that they will find that we are prepared to meet them in no spirit of envy or intolerance, but with the feelings of brothers too long separated from them, and in the sacred spirit of our patriotism.²²

He also called for tolerance among nationalists. This was a particular concern in Ulster where feuding among nationalists could allow unionists to gain in electoral contests.

Another sign of the uncertainty of the public mood was the difficulty encountered by Sinn Fein in conducting what has been variously described as a referendum or a plebiscite on whether Ireland's claim ought to be presented to the Peace Conference. Clearly Sinn Fein anticipated a massive "yes" answer and few nationalists, even among the most fervent supporters of the Irish Party, would have opposed the idea. They might think it futile but hardly objectionable as such, yet in mid-February Sinn Fein found itself faced with massive apathy on the question. People were simply refusing to be drawn into a controversy between Sinn Fein and the Party and one Sinn Feiner, Denis Tobin, was driven in frustration to declare to the Ballygarvan Sinn Fein Club that, "If any of those labourers who had refused to sign the Peace Conference plebiscite were listening to him, he would tell them that they were not Irishmen - they were not men at all - they were

²²Irish Weekly Independent, 16 February, 1918.
traitors to their country and renegades".\textsuperscript{23}

Sinn Fein was also experiencing internal difficulties with respect to the revival of agrarian agitation in the west of Ireland. The main problem was that the Volunteers, the most highly organized element in the community, tended to become involved in these activities which included cattle drives and land ploughing. Arms raids, while more directly useful to the Volunteers, were also a source of embarrassment.\textsuperscript{24} The Church tended to be critical of these outrages and it was now vital for Sinn Fein to consolidate its growing clerical support as well as win over people well disposed towards the Irish Party. A revival of agrarian agitation reminiscent of the Land League agitation was likely to offend and frighten the middle class elements whose support Sinn Fein was trying to win. Sinn Fein officially rejected violence until the Irish Party was driven from the scene and ceased to be available as a nationalist alternative to which the Church and the middle class could rally. Sinn Fein and the Volunteers made determined, and largely successful, efforts to restrain their local units and at the same time Diarmuid Lynch, the Sinn Fein Food Director, dramatically organized the seizure of thirty-four pigs destined for export in order to demonstrate Sinn Fein's concern for the grievances which fuelled the

\textsuperscript{23}Cork Examiner, 18 February, 1918.  
\textsuperscript{24}Cork Examiner, 23 February, 1918; Freeman's Journal, 23 February, 1918; Irish Independent, 26 and 28 February, 1918.
agrarian unrest. The seizure was a largely symbolic act. The number of pigs exported that week was 4,535 and the Irish Food Control Committee had already issued an order controlling the trade in pigs which was to become effective on 1 March. Sinn Fein's hope was that to the popular mind the order would be linked directly to the seizure of pigs in Dublin and that the movement would get the credit, which is substantially what happened.

The Church was manifesting considerable alarm at the lawlessness in the west of Ireland and Dr. Coyne, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Elphin, issued a strongly worded condemnation of arms raids in particular. Sinn Fein was ultimately saved from a potentially damaging loss of popularity by the decision of the authorities to declare county Clare a "special military area" thus allowing some of the onus for the outrages to be diverted to the Government. The outrages continued for some time and were duly condemned by Dr. Gilmartin, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Clonfert as well as by Dr. Fogarty of Killaloe, even the Sinn Fein Executive formally condemned them now that they could safely be attributed to Government coercion. The Cork Examiner in a leader on agrarian unrest typically declared:

25 Freeman's Journal, 22 February, 1918.
26 Cork Examiner, 23 February, 1918.
27 Freeman's Journal, 26 February, 1918.
28 Ibid., 27 February, 1918.
29 Ibid., 5 March, 1918.
30 Cork Examiner, 9 March, 1918.
31 Freeman's Journal, 5 March, 1918.
We are convinced that the Government is itself largely responsible for much of the unrest that prevails in some counties of the West coast of Ireland, in as much as the causes of that unrest may be traced to the disappointment and vexation that have resulted from the delay in settling the Irish question, and the belief that the Government has condoned the acts of the Covenanters, while ready to deal drastically with those holding different political opinions. Whether that view be right or wrong, it unquestionably prevails, and with the added incentives which high prices and other causes supply, the existent unrest in this country is allied.32

Dr. Fogarty’s condemnation of agrarian crimes and of arms raids was allied to a political interpretation of the administration’s moves in county Clare. He added,

My opinion of the martial laws here and military display, and of the grievous inconvenience it is causing to the community is that it is an effort by politicians to swamp the Sinn Fein movement under an organized campaign of calumny and terror. That effort will fail, for the Sinn Fein movement is nothing more than the National spirit of Ireland purified from English dross. That spirit is immortal and nothing can kill it.33

The Irish Parliamentary Party was unable to exploit whatever damage to Sinn Fein’s popular image resulted from agitation in the west of Ireland. On 2 March the press reported that John Redmond, who had been ailing for some months, had undergone a successful surgical operation but within the week he was dead.34 Redmond died with his efforts in ruins. His hopes for the Irish Convention were dashed, though the extent of that failure was not yet clear to the public.

32 2 March, 1918.
33 Cork Examiner, 9 March, 1918.
34 Freeman’s Journal, 7 March, 1918.
Even Dr. Fogarty, in an interview a few days after Redmond's death expressed the opinion that a generous measure of Dominion Home Rule would rally the country to Britain's support but he went on to warn that:

Irish control of finance is, however, absolutely essential. On the other hand if the Convention breaks up without any result and the Government fail to announce a just policy immediately, I should not like to answer for the result in the present temper of the people, should anything happen.35

There were portents that the hoped for solution to the Irish question was not forthcoming. The southern unionists issued a manifesto in early March which indicated that they were unlikely to accept their own leader's plan as submitted to the Convention and they declared that what was needed in Ireland was

1. The enforcement of the ordinary law with firmness, justice, and impartiality. Without this no country has ever prospered, or ever will.
2. The development of the national resources of Ireland, and the promotion of commerce, industry, and agriculture.
3. The completion of Land Purchase. The Land question was, as is well known, the lever without the support of which the Home Rule agitation would have long since collapsed.
4. The obligations and burdens of the war, already imposed on the rest of the United Kingdom, should be shared by Ireland.

Finally, if the present system of government is in any way altered, the only safe and logical solution is that which would treat Ireland in the same way as all other parts of the United Kingdom, by entrusting to each part defined powers in connection with its strictly local affairs. Any scheme which confers on Ireland powers which are denied to other parts of the United Kingdom would at once become the badge of separation, and afford the opportunity, long looked for, of setting up an independent Irish Republic.36

35Cork Examiner, 12 March, 1918.
36Freeman's Journal, 4 March, 1918.
In the Cork area the long and bitter feud between the Irish Party and the All-for-Ireland League together with a perception that prospects for self-government were dimming contributed to the decisions of the Cork Rural Council and the Cork Guardians not to adjourn their sittings because of Redmond's death. One of the Guardians, Mr. J. Richard, went so far as to describe John Redmond as "the greatest curse to Ireland". Elsewhere in Ireland Redmond's death elicited a considerable display of sorrow and requiem services were held in most Irish centres. Even the National Volunteers managed to muster up a guard of honour when the body passed through Dublin on its way to burial in Waterford. Within a few days, however, Irish Party supporters were shocked by what appeared to be the sharpest rebuff to the Party from a member of the Roman Catholic hierarchy when Dr. Hallinan, the Bishop of Limerick, refused the Limerick Ladies National Volunteer Association's request for a requiem mass for John Redmond in St. John's Cathedral. The reason given by the Bishop was that this would introduce politics into the Church. In view of the importance of requiem services following the 1916 rebellion to the protest of the extremists, the action of the Bishop of Limerick was bound to be offensive on political grounds as well as on moral grounds. Dr. Hallinan was known

37Cork Examiner, 8 March, 1918.
38Ibid., 11 March, 1918.
39Freeman's Journal, 18 March, 1918.
to sympathize with Sinn Fein and to be in the vanguard of the hierarchy's shift in attitude towards Sinn Fein but even so the refusal to permit a requiem mass for the man who had been the major political figure in Ireland for many years and a strong advocate of the Church's interests at Westminster was a severe shock to his followers and an encouragement to his opponents.

The mantle of John Redmond passed to his natural successor, John Dillon, and this was bound to have a further adverse effect on relations between the Roman Catholic hierarchy and the leadership of the Irish Party. Ironically, John Redmond, the faithful Parnellite who had supported his leader when the Church rounded on him, had been far more popular with the hierarchy than John Dillon, and while Dr. Morrisroe, the Bishop of Achonry, publicly congratulated Dillon on his appointment as leader of the Irish Party most bishops maintained a discrete silence. 40

Redmond's death had created a vacancy in the parliamentary seat for Waterford and Sinn Fein immediately announced the candidacy of Dr. Vincent White. 41 A few days later Captain William Redmond, John Redmond's son, announced that he would contest the seat on behalf of the Irish Party. As William Redmond was himself the sitting member for East Tyrone this opened up a further vacancy. The British Government, so often

40 Ibid., 15 March, 1918.
41 Ibid., 11 March, 1918.
the unwitting ally of Sinn Fein in electoral contests, once again gave indications of moving to bolster Sinn Fein's appeal by stepping up sharply the arrest of Sinn Feiners throughout the country. The Sinn Fein platform in Waterford once again relied considerably on the prospect of an appeal to the Peace Conference as well as on the argument that Ireland was by right a "free and independent nation". Darrell Figgis declared that "If Nationalist Ireland were united and solid nothing could keep it from its freedom. Their case at the Peace Conference would be decided by the backing their delegates would get from the people of the country". De Valera, speaking at the close of the Waterford campaign, declared that the Irish Parliamentary Party had lost its opportunity to secure self-government at the beginning of the war and had missed all their chances in the past, Sinn Fein was now demanding an opportunity to secure self-government as a free and independent nation by an appeal to the Peace Conference.

In Cork, Liam de Roiste, speaking on behalf of Sinn Fein, referred to the Peace Conference and to other international forces, declaring that

Ireland's claim had gone abroad, and had been placed before the United States, had been recognized by the present Government of Russia, and endorsed by the people of Australia. That claim for Ireland's

42 Cork Examiner, 15 March, 1918.
43 Cork Examiner, 13 March, 1918.
44 Freeman's Journal, 20 March, 1918.
independence had become an international question, and strong international pressure was being brought to bear on it. The question of Ireland's claim was no longer a domestic one - it had become a great international issue with international bearings. Sinn Fein had raised it to that level, and the demand had gone forth that Ireland must be heard at the council of the nations. It was the obvious duty of all to rally to Sinn Fein to keep up this pressure, and keep this question up to the standards of an international one, and not let it sink - as some of our own would have it - to the level of a domestic question. If Ireland were not represented at the Peace Conference it would be the duty of the representatives of the Irish nation to lay the principles of our case before the Conference, and he advocated an appeal to His Holiness the Pope to further the Irish case at the Peace Conference.\textsuperscript{45}

Dr. Hallinan, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Limerick, wrote at this time a long letter in which he wholeheartedly endorsed Sinn Fein, with the important qualification that his approval was conditional on the assumption that the movement was not a secret society and that it would not engage in armed rebellion. He also expressed his confidence in the Peace Conference and explained in some detail how he had come to support Sinn Fein. His justification of the Dublin rising of 1916 would, however, have astonished Tom Clarke and Patrick Pearse. He treated the rebellion as a revolt not against the British Constitution but against Carsonism and he declared that:

The Irish Volunteers, sickened and disgusted at the condonation and reward of Carsonism, rose up in rebellion, not, mind you, against the British Constitution, but against Carsonism, the enemy of the Constitution. The action of the Government of England in condoning Carsonism and shooting down the Irish Volunteers killed the British Constitution in Ireland. Mr. Asquith came over

\textsuperscript{45}Cork Examiner, 18 May, 1918.
to Ireland after the events of Easter Week, 1916, and publicly declared that Dublin Castle rule had failed in Ireland, and Ireland is no longer living under it. We are living under the laws made when the Constitution applied to Ireland, and are bound to obey them. Otherwise the sound fabric would be dissolved, and a nation would be plunged into anarchy. Carsonism killed the British Constitution in Ireland, and with it what was called the Constitutional movement. There is no longer any meaning or motive in the constitutional movement in this country, as the Constitution itself has failed. To send Irish representatives to the British Parliament now would be nothing more or less than a silly farce.

Dr. Hallinan thus went on to endorse Sinn Fein as being under these circumstances the appropriate alternative to representation at Westminster and he declared that, "When the Peace Conference recognizes the right of Ireland to complete independence, England must recognize it - it must". Then it would be time for Ireland to choose its form of government; which was the official position of Sinn Fein adopted at the Sinn Fein Ard Fheis of 1917. 46

The thrust of Sinn Fein's appeal was being blunted by the noticeably more militant tone adopted by Dillon on behalf of the Irish Party. In Enniskillen he outlined what he intended to do as leader of the party: "I feel my first task will be to tell England before the world that her statesmen must cease to talk of a League of Nations, or pretend to carry on this war in defence of small nationalities unless she gets her house in order, and sets free the nation that for 800 years has groaned under her misgovernment". He then called

46 Ibid.
for the bringing to a close the Irish Convention and for the announcement of its results. The ends being sought by the Irish Party and by Sinn Fein were thus demonstrably close. The Party rejected the idea of a republic as impossible but demanded freedom and independence. Sinn Fein while republican did not stress the point and concentrated on so-called "sovereign" independence to be secured through the Peace Conference. Under these circumstances Captain Redmond won Waterford by 1242 votes to 764 and, a few days later, Mr. Harbison, the Party candidate, won East Tyrone by 1,802 to 1,222 for Sean Milroy.

Meanwhile, the end of the Convention's deliberations was announced and now only the preparation of the report remained. Before the public became aware that the Irish Convention had utterly failed to arrive at an agreed solution to the problem of framing an Irish constitution there was some optimism among those who were sympathetic to the Irish Party which was reflected in the Cork Examiner's leading article dealing with the end of the Convention:

The official announcement made to-day that the Irish Convention had adopted the draft report presented by the Chairman (Sir Horace Plunkett) - in other words, that the Convention has agreed on a scheme for the better government of Ireland - supplies an effective answer to those who alleged that agreement amongst Irishmen on the subject of self-government was impossible.

47 Irish Weekly Independent, 23 March, 1918.
49 Freeman's Journal, 5 April, 1918.
50 Ibid., 23 March, 1918.
51 6 April, 1918.
In fact the announcement merely meant that the Convention had agreed on a report reflecting the total failure of the parties in the Convention to agree on any scheme of self-governance for Ireland. This failure quickly became evident and was deeply frustrating, leading to increased questioning of the Irish Party's policy of relying on the Government for a solution. Other factors, such as an intensified campaign of suppression of newspapers considered disloyal such as the Mayo News, the Clare Champion, the Weekly Observer of Newcastle West and the Southern Democrat of Charleville accompanied by arrests for drilling, unlawful assembly, etc., raised tensions to even higher levels.\textsuperscript{52} Irish teachers were also at this time threatening to strike for higher salaries.\textsuperscript{53} In fact most Irish teachers were earning less than labourers and typists employed by the Irish Education Office.\textsuperscript{54} The disillusioning impact of the Convention's failure thus tended to be magnified by these other tensions.

The most ominous source of tension, however, continued to be fear of conscription. The southern unionist manifesto while not explicitly calling for conscription in Ireland had demanded an equal sharing by Ireland in the obligations and burdens of the war and in the House of Commons Sir Richard Cooper had presented a petition calling for conscription in

\textsuperscript{52}\textit{Freeman's Journal}, 28 March, 1918; \textit{Cork Examiner}, 2, 3, 4 and 6 April, 1918.

\textsuperscript{53}\textit{Freeman's Journal}, 3 April, 1918.

\textsuperscript{54}\textit{Irish Weekly Independent}, 12 January, 1918.
Ireland signed by 102,000 people and by 46 members of parliament. In themselves these were merely typical of the constant pressure on the Government to impose conscription in Ireland. So far the Government had resisted this pressure but as the war dragged on and new classes were continually being called up it became increasingly difficult to justify to British public opinion the differential treatment of Ireland. In March 1918 a new German offensive intensified the pressure. Paris was bombarded and the German army crossed the Somme. In April it became obvious that a new Act would be required and there were very few categories left in Great Britain to draw on. The Cork Examiner confidently predicted that once again the Irish Party would succeed in excluding Ireland from any new measure and it declared that "Absentee Sinn Fein members of Parliament may talk heroics in Ireland, but their oratory will be less effective in counteracting the British conscription campaign than the votes and voices of Mr. Dillon and his colleagues in the House of Commons".

The Party had by then given up the argument that conscription was not required and that voluntary enlistment could supply the needs of the British army. Their case was now clearly a demand for special treatment for Ireland. The flavour of British unionist opinion was conveyed by a letter from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in which he said:

55Cork Examiner, 13 March, 1918.
56Freeman's Journal, 26, 27 March, 1918.
572 April, 1918.
The world is a strange picture at present. Belgium in slavery. France bleeding from a hundred wounds, but still keeping her brave pale face to the enemy; Britain sending her last man and her last pound to hold the murderer off his victim; America straining every nerve with real cause for fear lest she be too late; and Ireland, as fat as butter, wrangling over her parish pump.58

Irish public opinion was being rallied to confront the reinvigorated threat. Sir Edward Carson not being in the Cabinet a new bête noire was found close to hand in Sir Henry Wilson, the new Chief of the Imperial General Staff and an Anglo-Irishman who had supported the officers involved in the Curragh mutiny.59 Rumours that John Dillon, as a gesture of solidarity with other opponents of conscription in Ireland, would not contest the upcoming Tullamore by-election where Dr. McCartan had already been chosen as the Sinn Fein candidate were rife.60 The Cork Examiner put forward the Irish rationale for resistance declaring that "no Government, except a Government elected by the Irish people, has the right to dispose of the manhood of the country, and the British Government cannot claim to that".61 Public bodies, including Dublin and Waterford Corporations, passed resolutions warning the Government against the imposition of conscription.62 Dr. Fogarty, however, made no gesture towards any common front including both the Irish Party and Sinn Fein in his letter accompanying a subscription to the Clare Prisoners’ Family Fund in which he

58 Freeman's Journal, 4 April, 1918.
59 Ibid., 6 April, 1918.
60 Ibid., 8 April, 1918.
61 8 April, 1918.
62 Cork Examiner, 9 April, 1918.
Sinn Fein needs no vindication from me or anyone else. We had almost ceased to be Irish until Sinn Fein arose and struck the English rust from the soul of Ireland. Unfortunately, the rust had eaten deep, and spoiled many a good Irish heart. For one thing, I hope we are done for ever with that mockery of a Constitution, the English House of Commons. The self-control maintained by the young people of Ireland, and especially of Clare, in spite of the callous prosecutions to which they are being subjected, is beyond all praise. But this policy of oppression and provocation will not succeed in its purpose, which is obvious enough, to clear the ground by the extermination of the national spirit for the "English friendlies" of the "sanity" Party, and, if possible, prepare the way for conscription - which, by the way, no Government, in my opinion, has the moral right to inflict on any nation without that nation's clearly expressed consent. No scheme of Federation which leaves Ireland as a morsel swallowed in the British stomach will be accepted here.63

The suggestion that the Irish Party were not only "English friendlies" but also in some undisclosed way linked with conscription was unwarranted and malicious but before the Party had an opportunity to defend itself the Man - Power Bill was introduced in the House of Commons and John Dillon warned the Prime Minister that the decision to include Ireland was one which "will plunge Ireland into bloodshed and confusion and which will open up a new war front in addition to the Eastern and Western fronts".64

The Bill did not in fact impose conscription on Ireland but it did allow the Government to do so by Order-In-Council. Its major provisions called up yet more men from England, Scotland and Wales. From Lloyd George's point of view the

63Cork Examiner, 9 April, 1918.
64Freeman's Journal, 10 April, 1918.
provisions relating to Ireland were necessary in order to retain the support of his Unionist colleagues and to make the extension of compulsory military service acceptable in Great Britain where the trades unions were getting restive. Some of his Liberal and Labour colleagues, on the other hand, insisted that conscription for Ireland be linked to the grant of Home Rule thus accounting in part for the delayed action feature of the measure. The possibility of conscription was a severe shock to the Irish Party already suffering from the shocks of Redmond's death and of the failure of the Irish Convention. The reaction in the House of Commons was undisguised hostility and anger, Mr. Lundon, the member for East Limerick, typically declared that "If the attempt was made to impose conscription he would go back to his constituents and tell the younger men that it was better to die upon their own doorsteps than in France at the command of their would-be masters". Statements like these aroused the wrath of Unionists such as Mr. Joynson Hicks who interpreted the Irish Party reaction as proof that Irishmen were fundamentally disloyal. The Cork Examiner tried to point out the advantage of Irish representation at Westminster in such a crisis and declared that:

Mr. Dillon and Mr. Devlin spoke for Ireland last evening, and their speeches - strong in argument

---

66 Freeman's Journal, 10 April, 1918.
67 Ibid.
and founded on justice - stand in strong contrast with the special pleading of the Prime Minister in his attempt to justify conscription in Ireland on the ground of 'extreme necessity'. Those who have maintained that the Irish Nationalist representatives should boycott the House of Commons have now the fullest reason to modify their opinions, because if no protest were made against the Government's tyrannical proposals and there were no dissent from the Premier's statement, Ireland's case would go by default.68

However, the passage of the first reading stage of the Bill by 365 to 80 demonstrated the ineffectiveness of the Party, accentuated its weakness and undermined its major claim for continued support. It also accentuated the ideological gulf which was growing deeper between Britain and Ireland. British opinion saw as simple justice the requirement that Ireland should be compelled to contribute to the defence of the embattled state while nationalist Ireland saw such a requirement as tyranny imposed on the Irish nation. The difference was rooted in a different concept of nationality.

It was clear that the new measure was going to raise a storm in Ireland, and it was also clear that at least some members of the Roman Catholic hierarchy would elaborate justifications for stiff opposition and protest. The bulk of the hierarchy, however, had always maintained the moral obligation to obey duly constituted authority. As Lloyd George was introducing his Bill in the House of Commons, the Episcopal Standing Committee of the Irish Roman Catholic Church met to consider the question of conscription. The Committee eventually

68 10 April, 1918.
issued a statement which was in effect a warning to the Government. The statement, which reflected the distress felt by the hierarchy at the prospect of conscription, was signed by Cardinal Logue, Dr. Browne, the Bishop of Cloyne and Dr. Foley, the Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin, none of whom had shown any sympathy for Sinn Fein.

The Bishops gave no indication of the action contemplated in the event of conscription but it was a significant step in the direction of abandoning their previous support for the authority of the Government. They declared:

Statements have recently been appearing in the Press to indicate that the Government intends to include this country in a measure of conscription. Whether there is any foundation for these rumours, we know not at the moment.

But since the outbreak of hostilities four years ago the War Office has shown such utter lack of real touch with Irish conditions that it is quite possible something may now be proposed, which if attempted, would only crown the disaster which want of knowledge and want of sympathy has already entailed.

To enforce conscription without the consent of the people would be perfectly unwarrantable, and would soon and inevitably end in defeating its own purposes.

Had the Government in any reasonable time given Ireland the benefit of the principles, which are declared to be at stake in the war, by the concession of a full measure of self-government, there would have been no occasion for contemplating forced levies from her now.

What between mismanagement and mischief — making this country has already been deplorably upset, and it would be a fatal mistake surpassing the worst blunders of the past four years, to furnish a telling plea now for desperate courses by an attempt to enforce conscription.

With all the responsibility that attaches to our pastoral office we feel bound to warn the Government against entering into a policy so disastrous to the public interest, and to all order, public and private. 69

69 Freeman's Journal, 10 April, 1918.
The assumption that had self-government been granted there would have been no need for conscription was highly dubious but the bishops were driven to involve themselves in political questions by the prospect of violent disorder in Ireland should conscription be imposed, by their long-standing resistance to any move which removed Irishmen from the ambit of the Irish Church and by their own nationalist inclination. So far their main argument was that conscription would be a blunder but as the crisis deepened in the following weeks they interpreted the question more in theological and moral terms though these tended to remain subordinate to the political factors involved. It was their subordination of theological to political considerations which prompted Father Walter McDonald to write his *Some Ethical Questions of Peace and War with Special Reference to Ireland* in which he argued that unless the position were taken of rejecting all legislation applying to Ireland which had been passed against a vote of the majority of Irish Members as invalid on theological grounds, which manifestly was not the case, then there were no grounds for rejecting conscription alone.70 The bishops, on the other hand, were led by political considerations to define conscription as legislation which was essentially of a special and exceptional character. This position, which was implicitly that of the Irish Parliamentary Party as well, also conflicted with the agreement in the Irish Convention

70 op. cit., pp. 23 ff.
that the legislative supremacy of the Imperial Parliament would be unaffected by the grant of self-government.

The danger of disorder in Ireland consequent upon the imposition of conscription was dramatically underlined when new insurance rates against civil commotion were revealed to Dublin Corporation. The rates which had been 63s. per hundred pounds rose with the announcement of the Prime Minister's proposal to £15 per hundred pounds. Resolutions against the plan poured in from public bodies and the resolution adopted by the Irish County Councils' General Council is typical of their spirit. It read:

That this meeting of the General Council of County Councils and voicing as it does the opinions, sentiments and aspirations of the great majority of the Irish people, protests in the strongest and most emphatic manner at the unconstitutional and tyrannical attempt to enforce conscription in Ireland without the consent of the Irish nation. We warn the Prime Minister and the War Cabinet that if the present Bill now before Parliament is carried and put in force, the whole Irish people will most strenuously resist it in every possible manner. We call upon all classes of the people, the clergy of all denominations, and leaders of all sections to unite and form one solid body in offering the most determined resistance to this inequitous measure. The Government have ignored that hundreds of thousands of Irishmen at home and abroad have joined the armies, and that the men now remaining in Ireland are absolutely necessary to produce food for the country and the armies now engaged in the field.

The prospect of violence was disturbing to most of the members of the Roman Catholic hierarchy and Cardinal Logue was careful to advise that only "passive resistance" to conscription would

---

71 *Freeman's Journal*, 11 April, 1918.

72 *Cork Examiner*, 13 April, 1918.
be lawful in the eyes of the Church. At the same time, the priests of his cathedral parish in Armagh began gathering signatures to a "Solemn League and Covenant" to resist conscription which was clearly copied from the Ulster Covenant to resist Home Rule, though in this case the resistance being contemplated was explicitly passive. As might be expected, a few bishops were less emphatic on the passive character of justifiable resistance and Dr. Fogarty made no such qualification when he declared that the people of Ireland were entitled to resist conscription. Dr. Cohalan of Cork, while somewhat more cautious, strongly opposed conscription and asserted that Catholic Irishmen owed nothing to England. Justices of the Peace began resigning their office and it was clear that an issue had arisen which united in opposition all shades of nationalist opinion and virtually all classes of the Roman Catholic population of Ireland.

A more unexpected source of opposition to the Bill was Sir Edward Carson. He opposed the measure on the basis of the Prime Minister's statement that self-government for Ireland was linked to conscription and that the Government would not make use of its authority to impose compulsory military service

73 Ibid., 15 April, 1918.
74 Freeman's Journal, 13 April, 1918.
75 Ibid., 16 April, 1918.
76 Cork Examiner, 15 April, 1918.
77 Ibid.
until a self-government scheme had been devised. He demanded conscription but without Home Rule implications. The solidarity of nationalist opinion was underlined by John Dillon's withdrawal of the Irish Party candidate in Tullamore.

In the south of Ireland no enthusiasm was generated for self-government at the cost of conscription. The prospect of conscription had been one of the most potent forces operating on behalf of Sinn Fein and the open support for voluntary recruiting by the Irish Party had been a handicap in the struggle for popular allegiance which the Party waged against Sinn Fein. The Party's will to resist conscription had been made suspect among many Irish people by its recruiting activities even though by early 1918 these had become perfunctory. The Party simply could not now afford to add to that suspicion by condoning conscription even if it could thereby gain Home Rule. The results of its compromise on exclusion for Ulster had drastically curtailed its options. The Cork Examiner reflected the Party's position in a leader on the self-government issue in which it said:

It is understood that the scheme of self-government now being drafted will be framed so as to fit into a scheme of Federal Home Rule applicable to England, Scotland, and Wales. It would, therefore, appear to be the case that the Government still hugs the delusion that a measure of Home Rule, which deprives an Irish Parliament of the right to decide the fate of the manhood of this country, and which reserves

---

78 *Freeman's Journal*, 16 April, 1918.

79 Ibid., 11 April, 1918.
that power for Mr. Lloyd George and his Ministers, will be considered by Irishmen as an adequate set-off for the imposition of the Conscription Bill that is now in the House of Lords.\textsuperscript{80}

There was no hope that the House of Lords would reject the Bill and when it passed third reading in the House of Commons the Irish Parliamentary Party walked out of the House and returned home where a conference of nationalists and representatives of Irish labour was announced.\textsuperscript{81} This was a traditional tactic for Irish members of parliament but in the past there had not been at home a rival party whose clearest difference with the parliamentarians was an abstentionist policy based on the conviction that representation at Westminster was futile and dangerous in as far as it legitimized the authority of the British Parliament over Ireland. The withdrawal of the Irish Party now seemed to confirm Sinn Fein's evaluation.

The Mansion House meeting in opposition to conscription grouped on one platform Eamon de Valera, Arthur Griffith, John Dillon, Joseph Devlin, William O'Brien, the labour leader, Tom Johnson, Michael Egan, Tim Healy and William O'Brien, the All-for-Ireland League leader. On the same day the Roman Catholic hierarchy was meeting at Maynooth and it was public knowledge that the bishops were disturbed at recent developments. The day before the Maynooth meeting the Roman Catholic Bishop of Kerry had described conscription in Ireland as

\textsuperscript{80} 18 April, 1918.

\textsuperscript{81} Cork Examiner, 17 April, 1918.
"unconstitutional and unjust".\textsuperscript{82} Even Protestant churchmen who favoured conscription were uneasy about the timing of this attempt which they felt might lead to violence and the Church of Ireland Archbishops of Armagh and Dublin jointly issued a statement which, while it did not condemn conscription, declared that it should have been imposed two years earlier.\textsuperscript{83} Had conscription been imposed immediately after the Easter rising, when it was widely expected, many patriotic Irishmen would have seen it as condign punishment for a mad and treacherous act. By 1918 that mood had changed and the general attitude of Ireland towards the Easter rebellion was totally different.

The leaders meeting at the Mansion House pledged themselves to resist conscription by the most effective means at their disposal and were persuaded to subscribe unanimously to a declaration which had been drafted by Eamon de Valera.

Taking our stand on Ireland's separate and distinct nationhood and affirming the principle of liberty that the governments of nations derive their just powers from the consent of the governed, we deny the right of the British Government or any external authority to impose compulsory military service on Ireland against the clearly expressed will of the Irish people. The passing of the Conscription Bill by the British House of Commons must be regarded as a declaration of war on the Irish nation.

The alternative to accepting it as such is to surrender our liberty and to acknowledge ourselves slaves.

It is in direct violation of the rights of small nationalities to self-determination, which even the

\textsuperscript{82}Ibid., 18 April, 1918.

\textsuperscript{83}Ibid.
Prime Minister of England - now preparing to employ naked militarism and force his Act upon Ireland - himself officially announced as an essential condition for peace at the Peace Congress. That attempt to enforce it will be an unwarrantable aggression, which we call upon all Irishmen to resist by the most effective means at their disposal.84

Subscribing to such a declaration posed for the Irish Party a problem similar to that facing the hierarchy. The Irish Party, up to the failure of the Irish Convention only a few days earlier, had expressed its willingness to accept a scheme of self-government which involved continued recognition of the legislative supremacy of the British Parliament and now the present crisis was forcing from them a denial of that supremacy, at least on the one issue of conscription. Unlike the Church, however, they could not have recourse to a theological smokescreen to mask the shift in their position. Ironically the attitude adopted at the Mansion House in 1918 was basically similar to the attitude of the Ulster unionists in 1913 who were then denying the right of the Government to place them under a different legislature against their clearly expressed will and the parallels between the anti-conscription and the anti-Home Rule agitation would multiply in the days following.

Sinn Fein was faced by none of the difficulties which assailed the logic of the Irish Party's position. They had opposed not only conscription at least as stoutly as the Party but also recruiting ever since the outbreak of the war.

84 Quoted in John McCann, War By the Irish (Kerryman Ltd., Tralee, 1946), p. 78.
Its abstentionist policy implied a consistent refusal to recognize the sovereignty over Ireland of the British Parliament. The typical Sinn Fein reaction to the announcement of conscription was outlined a few years later by J.L. Hammond who said:

The effect in Ireland was instantaneous. This was the most emphatic declaration ever made that Ireland was England's property, that she has as much or as little right to her own life as the Czecho-Slovaks on the Poles, forced to send their sons into Austrian or German armies; that Ireland was a subject people of whom her rulers could claim tribute of blood and of money at their pleasure. No Irishman with a spark of national feeling could acknowledge that claim, and the claim was made at a moment when the Irish spirit was more self-conscious and more sensitive than at any time for a hundred years.85

During this period of ephemeral unity between all nationalist factions, the various leaders, under the influence of Mr. de Valera, adjourned the Mansion House meeting and drove out to Maynooth to consult with the bishops who had been forewarned of such a visit by Dr. Walsh who was privy to de Valera's plan. The outcome of this consultation was that the hierarchy wholeheartedly joined in the anti-conscription campaign and by their action marked a new departure in Irish politics. David W. Miller has commented on the significance of this Maynooth meeting and he pointed out that,

When the hierarchy granted de Valera an audience at Maynooth and urged co-operation between all parties, they gave to Sinn Fein the moral sanction of a legitimate political party and removed it from the realm of theological and moral suspicion in which it had operated for the preceding year. But for its own internal differences, the hierarchy probably possessed the power, up until this point, if not to

85 "A Tragedy of Errors", The Nation, 8 January, 1921.
crush Sinn Fein, to forestall the overwhelming mandate which it received eight months later. The political power of the Irish Church in this period, however, could only be exercised in such a sweeping, nation-wide fashion when the fundamental issue could be depicted as a religious, moral or theological one within the framework in which those terms were understood in Ireland. A generation earlier, Parnell's moral indiscretion had provided such an issue. During the period before the conscription crisis the flirtations of Sinn Fein with armed rebellions and secret societies had offered another such issue upon which the Church might have chosen to mobilize her political power. In April 1918 she deliberately forfeited that option.

In the urgency of building an effective base for the fight against conscription the changing status of Sinn Fein was not immediately perceived. On two successive days the Cork Examiner rejoiced at the new-found unity in nationalist ranks. The second leader on the subject was particularly ecstatic declaring that,

The silver lining to the dark cloud that hangs over the country is the complete and gratifying unification of different parties, creeds and classes that the threat of conscription has so magically secured. No longer do party lines cause cleavage amongst Irishmen. Dissension exists no longer, and all stand united to defend Ireland and to maintain her rights as an ancient nation.

The unity of creeds was not in fact as evident as the Cork newspaper might have wished and at the Workman and Clarke Shipyards in Belfast, Roman Catholic workers were attacked and beaten. But in nationalist circles there was genuine rejoicing at the new found unity.

---

86 Church, State and Nation in Ireland 1898-1921, op. cit., pp. 413-414.
87 20 April, 1918.
88 Irish Weekly Independent, 20 April, 1918.
On the Sunday following the Maynooth meeting the Irish Roman Catholic clergy were directed by their bishops to offer a public mass of intercession to avert "the scourge of conscription" following which they were to administer to the people a pledge which denied the right of England to impose conscription on Ireland and which bound them to resist it by the most effective means at their disposal. A number of bishops, notably Drs. Cohalan of Cork, Kelly of Ross and Fogarty of Killaloe personally administered the pledge at the doors of their cathedrals. \(^8^9\) Cardinal Logue said that

... they all knew the terrible crisis, the dangerous crisis, the danger of bloodshed the country was passing through. Hence he exhorted the people to be guided by the directions they received from the Bishops, and openly from their leaders. Above all things he warned them against emmissaries, spies or traitors in the pay of the Government.

but he also warned people against secret societies and it was clear that the Cardinal feared Sinn Fein only a little less than the Government. \(^9^0\)

Other bishops, however, were not all as cautious and Dr. O'Day, the Bishop of Galway went far towards sanctioning unqualified resistance because of the moral and physical threat which conscription presented to "the small healthy remnant of the Irish race in Ireland". \(^9^1\) Dr. Gilmartin, the

\(^{8^9}\) *Cork Examiner*, 22 April, 1918.

\(^{9^0}\) *Freeman's Journal*, 22 April, 1918.

\(^{9^1}\) *Ibid.*
Bishop of Clonfert, speaking in Ballinasloe, declared that

... while conscription might be a political, it was also a moral question. Ireland was a distinct nation from England; her Parliament - a Protestant Parliament - had been extinguished by corruption, and the Union was a political Union which the Catholics had no power to resist, and if they had in a sense accepted the fact of a union it was to avert the evils of anarchy. This country had never accepted identity with England, nor were her people ever offered it, as the educational grant scheme showed. Under the Union Ireland had decayed, her population had in half a century decreased, her trade had been systematically destroyed and until recent times she was denied freedom of worship and intellectual development on higher lines.

The Home Rule Act on the Statute Book must remain in operation unless by permission of a small minority. The denial of Irish liberty was the basis of the pledge against conscription. They had not only a right to resist; it was a duty to do so, in the case of what the hierarchy called an "oppressive and inhuman law", which would leave their fields without workers, their colleges without students and would, perhaps, complete the decay which the last few years had partially arrested.92

Dr. Harty, the Archbishop of Cashel and Emly offered the most explicit rationale for the hierarchy's involvement in the conscription issue and he declared:

The Bishops have a right to interfere in politics whenever the good of their people is at stake. But, as a matter of fact, the Bishops have interfered in a moral and religious question. They were asked a question of conscience - "Are people bound in conscience to obey this law of Conscription?" They have answered that they are not bound in conscience to obey it because in the circumstances of Ireland it is an oppressive and inhuman law. That is a moral question, an affair of conscience. Moreover, it is a work of Christian charity to defend the oppressed, and the Bishops of Ireland have merely performed this duty towards their people.93

92Irish Weekly Independent, 27 April, 1918.
93Cork Examiner, 7 May, 1918.
The case for conscription was also being made on the basis of the obligation to defend the oppressed but naturally one's own oppression tended to appear more monstrous than that of others.

The anti-conscription pledge was Nationalist Ireland's equivalent of the Ulster Covenant. It involved the denial of the legislative authority of Parliament and was given a religious sanction by the Roman Catholic hierarchy just as the Covenant had been sanctioned by Protestant religious leaders. The example of Sir Edward Carson was once again bearing unexpected fruit. The unionist historian, Professor Phillips, commented on the conscription crisis that

... by far the most serious effect was produced by the action of the Roman hierarchy. Hitherto, while not disguising their sympathy with the cause of Irish nationalism and helping it by every legitimate means, they had carefully avoided lending their moral support to any resistance to lawful authority, while the use of churches for political purposes had been explicitly forbidden. This attitude was now changed. On the 18th of April, the day on which the first anti-conscription meeting was held at the Mansion House in Dublin, the bishops met at Maynooth, under the presidency of Cardinal Logue, and decided to throw the whole weight of the Church against the Act, which was described as "an oppressive and inhuman law, which the Irish people have a right to resist by all the means that are consonant with the law of God". They proceeded to draw up a form of pledge to resist conscription, directing it to be administered by the priests after mass to all the faithful, and every Roman Catholic "chapel" in Ireland was then soon turned into an active centre of political resistance.94

The behaviour of the Roman Catholic hierarchy of Ireland during the conscription crisis illustrates the point recently

made by a student of revolutions that "It is not the catholicity of the Church which renders it so effective in revolutionary terms, but the church organization of Catholics which enables them to express their political attitudes in anomic or non-anomic patterns, at will". Over conscription the entire weight of the Church was placed behind an anomic agitation.

The Irish labour movement was another element drawn into the anti-conscription agitation though here again it was the Roman Catholic portion of the working class which became involved. Shortly after the Mansion House meeting where labour had been represented, an All-Ireland Labour Conference met, also in the Mansion House, and that conference of 1,500 delegates adopted the following resolution:

That this Convention of the Irish labour movement representing all sections and provinces of Ireland, pledge ourselves and those whom we represent that we will not have conscription; that we shall resist it in every way that to us seems feasible; that we claim the right of liberty to decide as units for ourselves, and as a nation for itself; that we place before our brothers in the labour movement all the world over our claim for independent status as a nation in the International movement, and the right of self-determination as a nation as to what action or actions our people should take on questions of political or economic issues.

That in view of the great claims on the resources of the National Executive of the Irish Trades Union Congress and Labour Party, we hereby call on the bodies represented here to forward subscriptions for the purpose of enabling them to carry out their campaign against conscription and pledge ourselves to make it a success.

Believing that our success in resisting the

---

imposition of conscription will be a signal to
the workers of all countries we call upon all
lovers of liberty everywhere to give assistance
in this impending struggle.  

The labour representatives also decided to call for a one
day general strike in protest against conscription for
Tuesday, 23 April. The strike was a success except in Belfast
where work went on as usual.

Throughout Ireland meetings were being held. In nationalist
Ireland they protested against conscription and in unionist
Ulster they denounced Home Rule. Dr. Fogarty, in a message
to an anti-conscription meeting in Nenagh, said:

My blessing to every man and woman who will take
part in to-morrow's monster meeting of the men of
North Tipperary. We are threatened with the
greatest act of tyranny recorded in our tragic
history - an act which assumes that we are a nation
of slaves, which contemplates nothing less than the
extinction of our race, but if we stand united as
one man we shall defeat it.

Such statements, though they came from a prelate closely
identified with Sinn Fein, acquired enhanced importance by
virtue of the stand taken by the entire hierarchy. The full
authority of the Irish Roman Catholic Church now seemed to
stand behind Dr. Fogarty. As usual some of the statements
of priests went far beyond opposition to the specific measure
of conscription and extended to recruiting, the army and
naturally to the Union. There were reports of military
church parties attending Sunday mass marching out of the

---

96 Freeman's Journal, 22 April, 1918.
97 Cork Examiner, 24 April, 1918.
98 Freeman's Journal, 24 April, 1918.
99 Cork Examiner, 25 April, 1918.
churches when some of the priests addressed their flocks.100

The prevalent attitude towards conscription was disturbing to Dr. Bernard, the Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin, who was fully aware of the potential for violence existing in Ireland. His initial response to the crisis was to call for more voluntary recruits and, speaking in Dublin's ancient St. Michan's Church, he issued an appeal to all loyal Irishmen:

Don't wait to be conscripted; offer your services as voluntary recruits without delay; don't hesitate because others hold back; your duty remains the same whether others are cowards or shirkers or traitors or not; it is your part, you loyal men, to do something to redeem the good name of Ireland from the shame into which it has been brought.101

On the whole he refrained from endorsing conscription under the circumstances prevailing in Ireland though evidently he considered it fully justified and felt it to be long overdue. There were, however, some Protestants who were opposed to conscription either in principle or under the existing conditions in Ireland. Some of these were disturbed at the exclusively Roman Catholic character of the anti-conscription movement.102 A small minority of these Protestant anti-conscriptionists attempted to organize a protest of their own against the measure and argued in the pages of the Church of Ireland Gazette that Protestants might endorse their stand "without disloyalty to their Archbishops". Dr. Bernard sharply rebuked them for this "mischievous and misleading"

101 Irish Weekly Independent, 27 April, 1918.
102 Freeman's Journal, 22 April, 1918.
view and he added that he trusted "that no Churchman or Churchwoman will commit themselves to a manifesto which implies that defiance of the law may become a duty and which will discourage voluntary recruiting".  

As if anything were needed to add to tensions in Ireland the new budget was introduced at the height of the conscription crisis and while it announced increased taxes on commodities these were relatively innocuous to Irish interests, however, its income tax provisions, which were specifically directed at farmers, fanned the flames of resentment in rural Ireland.

In sum the conscription crisis can be said to have drawn together the various strands of nationalist opinion, Sinn Fein, the Irish Parliamentary Party and labour; to have awakened many who hitherto had been apathetic and who were drawn mostly into Sinn Fein; and to have driven even deeper the division between Roman Catholic and Protestant Irishmen.

As Tomas O'Fiaich commented fifty years after the crisis,

When one looks back on the conscription crisis aided by the perspective which half a century provides, it becomes immediately obvious that it was one of the great turning points of modern Irish history. If the executions which followed Easter Week caused the mass of the people to have qualms about their initial reaction to the rising, the conscription crisis was the second important factor in turning the population to Sinn Fein. For that reason, by forcing conscription even in theory alone, on an unwilling people, Lloyd George's government played into the hands of the republicans and prepared the way for their overwhelming success in the General Election at the end of the same year.

103Cork Examiner, 6 May, 1918.

104Freeman's Journal, 23 and 24 April, 1918.
Although the spoils from the conscription crisis went to Sinn Fein, however, it is very doubtful if conscription would have been defeated without the Church's intervention. There is a great amount of truth, therefore, in the recent statement that Lloyd George was defeated not by Irish guns but by Irish croziers.105

There were early signs that the unity in nationalist ranks resulting from the conscription crisis might be short lived. The Irish Party having left the field open to the Sinn Fein candidate in Tullamore clearly expected a reciprocal gesture of good will and unity on Sinn Fein's part in another by-election pending in East Cavan. No moves in that direction, however, were being made by Sinn Fein. The scent of victory was in their nostrils, the failure of the Irish Convention and the Irish Party's withdrawal from Westminster had convinced many people that Sinn Fein was right and that its policies were being vindicated. The actions of the Church had removed any moral difficulties perceived by many who had become frustrated at the Irish Party's lack of success but had so far held back. Sinn Fein knew that there was now an opportunity for them to consolidate their hold on public opinion.

The Sinn Fein candidate in East Cavan was Arthur Griffith and in their efforts to secure some conciliatory gesture from their new allies the Irish Party leaders went so far as to suggest that they would withdraw their candidate, Mr. O'Hanlon, if the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Lawrence O'Neill, were chosen as an all-party candidate.106 He was known to be

106 Freeman's Journal, 27 April, 1918.
sympathetic to Sinn Fein and pointed suggestions appeared in the press that it was now Sinn Fein's turn to make a gesture of solidarity. To these Mr. de Valera replied, in a speech at Ballyjamesduff, that:

From what he saw in certain newspapers he supposed Mr. Griffith was to be opposed. He regretted it because the energies which were likely to be spent in the contest were needed for preparation for the impending danger that immediately threatened the life of the nation. He regretted it because opposition to Mr. Griffith would indicate that there were still some Nationalists left who were not convinced of the soundness of the view of Archbishop Mannix that Parliamentarianism had failed, that it had an exhaustive trial and had been found wanting.

After the frank brutality of Lloyd George and his confreres in the English House of Commons a week or two ago, was it possible that there was still left in Cavan Nationalists optimistic enough to hope that Irish nationality and Irish aspirations would receive consideration in the alien assembly?

Surely it was not necessary to point the moral of recent events and show in detail, that the nation had been thrown back upon and had, in effect, adopted the policy of self-reliance, the policy of Sinn Fein, which would ever be associated with the name of Arthur Griffith, who, many years ago, pointed out that Westminster would fail, and indicated the alternative which they had seen adopted within the last couple of weeks, when the people turned their eyes away from Westminster and fixed them on their own capital city, forced to rely not on the treacherous pledges of British ministers, but on their own strength, their own resources, and their own determination.

Later in his speech de Valera went on to further calm the uneasiness of the clergy and of the Irish bourgeoisie by saying:

They were called by certain people the Revolutionary Party. Were they called the Conservative party they would be more correctly named. They would conserve the spirit of true Irish nationality to keep the people true to the ideals sanctified by the blood and the sacrifices of twenty-five generations, ideals which,
indeed the great mass of the Irish people had at no time really compromised. 107

This speech made it clear that Sinn Fein was in no mood to make any concessions to the Irish Parliamentary Party. A number of appeals made within the next few days were all resisted by Sinn Fein and the Irish Party, on the other hand, could not give in totally without losing face. Even Dr. Finegan the Roman Catholic Bishop of Kilmore, was unable to persuade Dillon and de Valera to avoid a contest. 108

Perhaps the most interesting appeal for a compromise in East Cavan came from Sean O'Casey in a letter to the press in which he wrote:

May I suggest that there is still a possible alternative respecting the selection of a candidate for the vacancy in E. Cavan which may perpetuate for some time longer that blessedness of unity which the menace of conscription has temporarily forced upon the Irish people. Some of the Parliamentary leaders have patted Irish labour on the back, and de Valera has voiced his sympathy with the claims of the Irish Workers. There are few in the Irish Labour movement will rejoice at the return of Mr. Griffith or his opponent, while there are many in the Sinn Fein movement that would welcome the unanimous selection of a Labour candidate. Irish labour has taken up a position in the front trenches in the fight against conscription, and it is only justice that Labour should have a strong voice in the Parliament that is gradually being evolved from the complexities of Irish political and economic life. The recognition of Labour will surely in no way offend the dignity of either party, and the adoption of above suggestion will tend to satisfy Irish labour that its activities in Irish movements will not eternally continue to be:

Letting down buckets into empty wells
And growing old with drawing nothing up. 109

107 Ibid., 29 April, 1918.
108 Ibid., 1 May, 1918.
109 Ibid., 3 May, 1918.
Further appeals for unity were made, notably by the Roman Catholic Bishop of Waterford and Lismore, Dr. Hackett, who said that "All parties should be as one and continue such for ever, enabling us as one man to fight the common foe, whose object was the extermination of our Catholic people".  

Dr. Morrisroe of Achonry was being less optimistic when he called for a two month truce between Irish nationalist parties. The major obstacle to unity was the question of whose model of unity was to prevail. John Dillon was convinced that to demand an Irish republic was sheer madness and would lead to disaster while Sinn Fein was resolutely opposed to parliamentary action and refused to extend any confidence in the old party. Union was only possible through the destruction of one party or its absorption by the other.

Fear of conscription was given a new impetus by changes in the Irish administration. First, Mr. Shortt was appointed as the new Chief Secretary. More ominous, however, was the appointment a few days later of Field Marshall Lord French as Lord Lieutenant. There were rumours, quickly denied, that Sir James Campbell was to become Lord Chancellor of Ireland and that Sir John Maxwell was to return to Ireland as General Officer Commanding. These changes all redounded to Sinn Fein's benefit in the despairing mood gripping Ireland. Dr. Browne, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Cloyne, declared that,

---

110 Cork Examiner, 11 May, 1918.
111 Freeman's Journal, 16 May, 1918.
112 Ibid., 30 April, 1918.
113 Ibid., 4 May, 1918.
114 Ibid., 11 May, 1918 and Cork Examiner, 13 May, 1918.
... the people were face to face with the greatest crisis that had ever arisen in Ireland - and he made no exception. If conscription was to be enforced it meant the ruin of the country. It was awful to contemplate what would be the result. All their little industries, which had never received even sympathy from the Government, were doomed to destruction, as it was they were struggling; handicapped by conscription they would be entirely paralyzed. And think of what it meant to the staple industry of the country! The crops would be left to waste and rot for want of hands.115

Such arguments, when Ireland's unemployment rate was the highest in the United Kingdom and when many men of military age were leaving their employment in order to take to the hills as Volunteers, were unlikely to impress the Government of British public opinion. Michael MacDonagh has spoken of "a general dispersal of youths capable of bearing arms from towns and villages to remote and mountainous parts of the country" and there is considerable evidence that the threat of conscription brought a spectacular increase in the number of Irish Volunteers, not men who favoured a republic so much as men who had come to the conclusion that joining the Volunteers was the surest way of avoiding conscription.116

Another more symbolic protest at conscription was made at this time by Limerick Corporation which by a vote of 18 to 2 deprived Lord Dunraven of the freedom of the city because

115 Irish Weekly Independent, 4 May, 1918.

he had expressed approval for conscription. 117

Sir Edward Carson, at this time called for reconsideration of the plan to grant Home Rule to Ireland as a quid pro quo for conscription and he suggested the likelihood of "fratricidal strife" at a moment when all should be concerned with fighting the enemies of the country. Dr. Crozier, the Church of Ireland Archbishop of Armagh, expressed somewhat similar sentiments. 118 The Presbyterian Church in Ireland General Assembly's Committee on the State of the Country demanded conscription but without Home Rule. 119 This demand had been prompted by Mr. Bonar Law's announcement that the application of the compulsory service measure was being delayed until a Home Rule scheme could be introduced. 120 The announcement meant a breathing space which was used by nationalist Ireland to build up the machinery of resistance and Michael Collins, in particular, used this time to good effect. The hostile reception to the prospect of Home Rule by Ulster unionists led Dr. Morrisroe, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Achonry, to comment:

Even now, when their rulers had been shamed after the long struggle into granting some small measure of justice, the foreign garrison in their midst ran to arms in defence of its threatened position of power. Yet this was the time they were asked to send their young men away and leave their aged fathers, their mothers and sisters to the tender mercies of those in whose veins ran the blood of the perpetrators of the most abominable outrages in the annals of history. 121

117 Cork Examiner, 4 May, 1918.
118 Ibid., 8 May, 1918.
119 Ibid., 11 May, 1918.
120 Ibid., 10 May, 1918.
121 Irish Weekly Independent, 11 May, 1918.
On can detect here an indication of the growing hysteria gripping Ireland in the spring of 1918.

The by-election campaign in East Cavan was placing the Irish Party in a very awkward position within the broad anti-conscription movement. United to Sinn Fein in opposition to conscription, it was nevertheless subjected during the campaign to allegations that a vote for the Party candidate would be a vote for conscription. Eoin MacNeill declared in an election address that,

The way they would prevent conscription was by supporting Arthur Griffith. If by any misfortune Mr. O'Hanlon were elected it would be a confession to the world that England was entitled to conscript the manhood of Ireland. Every vote given for O'Hanlon was a vote for conscription.122

Mr. Gavan Duffy described Mr. O'Hanlon as the candidate of the British Government while Griffith was the candidate of the Irish people.123 Such tactics against an ally were considered necessary in what promised to be a very close fight. Then, as in a number of past instances, the British Government intervened in a way which practically guaranteed Arthur Griffith's victory - they arrested him.

The arrest of Arthur Griffith was part of a general rounding up of Sinn Fein leaders in what has been referred to as the "German Plot" incident.124 Close to one hundred people prominent in Sinn Fein were arrested on suspicion of

122 *Freeman's Journal*, 13 May, 1918.
123 Ibid.
124 *Cork Examiner*, 18 May, 1918.
being involved in a conspiracy to assist Germany. There were immediate calls upon the Government for speedy public trials and for the publication of the evidence supporting the charges.\textsuperscript{125} Nationalist Ireland was evidently sceptical about the allegations. The Sinn Fein leadership had been operating much more in the public eye than it had in the past and most Irish people were convinced that the German Plot was a fabrication. The Mansion House Conference was reunited to protest against the arrests and what it called an attempt to blacken the name of Irishmen.\textsuperscript{126} Dr. Fogarty protested that "on the previous day the Government had swooped down, rounded up and deported their national leaders - the true leaders of the people".\textsuperscript{127} Many were inclined to agree with the bishop and drew from the arrests the lesson that Sinn Fein was their most effective weapon against conscription.

When the Prime Minister finally produced his evidence of a German Plot it proved gossamer thin. There was evidence of a man landing in the west of Ireland in a rubber dinghy but most of the rest related to the 1916 rebellion and its sole effect was to change the suspicion that the main purpose behind the arrests had been to silence the most effective voices raised against conscription into a conviction. The main beneficiaries of the Government's activity proved to be Sinn Fein and the Irish Volunteers. In part this was because

\textsuperscript{125}Ibid., 20 May, 1918.
\textsuperscript{126}Ibid., 21 May, 1918.
\textsuperscript{127}Ibid., 22 May, 1918.
the Government's intelligence was faulty and allowed important leaders such as Michael Collins to escape the net. Collin's role at this time was not a public one and together with others who had escaped arrest he continued to run the movement in the absence of the more public figures in the leadership. The British operation once again proved more of a severe irritant than an effective impediment and the fact that very little evidence could be produced made it an invaluable propaganda weapon. What is often overlooked is that the Government was not entirely without reasons to suspect a link between Sinn Fein and Germany. Clann na Gael, the Irish-American allies of Sinn Fein and of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, were at this time trying to send Liam Mellows and Dr. McCartan to Germany and the Clann was certainly involved in a "German Plot". The link which the Government was unable to establish was that between these activities and Sinn Fein in Ireland, probably because there was no such link. The German Plot arrests lent credence once more to charges of oppression and tyranny though it does appear that the Royal Irish Constabulary was not very effective and Ernie O'Malley has recounted that in the spring of 1918 he moved about Ireland quite freely and when approached by police he would brandish his gun and be allowed on his way.

In early June the Lord Lieutenant announced an intensified recruiting campaign for 50,000 men and the imposition of

---

129 On Another Man's Wound, op. cit., p. 68.
conscription was delayed for four months during this campaign. This also worked to the advantage of Sinn Fein by confirming the popular view that the anti-conscription campaign which was identified with the abstentionist methods of Sinn Fein had frightened the Government into altering its plans. As John Horgan has pointed out the passage of the Man-Power Bill against the opposition of the Irish Parliamentary Party and the resort to abstentionism in the face of parliamentary defeat had damaged the Party's prestige and standing in Ireland but "its non-enforcement was even more fatal to their policy and themselves. No greater victory for the Sinn Fein policy could have been conceived. From that moment the fate of the constitutional movement was sealed". Tension would be maintained at a high level by the Government's holding the threat of conscription over Ireland until the end of the war. The goal of 50,000 recruits on a voluntary basis was totally unrealistic. Recruiting figures were at this time down to between three and four hundred a week and this meant that the threat of conscription even if deferred remained very real.

The Defence Against Conscription Fund was reported to have reached £200,000 in early June, and the breathing space of four months could be used to prepare for resistance whenever the Government moved towards conscription. As a contemporary

130 Freeman's Journal, 4 June, 1918.
131 Parnell to Pearse, op. cit., p. 328.
132 Freeman's Journal, 4 June, 1918.
133 Irish Weekly Independent, 1 June, 1918.
observer reported a few years later,

Under the winnowing fan of Downing Street, the flames of rebellion were running through Ireland, but with all the threats the thing that Europe noticed was just this - The British Government did not impose conscription. So once more with fatal wavering, out came the leaflets, this time an appeal to Ireland for God's sake to roll up - an appeal for voluntary recruits to a country upon which conscription had already been passed. 134

A threat of massive deprivation remained and was allied with an intensification of half-hearted, largely ineffective measures of coercion. Such conditions are ideally designed to raise the potential for violence and revolution. In Ireland the link between the Roman Catholic Church and Sinn Fein, the Church's rejection of violence and the presence of an alternative to Sinn Fein all worked to restrain the outbreak of violence. Sinn Fein could not in 1918 afford to lose its share of the support of the church if it wished to continue to win popular favour and to enjoy the legitimacy which the Church conferred upon its activities, but the potential for violence was growing.

While the German Plot arrests would have been sufficient to secure the election of Arthur Griffith in East Cavan, other sources of frustration arose just prior to the election. Sir James Campbell was finally appointed Lord Chancellor of Ireland, displacing the Home Rule Incumbent. 135 This in fact completed the changes in the Irish Executive which placed in

134 Shaw Desmond, The Drama of Sinn Fein, op. cit., p. 195.
135 Cork Examiner, 5 June, 1918.
office a resolutely Unionist body of officials and which led the former Lord Lieutenant, Lord Wimborne, to comment in the House of Lords on 20 June, 1918 that:

As far as one could see, the changes had removed from the Irish Government all or nearly all who had sympathy with Irish Nationality. The change had been so complete and dramatic that one was entitled to ask the Government what it might portend. In partial explanation the Government had alleged a German Plot; but it seemed strange that, in view of the highly specialized means of obtaining information which recently existed in Ireland, neither I nor, as far as I am aware, any member of the Irish Executive had been aware of the existence of the plot until it was discovered by the British Government.  

Sinn Fein benefitted from this as it did from the policy of continuing arrests which were being denounced at protest meetings. In the second half of June fourteen counties and two cities, Limerick and Cork, had been proclaimed as special military areas. Dr. Hallinan, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Limerick declared to one protest meeting that "Nothing that I have heard or read of in modern times of the exercise of autocratic power by Kaisers or Czars has exceeded in despotic tyranny the treatment of their men and women by the pseudo-democrat, Mr. Lloyd George, and his Government".

In rural Ireland there was some apprehension and resentment as a result of the announcement by the Government of a scheme to grant untenanted land to returning soldiers. This was greeted in Ireland by denunciations of the new "plantation"

---

137 Irish Weekly Independent, 22 June, 1918.
138 Freeman's Journal, 18 June, 1918.
and of the "military colonization in Ireland".\textsuperscript{139} A new threat to the land from the Government could only be a boon to Sinn Fein and when one adds to these factors the report from East Cavan that a paralytic had been cured miraculously by the visit of Father O'Flanagan canvassing for Sinn Fein,\textsuperscript{140} the victory of Arthur Griffith by 3,785 votes to 2,581 came as no surprise.\textsuperscript{141} The celebrations over the victory were exuberant and led to clashes of the crowds with police and military in Newmarket and Tralee.\textsuperscript{142} The victory did much to convince Ireland generally that Sinn Fein was the new force despite the assertion of an Antrim priest, Father Robert O'Loughran, that "Sinn Fein is as necessary in Ireland as a dose of Asiatic cholera".\textsuperscript{143}

One form of protest against the arrests of Sinn Fein was the election of Sinn Feiners to the chairmanship of a number of rural councils all over Ireland.\textsuperscript{144} There were charges of widespread intimidation on Sinn Fein's part both in East Cavan and in the rural council elections but this was inevitable given the phenomenal growth of the Irish Volunteers during the period.

Following shortly after the East Cavan by-election the Government decided to proclaim as dangerous associations and

\textsuperscript{139} Ibid., 12 June, 1918.
\textsuperscript{140} Cork Examiner, 19 June, 1918.
\textsuperscript{141} Freeman's Journal, 22 June, 1918.
\textsuperscript{142} Cork Examiner, 24 June, 1918.
\textsuperscript{143} Ibid., 26 June, 1918.
\textsuperscript{144} Irish Weekly Independent, 15 June, 1918.
as "a grave menace to, and designed to terrorize peaceful and law-abiding people in Ireland", Sinn Fein, the Gaelic League, the Irish Volunteers and Cumann na mBan. Meetings of these organizations were now prohibited. The Mansion House Conference met once again in the wake of the proclamation and agreed to send to President Wilson a manifesto reviewing from an Irish perspective the history of Ireland over the past seven hundred and fifty years. This narrowed even more the differences which could be said to distinguish the ends sought by the Irish Parliamentary Party and by Sinn Fein and it brought the Party into agreement with making an appeal to the Peace Conference though, it must be noted, only through President Wilson. The fact that the Orange Order had not been banned proved a source of dissatisfaction, particularly after 12 July when the Order defied the regulation prohibiting large meetings without permission. These meetings were characterized by vociferous demands for conscription. Colonel Wallace, at one of these meetings, asked what the fate of Protestants under an Irish Roman Catholic regime would be if the Church of Rome could defeat the British Government as it had just done over conscription. The Gaelic Athletic Association which had not been proclaimed as an organization also decided to defy

---

145 *Cork Examiner*, 4 June, 1918.
146 Ibid., 5 July, 1918.
147 Ibid., 13 July, 1918.
the regulation requiring permits and through the device of announcing Aeridheachta and building platforms in one location and holding their meetings elsewhere they managed to evade the police. The authorities eventually gave way once again and permitted sporting matches to be held provided that they were "non-political".

In late June Lord Curzon drew angry cries of protest from Irish Roman Catholic bishops and clergy when he alleged in the House of Lords that Irish priests had declared from the pulpit that those who would enforce conscription would be damned while those who died resisting them would enjoy the peace of God. Philip Bagenal later published some of these statements allegedly made at the height of the conscription crisis. The most extreme of these was a statement attributed to the Rev. Gerald Dennehy, c.c. of Eyries, County Cork that

... any Catholic policeman or agent of the Government who assisted in putting conscription in force would be excommunicated and cursed by the Roman Catholic Church; that the curse of God would follow them in every land, and he asked his hearers to kill them at sight; they would be blessed by God, and this would be the most acceptable sacrifice that could be offered.

Most of these statements were denied but they did impress unionists and the conscription crisis demolished the new rapprochement between southern unionists and the Irish Party which had been evident in the Irish Convention. The Council

149 Freeman's Journal, 22 July, 1918.
150 Ibid., 31 July, 1918.
151 Freeman's Journal, 27 June, 1918.
152 "The Royal Irish Constabulary; and Sinn Fein," Nineteenth Century. XCII (1922), p. 122.
of the Irish Unionist Alliance in June repudiated the stand taken by its president, Lord Midleton, and twenty hard-line unionists supporting a "no compromise on Home Rule" policy were elected to the Executive Committee. 153

In late June the British Government finally decided to try something different in order to encourage recruiting in Ireland and one of the Irish Party's M.P.'s, Arthur Lynch, who had commanded the second Irish Brigade on the Boer side in the South African war, was commissioned as a colonel in the British army and sent to Ireland to join Stephen Gwynn, another Irish Party M.P. on a recruiting campaign. 154 This was bound to further weaken the popular appeal of the Irish Party. John Dillon had taken as strong a stand as anyone against conscription and as part of this stand he had ceased to endorse voluntary recruiting, yet the fact that some of his followers were obviously unwilling to support him in this course was bound to weaken his position. In the political atmosphere of Ireland after the passage of the Man-Power Act of 1918 the distinction between a strongly committed recruiter and a conscriptionist was not always an easy one for the public mind to make and this, among other factors, made it impossible for the Party to present as strong an oppositionist image as Sinn Fein's. 155 This is a problem

153 Cork Examiner, 8 June, 1918.
154 Cork Examiner, 25 June, 1918.
common to moderate parties caught in a revolutionary situation and which makes it very difficult for them to survive.

In July the Irish Party returned to Westminster and once again tried to win some sort of concessions through parliamentary methods. John Dillon introduced a motion to the effect that England must live up to the principles enunciated by President Wilson in its dealings with Ireland. As the *Irish Independent* newspapers pointed out it was a "futile performance". A few points were scored off the Chief Secretary regarding the differential treatment of the Ulster Volunteer Force which had not been called upon to surrender its arms and an undertaking to take some action relative to these arms was extracted from the Government but no significant concessions were secured even in principle. In fact it was not until the middle of October that any action was taken concerning the Ulster Volunteer arms and then it was limited to placing a sentry at U.V.F. arsenals.

During August Colonel Lynch accompanied by another M.P., Captain O'Grady, launched into an energetic recruiting campaign travelling all over Ireland. He made use of the Peace Conference appeal, which Sinn Fein had made familiar, pointing out that Ireland's chances for a sympathetic hearing would be enhanced by a greater commitment to the Allied cause in the


157 3 August, 1918.

158 *Freeman's Journal*, 18 October, 1918.
Against Sinn Fein he used the argument that a solution to the Irish question must win the assent of Ulster and while he suggested no way out of that impasse he did suggest that Sinn Fein had no answer either. In late August Colonel Lynch held the first open air recruiting meeting in Dublin since 1916 and it was reported that recruiting had risen from less than 400 per week to 1,000 per week. Obviously, this would never produce the 50,000 recruits demanded before October but for the first time since the war began the British Government had found a recruiter who could appeal to Irishmen. Sinn Fein naturally did not welcome any renewed enthusiasm for the British army and disruptions were organized to prevent any further open air meetings and Lynch was thereafter prevented from speaking and had to cancel all further meetings in Dublin. There was no reply to his offer to publicly debate the recruiting question with Sinn Fein representatives. Some open air recruiting meetings, however, were held outside Dublin in spite of Sinn Fein's efforts at disruption.

An order from the censor prohibiting newspaper accounts of the proceedings of meetings held without permits hampered Sinn Fein propaganda but in August the Volunteer journal An t Oglach resumed publication and became the leading medium of anti-conscriptionism. It is in one of the early issues that

159 Cork Examiner, 2 August, 1918.
160 Freeman's Journal, 19 August, 1918.
161 Freeman's Journal, 24 and 26 August, 1918.
162 Ibid., 28, 29 and 30 August, 1918.
163 Ibid., 31 August, 1918.
Ernest Blythe published what was probably the most ferocious attack against conscription of the entire war. In the event of conscription he called for an all out war not only against the agents of the Government actively enforcing conscription but against all those who in any way, even passively, assisted conscription. He declared,

"We must recognize that anyone, civilian or soldier, who assists directly or by connivance in this crime against us, merits no more consideration than a wild beast, and should be killed without mercy or hesitation as opportunity offers. To prevent our people being divided, to prevent men from being seduced by certain exemption if they will surrender, or promises of home service duty if they will attest, or by similar devices of the enemy, we must from the first insist upon a clean cut amongst the population of Ireland. Any man who knowingly and willingly does anything to facilitate the working of the machinery of conscription must be dealt with exactly as if he were an enemy soldier. Thus the man who serves on an exemption tribunal, the doctor who treats soldiers or examines conscripts, the man who voluntarily surrenders, when called for, the man who in any shape or form applies for an exemption, the man who drives a police car or assists in the transport of army supplies, all these having assisted the enemy must be shot or otherwise destroyed with the least possible delay. In short, we must show them that it is not healthy to be against us, and thus those who are not going to be against us must be with us. By that producing the clean-cut, and insisting that every man who stands for Ireland shall do his bit, we shall induce Irishmen in Great Britain to realize that when the tussle is on their duty is not, certainly, to continue quietly making munitions, that in fact their only business with munitions is to send them crashing to the skies."

Here was a recipe for naked terrorism and it was also clear that if the "clean-cut" were made it would be largely along sectarian lines. Ironically Ernest Blythe was one of the handful of Protestants in the Sinn Fein ranks.

By late August the fortunes of war had changed drastically and the German armies were being beaten back so that conscription in Ireland was becoming less of a military requirement though political considerations led to the Government maintaining the threat without any attempt at enforcement. The continuation of the threat was bound to benefit Sinn Fein which was also getting considerable publicity value out of its selection of candidates in anticipation of a general election. The Government's moral authority in Ireland was at a very low ebb but the fact that a proclaimed political party could hold meetings to select candidates and get full newspaper coverage indicates that the state's machinery of coercion was not being used very ruthlessly so that the British Government in Ireland, in a most un-Machiavellian fashion, made no effort to be either loved or feared and inevitably contempt became the prevalent emotion.

There was a quickly settled labour dispute in Dublin in late August which put 18,000 men out of work and which led the press to speculate that there was to be a renewal of the 1913 troubles. This, while short-lived, did disturb the working class of Dublin and hardened their attitude against the interests represented on the whole by the Irish Party. This kind of development was ominous for Irish Party fortunes at a time when elections following the end of the war were

165 *Freeman's Journal*, 3 and 4 September, 1918.
being discussed.

The Cork Examiner referred to the prospect of a general election and pleaded for a popular endorsement of the Irish Party rather than voluntary disenfranchisement saying that Lloyd George wanted the Irish to vote Sinn Fein so that he would not have to deal with an Irish party in Parliament but it gloomily concluded, "Nevertheless it is to be feared that the next General Election will, owing to the Georgian strategy which has set Irishmen against each other by means of broken pledges, by deportations, and by military law, see the Constitutional Party numerically touch low-water mark". The further suspension of the Government of Ireland Act, 1914 which was announced as usual at this time of year had by now become a symbolic manifestation of Ireland's subordinate status and of the impotence of the Irish even though no nationalist would any longer have considered it an adequate measure of self-government. This and the continued inaction of the Government concerning Ulster Volunteer arms; the stiff sentences being handed down for disloyal activities, which meant that a person accused of reading a Sinn Fein manifesto aloud received two years at hard labour whereas someone convicted of manslaughter usually got a one year sentence; and the irony, from the Irish point of view, of the Foreign Secretary's note to the Estonian Provisional

166 5 September, 1918.

167 Cork Examiner, 7 September, 1918.
Government saying that "He regards any attempt by Germany to enforce compulsory enrolment, or other oppressive laws, on the Estonians without their consent as "usurpation and tyranny." maintained high levels of discontent and of anticipated disaster in Ireland which were not significantly relieved by the extension of the conscription deadline from 1 October to 15 October.

It was obvious that despite the dramatic increase in recruiting figures the target of 50,000 volunteers would not be met so that apprehension of conscription remained high. Even the Irish Volunteers pledged to resist conscription in a time of extraordinary tension, frustrations and relative deprivation had only grown to some fifty thousand men themselves. Many of these new Volunteers were at best lukewarm Sinn Feiners only enrolled because of the threat of conscription: "better politicians than soldiers" as has been said of them.

In September Colonel Lynch finally won from the War Office the right to recruit an Irish brigade which he would command and which would have distinctive insignia and uniforms, precisely the concessions which Redmond had tried so hard to obtain in 1914 and which Sir Edward Carson had then readily been granted. It was now far too late for such concessions to be very effective but the Colonel re-doubled his efforts, circumventing Sinn Fein's disruptive

---

168 Irish Weekly Independent, 21 September, 1918.
169 Freeman's Journal, 21 September, 1918.
170 See Moirin Chavasse, Terence MacSwiney, op. cit., p. 103.
171 Florence O'Donoghue, No Other Law, op. cit., p. 21.
172 Freeman's Journal, 14 September, 1918.
tactics by addressing workers at their place of employment, and once again the rate of enlistment rose. Had Redmond obtained the concessions which he had demanded at the outset the history of Ireland during the war years might have been very different. Robert Kee observed that,

Historical hindsight now leads us to take the political success of Sinn Fein at this period so much for granted that it is instructive to note the difficulties with which it still had to contend in order to achieve that success. This last recruiting campaign is a case in point...in the peculiarly unfavourable atmosphere produced by the conscription threat, the German plot and the arrests of the leaders in addition to the systematic campaign against recruiting so efficiently managed by Sinn Fein, it succeeded in getting more than eleven thousand recruits in eleven weeks. The weight of nationalist opinion of the old Redmondite school was still by no means contemptible.

Arthur Lynch himself felt that he could have had an even greater success had he not been restrained by bureaucratic impediments and in his autobiography he claimed that almost all his suggestions were turned down. Typically he wrote that "In the face of any new proposal, it always seemed sufficient to the Authorities to say: 'But we have never done that before!' and it was useless to point out that nothing they had done before had produced anything but failure".

In late September the Irish Party began to hammer out a policy with which they might face the election whenever it came and one of the first points agreed upon was that self-

---

173 _Cork Examiner_, 25 September, 1918.
175 _My Life Story_, op. cit., p. 301.
government for all Ireland with full executive, legislative and fiscal powers was the only acceptable solution to the Irish question. 176 This was so close to the Sinn Fein demand that only the "republican" label seemed to clearly differentiate the respective goals of the two parties. Joe Devlin's rhetorical question to an Ardee Party meeting —

How can any member of the Government denounce the treatment of the Belgians, the French, the Serbians, the Russians, or the Armenians by the occupying armies of the Central Powers and at the same time be an assenting party to the military occupation of Ireland and to a policy of coercion which is the very negation of national liberty? 177

could have been asked from any Sinn Fein platform without raising an eyebrow in the audience. On 10 October, the Party leaders and the National Directory of the United Irish League held a joint conference in Dublin and the Party's appeal to the electorate was decided. Reference was made to the Party's long record of devoted service to Ireland and while this was not an unimpressive one there was very little of substance to show for the years since 1914. The inexperience of Sinn Fein, its pro-German taint which made it unlikely that it would win favourable notice at the Peace Conference, were also underlined. 178

Sinn Fein's election manifesto was published on the following day and, while the censor had deleted much of it,

176 Freeman's Journal, 26 September, 1918.
177 Cork Examiner, 30 September, 1918.
178 Ibid., 11 October, 1918; see also F.S.L. Lyons, John Dillon: A Biography, op. cit., p. 446.
the main import was quite clear. It was specifically abstentionist, referred to the establishment of a republic and of a constituent assembly. It also referred to an appeal to the Peace Conference as the means of establishing Ireland's status as an independent nation. The Irish Party was condemned mainly for agreeing to "the mutilation of our country by partition."¹⁷⁹ This condemnation of the Irish Party was ironic in view of the fact that within the month Father O'Flanagan, chairing the Sinn Fein Ard Fheis, declared that Ireland was "an historical and social duality".¹⁸⁰ The difficulty of both groups in the confrontation was that so little differentiated them in terms of the ends sought that the campaign was destined to be fought largely in terms of their pasts. The Irish Party had many victories of which to boast but they were mostly in the far past and the major goal of the Party over generations, an Irish parliament, had been denied them. Sinn Fein had comparatively few victories to parade before the electorate but the non-enforcement of conscription was largely credited to its opposition and this was a recent victory which could advantageously be set off against the Party's compromise over partition.

For most Irishmen who had remained in Ireland the closest brush with the war occurred in the last days of the conflict when the Royal Mail Steamer Leinster was sunk in the Irish

sea by a German submarine. 528 people were lost in this tragedy which the Irish press blamed more on the British Admiralty than on the German navy. This attribution, quite natural and traditional in Ireland, prevented Sinn Fein's pro-Germanism from becoming an issue. The British and their conscription plans were feared far more in Ireland than the Germans. The threat of conscription, however, receded as did the German army and when the extended deadline for recruiting passed without any move by the Government it became evident that the threat had become virtually non-existent.

The election prospects now came to dominate the Irish political scene. One of the first major blows to the hopes of the Irish Party came from its old enemy William O'Brien of the All-for-Ireland League. It could safely be assumed that O'Brien would oppose the Party and that in the Cork area at least his League might win seats. O'Brien, however, had long been a constitutionalist and for years he had been moving in and out of the Irish Party. On that basis he might have been assumed to be ideologically closer to the Party than to Sinn Fein but, in October, he published a pamphlet entitled "The Downfall of Parliamentarism" in which he wrote:

Sinn Fein has captured the best elements of Nationalist opinion for three substantial reasons. Sinn Fein has

\[^{181}\text{Freeman's Journal, 12 October, 1918.}\]
\[^{182}\text{Ibid., 17 October, 1918.}\]
saved the country from the three plagues of Partition, Conscription and Corruption, and be the fault whose it may, there was no other force left which could have saved her from any of the three. The Sinn Feiners have yet to develop qualities of statesmanship, insight, and breadth of toleration for all their countrymen before they can hope to inspire unconditional confidence for Sinn Fein's own sake. But the first thing is to deliver the national cause from the men for whom incorrigible incompetence is the most merciful plea that can be invented to palliate their failure to turn to account the most colossal powers and opportunities that ever fell the lot of Irishmen.

It is proved to the satisfaction of nearly all their own disinterested adherents that they failed, not for want of being trusted, but because they were trusted too blindly and too long - not for want of unity, but owing to excess of a diseased Party unity, which has grown into a gangrene to the destruction of the true national unity that might long ago have accomplished its healing work.

The first condition of any safety for the future must be the removal from the helm of leaders who to this hour stand committed to the partition of the country - be the same more or less - as the indispensable price for ever setting their precious "Act on the Statute Book" going. Sinn Fein alone possesses the material forces and the high purpose which can unhorse the Board of Erin tyranny on the electoral field.

He simultaneously withdrew from Parliament. 183

Sinn Fein's strength at the polls would be enhanced by defections from the groups which from time to time had been set up to protest some aspect or other of Irish Party policy but which had been unable to establish themselves as viable alternatives to it. The All-for-Ireland League was the oldest, best organized and most successful of these groups. It had a solid base of support in the south-western corner

183 Irish Weekly Independent, 19 October, 1918.
of Ireland where it could have campaigned against both the Party and Sinn Fein. Others who had joined the Irish Nation League and other anti-partition groups which had disintegrated for lack of leadership were in no position to campaign and were faced with a choice between rejoining the Irish Party or supporting Sinn Fein. Many of them would choose Sinn Fein.

The politically uncommitted were encouraged to support Sinn Fein by the strong support it enjoyed from certain members of the Roman Catholic hierarchy. There were bishops who continued to support the Irish Party to the end but on the whole their support was lukewarm in comparison to the whole-hearted support of a number of Sinn Fein bishops. Dr. Cohalan, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Cork, for example, who had been mildly sympathetic to Sinn Fein emerged as a much stronger supporter following William O'Brien's withdrawal from the field. At the end of October he discoursed on politics to the Cork Catholic Young Men's Society and he gave as his opinion that "the cause of the failure of the British Government here was partly racial, and, in large part, religious. England's rule, or misrule, had been misrule by the Anglican Protestant church and the House of Lords in favour of their friends the Protestant Church and the Irish landlords". He also characterized the "Protestant religion" as "lifeless and sapless except with the life and sap of a lopped off branch". He gave the Sinn Fein demand
for complete sovereign independence his full support and
he declared that those who did not endorse the Sinn Fein
position "speak slightingly of their own race and of their
own country". After a disquisition on the history of
coercion in Ireland, he came to the crux of his message,

I refer to these things because I have often been
approached on the subject of recruiting...and I
could never forget this state of coercion when
speaking of recruiting. It was urged: "This is
a war for freedom and liberty. Ireland is demanding
freedom and liberty, and why then does she not offer
her services?" I asked in return: "Is it for the
abstraction that we call "liberty" the small nations
are fighting, or is it for some concrete benefit
for themselves?" They answered: "They are fighting
for liberty for themselves". I asked: "Are Belgium
and Serbia and Rumania fighting for the freedom of
Ireland?" They said, "No". They agreed that Belgium
and Serbia were fighting the nations which robbed
them of their liberty. Well, said I, the only nation
that is refusing liberty to Ireland is England, not
Germany, not Austria, not Bulgaria, not the Turks;
and if Ireland followed the example of the small
nations you have cited, Ireland would be fighting
against England, the only nation that gives her
coercion when she asks for freedom and good government.184

This Socratic discourse marked a change in the hierarchy's
public pronouncements on recruiting. Very few bishops had
actively supported or encouraged recruiting but on the whole
they had avoided overt opposition and Dr. Cohalan was going
further than identification with Sinn Fein on the question
of independence and identifying with its position on recruiting
as well. Now that the war was clearly winding down the
recruiting issue was less important but the transformation of
clerical attitude owed much to the conscription crisis which

184 Irish Weekly Independent, 26 October, 1918 and Cork Examiner,
23 October, 1918.
had largely destroyed whatever vestiges of support for the state which remained among the hierarchy.

The position taken at the time by Dr. Cohalan's Church of Ireland counterpart, Dr. Dowse, illustrates the polarization which had become ever more evident with the conscription issue. Dr. Dowse was addressing his Diocesan Synod and after reviewing Ireland's good fortune in having avoided the worst effects of the war he went on,

And yet for us Irishmen there is one dark blot on the brightness around us. We, as a country, are largely standing aloof. The very greatness of the sacrifice endured by the Allies served to intensify our shame. No doubt, there are many noble exceptions, and Irish sailors and soldiers have played a part second to none in heroism and devoted service on behalf of freedom and righteousness. But the fact that Ireland generally had refused to take her proper and full share of the burden must ever remain the measure of our degradation and disgrace. What an opportunity was given to the Nationalists of Ireland. Had they heartily and loyally espoused the cause of the Allies and sent the young men of this country to bear a glorious part in the fighting line in the defeat of oppression and tyranny and the establishment of truth and right, what demand could England had refused had they taken such a course as this. The realization of all their desires was at hand. As it is, it is hard to see how England can give fulfilment to the desire of a people who refuse her help, and by doing so encourage her enemies. But, however Ireland may stand in lonely selfishness, thinking only of herself and her own petty grievances, in the midst of world wide happenings and events that are calling for the co-operation of all the peoples of the earth, victory, sure, complete, and far reaching is coming to the Allies.185

There is no reason to think that either one of these prelates was less sincere than the other yet, living in the same city,

185 Ibid., 24 October, 1918.
they saw Ireland so very differently than one may understand the difficulties of British Cabinet Ministers, involved primarily in fighting the war, trying to disentangle the Irish muddle.

The Sinn Fein Ard Fheis at the end of October brought new expressions of ecclesiastical support for Sinn Fein. Both Dr. Fogarty and Dr. Hallinan sent in letters of support and Dr. Hallinan in particular endorsed the entire Sinn Fein mystique. He referred to nature having made Ireland a nation older than England, a nation which had survived seven centuries of ordeal and emerged intact and indestructible despite the stranglehold of England. Referring to the period since the Act of Union the Bishop of Limerick said:

During all this time some remedial concessions have been wrung from a hostile Parliament, but, however, either at the point of the bayonet, under the stress of social revolution, or when it suited the party purposes of British politicians. Nothing was given from a sense of right or justice - as little as possible was given, and that little with the worst grace possible - so that the British Government never deserved and never got a word of thanks from this nation. For those who, like myself have been during a half century witnesses of the party intrigues, the exasperating delays, the broken promises, the contemptuous treatment of this ancient, downtrodden nation by an unsympathetic, arrogant foreign Parliament, the process of amelioration has been sickening.

And now the weapon of Parliamentarianism, feeble and disappointing as it often proved to be, has been wrested from our hands. Carsonism, which means rebellion against the fundamental principle of the British constitution, with its threat "to break every law", the stirring up of mutiny in the army, and its condonation, approval, and reward by the Government, has laid the axe at the root of Parliamentarianism so far as this country at least is concerned. But we have at hand a weapon more
powerful than armed rebellion or Parliamentarianism, and that is the policy of Sinn Fein. For what else is the policy of "self-determination" now accepted by all nations but the English translation of the basic principle of Sinn Fein? Generations of Irishmen in the past have been appealing at one time to the fears, at another to the sense of justice, of Englishmen in the British Parliament for the freedom of their native land. They have appealed in vain.

There is only one barrier to the success of this policy, and that is the continued presence of Irish national representatives in the English Parliament. They can do no good there. This is not time for them to be toying and trifling with the supreme interests of the nation in that assembly, whilst they are at the same time proclaiming for Ireland the right of self-determination. If they be sincere in their profession, then it seems to me that it is their duty to shake the dust from the House of Commons off their feet, bid good-bye to it for ever, return to their own country, then take counsel with the leaders of Sinn Fein, enter into some arrangement with them to avoid contested elections, and thus united jointly, to prepare and formulate the national demand for self-determination before the Peace Conference. 186

While the Sinn Fein Ard Fheis was being held in Dublin and the movement was receiving such encomium from Church dignitaries the totally different temper of Belfast was manifested by the granting of the freedom of the city to Lord French. 187

Appeals for some accommodation which would avoid electoral contests between Sinn Fein and the Irish Party were coming from all sides. The Bishop of Limerick had suggested such an arrangement and even stalwart supporters of the Party such as J.J. Horgan and J. Dunn made such an appeal through the pages of the Freeman's Journal. 188 The stumbling block was abstentionism. Sinn Fein insisted on it as the price for any

---

186 _Freeman's Journal_, 31 October, 1918.
187 _Cork Examiner_, 31 October, 1918.
188 4 November, 1918.
compromise. The Irish Parliamentary Party, on the other hand, was deeply committed to a parliamentary strategy and its leaders had well founded doubts concerning the likelihood of the Irish case over getting to the Peace Conference. They said that Parliament and the Peace Conference were the only agencies which might be persuaded to grant a measure of Irish self-government without recourse to violence and bloodshed. In Parliament they had a forum by right and while it had not given them much in late years it was secure. The Peace Conference was unsure and in any case Irish access to it was likely to depend on the good-will of the British Government. Sinn Fein had sound political and propaganda reasons for insisting on abstentionism since it provided its major distinguishing feature from the Irish Party and the more different they appeared the more likely they were to draw votes away from their Party opponents. For many of the older electors who remembered the years of impotence and petty feuding which had followed the Parnell split the prospect of fragmented nationalist political opinion was, however, a daunting one.

One group which had an ambivalent attitude towards Sinn Fein was labour and its position on the forthcoming general election was unclear during the summer of 1918. James Connolly was dead, Jim Larkin was in the United States, and the leadership of the Irish labour movement had passed to men whose devotion to trade unionism was not in question but whose
socialism and political acumen was rather rudimentary. Their new leaders were ill prepared for a general election. William O'Brien, the Labour leader, had admitted as much to the Irish Trades Union Congress in Waterford in early August. Nevertheless that meeting had selected four candidates to contest four Dublin constituencies but it was clear that labour did not feel strong enough to mount a large scale campaign.\(^{189}\) Personally William O'Brien was attracted to Sinn Fein, but, as he himself pointed out there were problems in mobilizing labour's support behind Sinn Fein, in 1918 it was thought the General Election might come soon and accordingly we had several talks with representatives of Sinn Fein. We had difficulties about the matter which they did not seem to understand. Sinn Fein had, of course, a fully political organization and the adherents of it were under the control or inspiration of their elected officials. Labour was not in that position at all. Labour was made up of the trade unions, and the members of the trade unions were not pledged supporters of Sinn Fein; many of them, in fact were opponents.\(^{190}\)

But being opponents of Sinn Fein did not make them supporters of the Irish Party and some of the Sinn Fein leaders, notably Harry Boland, were careful during the Ard Fheis not to antagonize labour any more than de Valera and Griffith had already done. They emphasized the identity of the commitment to self-determination of both labour and Sinn Fein.\(^{191}\)

Following the Ard Fheis, the Irish Trades Union Congress

\(^{189}\) Thomas P. O'Neill, "The General Election, 1918", op. cit., p. 396.

\(^{190}\) Forth the Banners Go, op. cit., p. 160.

\(^{191}\) Thomas P. O'Neill, "The General Election, 1918", op. cit., p. 396.
and Labour Party held a special meeting at the Mansion House in Dublin and it was there decided to withdraw the labour candidates in order to present a united front with Sinn Fein. The vote was 96 to 23 but it appears that P.T. Daly, one of the labour leaders who most energetically supported the alliance with Sinn Fein, was acting as much because of a personal feud with the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union as out of sympathy with Sinn Fein. It has been argued that this decision not to contest the election had very far reaching effects for Irish labour because of the extension of the suffrage which gave the vote to the poorer classes. These were denied the opportunity of establishing a pattern of voting for a working class party and thus became electorally committed to support of a middle class party, a type of commitment which is notoriously difficult to overcome at a later date. The electoral compromise was denounced from America by Jim Larkin who perceived the danger to which the labour leaders in Ireland appear to have been oblivious. The presence of labour candidates might indeed have split the anti-Party vote and permitted a few more Irish Party members to retain their

192 Freeman's Journal, 2 November, 1918.
195 Ibid., pp. 487 ff.
seats so that Sinn Fein was the clear beneficiary of the decision not to contest seats.

The Irish Party was at this time launching what proved to be its last offensive in the House of Commons. T.P.

O'Connor moved the following resolution:

That in the opinion of this House it is essential that before the British Government takes part in any proceedings for the re-settlement of Europe on the conclusion of peace, the Irish question should be settled in accordance with the principles laid down by President Wilson, that all nations large and small, should have free self-determination as to their form of government, and that no people should be ruled and dominated even in their own internal affairs by arbitrary and irresponsible force, instead of their own will and choice - principles for which, in the words of the Prime Minister, the Allies are ostensibly fighting in every other country - and that by the application of these principles the system of coercion and military rule under which Ireland is at present governed should be brought to an end.197

The debate was one of the Irish Party's best performances and the motion received the support of the former Prime Minister, Herbert Asquith. The Government, however, took the position that the Irish question was a purely domestic one, that the Irish people could have self-government provided that the coercion of Ulster were not involved and finally that the coercion and military rule of which the resolution complained were merely the necessary means of dealing with pro-Germans within the United Kingdom. John Dillon declared in despairing tones that he felt transported back thirty years to Balfour's Chief Secretaryship.198

197 Irish Weekly Independent, 9 November, 1918.
198 Cork Examiner, 7 November, 1918.
Dillon's speech was an admission of the futility of the Irish Party's performance over the past few years and as such was an indirect confirmation of Sinn Fein's arguments concerning parliamentarianism. The resolution was rejected by 196 votes to 115 which was more support than the Irish Party had been able to muster for many years. The Party was driven ever closer to the Sinn Fein position and following this defeat unanimously decided to forward an appeal to President Wilson. The Cork Examiner now expressed confidence that the Peace Conference would humiliate Britain and vindicate Ireland.

With the signing of the Armistice on 11 November the election preparations accelerated and renewed calls were made for a united front of all nationalists. A meeting of the Cork City Executive of the United Irish League made a strong plea for unity as did Waterford Corporation. Dr. Foley, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin made a similar appeal and Dr. McHugh of Derry, perhaps more realistically, called for unity at least in Ulster. John Dillon, replying to the resolution he had received from the Cork United Irish League, declared that he had been trying to achieve a united front of all nationalists for the past

199 Freeman's Journal, 6 November, 1918.
200 Ibid., 7 November, 1918.
201 Ibid., 8 November, 1918.
202 Cork Examiner, 11 and 13 November, 1918.
203 Ibid., 16 November, 1918 and Freeman's Journal, 16 November, 1918.
six months only to be met by insults and abuse on the part of Sinn Fein. The main stumbling block to unity remained abstention from Parliament and Dillon was not prepared to accept this policy for the Irish Party. As to Sinn Fein's hopes for the Peace Conference he considered them illusory. The Conference would be a conference of the victorious nations which Sinn Fein's pro-Germanism had alienated. Dillon felt that the only hope for the Peace Conference lay through the intervention of President Wilson. 204

Ulster's opposition to self-government had not softened and Sir Edward Carson, certainly with the election in mind, told the Ulster Club in Belfast,

> We in Ulster will never give up our freedom and our liberty for any man. Ulster had taken a splendid part in the war. The soldiers have been of the best; her heroes have been of the greatest; the men of the shipyards have saved the country from starvation; the men and women in the linen factories have covered our aeroplanes so that they have been enabled to maintain the mastery of the air. I wish I could say as much for the rest of Ireland. With some splendid exceptions they have been thinking of treason while we were thinking of our country. We will never forget that, England and Scotland will never forget that in the darkest days in our history the contribution of the South and West of Ireland to the Empire was a rebellion in which they shot our soldiers. Shame be upon them. Shame be upon them, indeed, now and for ever during history.205

This unabated hostility to Home Rule was an integral part of the calculation of the Government in determining a future policy for Ireland. This was to be a further humiliation

---

204*Cork Examiner*, 18 November, 1918.

205Ibid., 15 November, 1918.
for the Irish Parliamentary Party. The Prime Minister had already assured a number of Liberal Party meetings that Ulster would not be coerced and in mid-November he wrote to the Unionist leader, Mr. Bonar Law, outlining his position on the Irish question among others which were crucial to the survival of the coalition. He declared:

The second question is Home Rule. There will be no political peace either in the United Kingdom or the Empire so long as the present state of affairs continues. The situation in regard to Ireland is governed by two fundamental facts. The first, that the Home Rule Act of 1914 is upon the Statute Book.

The second, that in accordance with a pledge which has been given by me in the past, and indeed by all party leaders, I can support no settlement which would involve forcible coercion of Ulster.

Eighteen months ago the Government made alternative proposals for a settlement of the Irish problem. It offered either to bring Home Rule into immediate effect, while excluding the six northern counties of Ulster from its operation, but setting up at the same time a joint council which would be empowered to extend the legislation of the Irish Parliament to Ulster or to set up a convention of representative Irishmen to endeavour to find a settlement for themselves.

The second alternative was adopted, but unfortunately, after nearly a year's earnest deliberation, the Convention found themselves unable to arrive at anything like agreement.

In these circumstances I claim the right to bring a settlement into effect, based on the first of these alternatives. I recognize, that in the present condition of Ireland such an attempt could not succeed and that it must be postponed until the condition of Ireland makes it possible.206

Thus the Irish Party were to be denied the measure which had been their major claim to their country's gratitude before the war. That measure was by now inadequate to satisfy the

206 Freeman's Journal, 18 November, 1918.
new expectation of nationalist Ireland but to fail to obtain even that was discrediting. The statement also made it clear that partition was to be an integral feature of any forthcoming official efforts at solving the Irish question. One can now see that for all the bloodshed and bitterness of the next few years the Anglo-Irish Treaty did not involve any substantial departure from the position outlined by the Prime Minister in 1918. The statement satisfied Unionists that it was safe to remain in the Coalition since nothing could be done while Liberals and Liberal Home Rulers were satisfied by statements such as that of Winston Churchill to the Dundee Liberal Association that: "As for Home Rule, the Irish could have it when they wished for all Ireland, except one small corner that at present distrusted it".207

For the Irish Party the blow was a severe one. John Dillon was aware of the damage which the statement inflicted upon the Party's electoral prospects but he continued to maintain that abstention under these circumstances would be foolhardy and he warned a Dublin audience,

Take care if the Irish Party are destroyed and Parliament, so far as Irish representation is concerned, left in the hands of Sir Edward Carson, that you don't have a very much worse form of permanent partition - Ulster fettered and annexed to England, and the rest of Ireland out in the cold, shut out from all the benefits of those vast reconstruction measures that millions are to be spent on, while the North, the loyal part of Ireland is made a pet child and turned, as I say, into an English shire.208

207 Ibid., 19 November, 1918.
208 Ibid., 22 November, 1918.
The issue of partition had lost much of its salience by 1918. It remained important primarily because the willingness of the Party to compromise on unity could be used to suggest weakness, vacillation and general unreliability. Sinn Fein, however, could offer no better prospect of preserving the unity of Ireland and its policy was clearly likely to deepen the misgivings of Ulster unionists. The Irish Party did try and make use of partition in the electoral campaign but its own compromise had been fruitless and was interpreted as a sign of fatal weakness. In addition only the tiny British Labour Party now seemed disposed to act on the Irish question and even with that ally the Party could entertain no hope of holding a balance of power at Westminster as long as the coalition stood united.

The Party's campaign use of partition was not entirely fruitless and a number of Roman Catholic Bishops did rally to the Party because they thought that the likelihood of partition would be much greater if Sinn Fein won. Dr. Codd, the Bishop of Ferns endorsed the Party quite openly. Dr. O'Donnell of Raphoe, who was not exactly an Irish Party favourite at this time, endorsed the policy of maintaining Ireland's representation at Westminster as the only hope of including Ulster in any scheme of self-government. Dr. Brownrigg, the Bishop of Ossory also came out in support of

209 *Cork Examiner*, 21 November, 1918.  
210 *Freeman's Journal*, 21 November, 1918.
the Irish Party and Dr. Foley of Kildare and Leighlin indicated that while he entertained very little hope from either party he was inclined to give his support to the Irish Parliamentary Party.\textsuperscript{211} Dr. Gilmartin, the Archbishop of Tuam, declared that "As regards the immediate issue; which is absence or non-absention from Parliament, speaking for myself I prefer the older policy because it seems safer" but he resolutely refused actively to take sides in the campaign.\textsuperscript{212} Dr. Walsh, the Archbishop of Dublin, on the other hand, took note of the fact that his three suffragans had rejected abstentionism and he wrote:

\begin{quote}
I cannot but feel that it might easily lead to a grave misconception if in the circumstances, I were to continue to keep silence, and if, in fact, I were to abstain from stating in the same public manner, that my views on the matter thus publicly dealt with, in reference to the momentous issues now before the country, are altogether different from those expressed in the letters of those three venerated prelates.\textsuperscript{213}
\end{quote}

Dr. Fogarty of Killaloe saw no advantage whatsoever in having Irish representatives at Westminster and, in a letter accompanying his £25 contribution to the Sinn Fein election fund, he wrote:

\begin{quote}
The country is sick of the House of Commons with its plutocratic record of oppression, corruption and chicanery. Ireland since it came under its influence a hundred years ago, has been wasted and withered as Armenia under the Turks. The policy of "massaging" English Ministers by our "expert statesmen" has had an ample trial. We
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{211}Ibid., 27 November, 1918.
\textsuperscript{212}Cork Examiner, 28 November, 1918.
\textsuperscript{213}Freeman's Journal, 28 November, 1918.
know where it has landed us - in the national degradation of partition. The authors of that criminal and cowardly surrender will never be forgiven by Ireland.

I am not afraid of abstention. It is not only a logical and long-called-for protest against the pillage of our national rights in the infamous union, but in view of the insulting policy expounded by the Prime Minister as to the share reserved for Ireland in his world-wide reconstruction no other course is open to us if we have a particle of self respect. Irish representation in a House of Commons dominated by Mr. Lloyd George and his anti-Irish Coalition is a horrible imposture which it is time to terminate. That Unionist combine will work its shameless will on Ireland whether Irish members are there or not. Why send them there to be spat upon as paupers to come back to us with empty hands, or with a few crumbs from the English kitchen garnished with rhetoric, but, as always, with the leprosy of Anglicisation visibly developed on their person for the ruin of our national spirit?

Partition is to be defeated and liberty won, not be talking to the dead ears of the House of Commons, but under God, where, and as emancipation was won, landlordism broken, and conscription defeated, at home in Ireland by the determined will of the people.214

On the whole therefore what ecclesiastical support there was for the Irish Party seems to have been lukewarm at best whereas Sinn Fein enjoyed enthusiastic support from a number of Roman Catholic bishops.

The bishops were also concerned with preventing Unionists winning seats because of a split in nationalist ranks. As Dr. MacRory, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Down and Connor, told the Belfast St. Vincent de Paul Society, it was vital that all nationalists unite to vote against Carsonism and he explained his intervention in the election on the grounds

214 Cork Examiner, 30 November, 1918.
that he had a duty to Ireland and to the "Catholicity of Belfast". He had earlier been a party with Cardinal Logue and the other bishops of Ulster in urging that, if an agreement between Sinn Fein and the Irish Party to avoid contested elections over the whole of Ireland proved impossible, the two parties at least avoid contested elections in Ulster seats where a Unionist might get in otherwise.**216**

After some difficult negotiations involving the Lord Mayor of Dublin and a Sinn Fein proposal for a church gate referendum on which candidate should run, which was rejected by the Party, it was finally agreed that Cardinal Logue would allocate the eight seats in question, four to each party.**217**

This arrangement was more acceptable to the Irish Party than the church gate referendum because of the prospect of intimidation and the intimidation feared by the Party was not only clerical but also the more worldly intimidation of the Irish Volunteers.

The threat of conscription had resulted in a spectacular increase of Volunteers but the end of the war definitely removed that threat and numbers had abruptly plummeted. Those who remained, however, tended to be true believers in Sinn Fein and hence more disposed to intimidation of their fellow-Irishmen who had yet to share their commitment. As Dan Breen commented:

---

**215**Ibid., 9 December, 1918.

**216**Irish Weekly Independent, 30 November, 1918.

**217**Freeman's Journal, 4 December, 1918.
The armistice came on November 11, 1918, and with it the threat of being conscripted disappeared overnight. So too, did our great army! The small number that remained was of more use than a conglomeration of half-hearted soldiers. This select few meant to fight for independence. The others had been thinking only of saving themselves from the trenches of France; they believed, as did the old political leaders that Ireland's freedom was not worth the shedding of one drop of blood.218

How much intimidation the Volunteers engaged in during the election campaign of 1918 is not clear. The Irish Party claimed that Sinn Fein intimidation was widespread.219 One argument which was used to justify the presence of Volunteers during the campaign was that the Royal Irish Constabulary and the army were in fact intimidating people into voting against Sinn Fein or that in the absence of the Volunteers Sinn Feiners would have been prevented from campaigning. Whatever the justifications and however well founded they may or may not have been, Sinn Fein did benefit from the support of a fanatically dedicated private army and the very presence of that army may have had intimidating effects.

Despite the great numerical loss suffered by the Irish Volunteers following the removal of the threat of conscription there is no doubt that their numbers did remain higher than they would have been had the conscription crisis not intervened. It would be difficult to overestimate the effect of the threat of conscription not only on the Volunteers but

219 Freeman's Journal, 14 December, 1918.
also on the General Election of 1918 itself. Katharine Chorley has described this effect in the following terms:

The proposed application of conscription to Ireland in 1918 produced that kind of revolutionary situation which leaders can exploit in order to inflame smouldering popular discontent to the heat necessary for open insurgence. The Irish insurrection was of course a long-term insurrection in the sense that it was not launched by a single spectacular outbreak but was rather conducted through numberless apparently isolated acts of terrorism and small guerrilla engagements over a period of years. The conscription issue dominated the opening period and enabled the Sinn Fein leaders to rouse the country to an active support of militant tactics. The Irish Volunteers pledged themselves to resist by force the imposition of conscription. By this means they induced thousands of men who wanted to avoid military service to join their ranks.

She went on to describe some of the salient events of the anti-conscription campaign and to quote the police reports which for Galway, among other areas, indicated an increase in the number of Sinn Fein supporters from 25 per cent of the population at the beginning of the year to 80 per cent at the end. She concluded: "In capitalizing the conscription issue the Sinn Fein leaders showed considerable revolutionary acumen. It is an example which exhibits clearly how a specific grievance may be used to create a necessary psychology of revolt".\textsuperscript{220} The Volunteers who remained in the force after November, 1918 were zealous converts for the most part, converted to revolution and to the Irish policy of physical force and it was impossible for Sinn Fein to maintain full control over its Volunteer allies. A number of Irish Party electoral

\textsuperscript{220}Armies and the Art of Revolution, op. cit., pp. 37-38.
meetings were disrupted or altogether prevented by the Volunteers and Sinn Fein later claimed that such actions were unauthorized.  

Southern unionists were apprehensive about partition which had been foreshadowed by the Prime Minister's letter to the Unionist leader. The Church of Ireland Gazette expressed a willingness to contemplate a measure of Home Rule within the Empire provided that it applied to all of Ireland as a second best alternative to the preservation of the Union. Towards the end of November it declared that:

If the Act of Union is to be abrogated, it can only be abrogated by a settlement of consent in favour of some other form of government within the Empire, for a united Ireland. A united Ireland is, and must be, the first postulate of all Churchmen who are Churchmen first; for a divided Ireland means death to their Church.  

It is clear that there was some apprehension of the republican demands of Sinn Fein but the major fear was partition and southern unionists on that one issue were poles apart from their Ulster counterparts. Sir Horace Plunkett called for the setting up of a new force in Irish politics, the Irish Reconstruction Association, to elaborate a form of self-government for all Ireland within the Empire. Even the southern unionists had reservations concerning the Irish Party's dedication to Irish unity and Sinn Fein offered no hope of unity in addition to demanding too much independence. Sir

---

222 Quoted in Freeman's Journal, 23 November, 1918.
Horace Plunkett concluded that Sinn Fein was likely to win the election and

In the situation I have described it is clear that it will be extremely difficult either to avert the calamity of partition or to safeguard the interests of Ireland through the reconstruction years. The Ulster business men hate partition just as much as we do. Neither in the Convention nor outside it have they ever, as far as I am aware, formulated a scheme which was logical or workable. Now, however, that their influence upon the Government is not quite sufficient to maintain the status quo, they intend to dictate the terms of their second best policy to suit themselves. Having borrowed from the South of Ireland the ablest political leader since Parnell, who moves in and out of the Coalition Government at will, and retains his influence all the while, they are very likely, if we allow things to drift, to get their way. 223

It was now too late for a unionist change of heart, both nationalist parties had given up any pretence at accommodation with the unionists in order to try and outbid each other on self-government. Neither Sir Horace Plunkett nor the *Church of Ireland Gazette* represented a universal tendency among southern unionists and the opposition of many of them to self-government had hardened since the Irish Convention. In early December a number of prominent unionists, Lords Midleton, Desart, Donoughmore, Mayo, Oranmore and Browne and Messrs. William J. Goulding, Andrew Jameson and George F. Steward, wrote to both Lloyd George and Bonar Law protesting against Home Rule and partition. 224

The Sinn Fein campaign emphasized the alleged insults of the House of Commons to Ireland, over taxation, under-

223 Ibid.

224 Ibid., 9 December, 1918.
development, depopulation and the imposition of conscription. Its response to these grievances was primarily abstentionism and the appeal to the Peace Conference to secure sovereign independence, but the republican nature of that independence was generally not strongly emphasized. One of the most prominent Sinn Fein campaigners, J.J. Walsh, described England as "a huge and poisonous reptile" but specifically eschewed violence in Ireland's dealing with her. This was a necessary concession to ecclesiastical opinion in the 1918 election. Speaking in Cork, Mr. Walsh declared that "physical force, had no great fascination for most of them, and he personally from his own experience would advise no man, except in the most extreme emergency, to resort to force as a means to free his country". He also attempted to deflect the charge of pro-Germanism being directed at the Sinn Fein, arguing that "the Irish people were not in the sense alleged Pro-German, but if the devil himself and all the devils in hell were up against the British Government the Irish people would be pro-devil and pro-hell". For a time it seemed likely that the authorities would interfere with Sinn Fein meetings and many planned Manchester Martyrs' commemorations were in fact proclaimed. However, these proclamations, once again, were not enforced and the meetings took place and made good use of the proclamations to denounce "British Prussianism".

225 *Cork Examiner*, 4 December, and 19 November, 1918.
226 Ibid., 7 December, 1918.
227 Ibid., 25 November, 1918.
There was something incongruous in the British policy of permitting Sinn Fein to campaign relatively openly in the election while at the same time refusing to release the leaders held in gaol since the "German Plot". There is no doubt that Sinn Fein faced considerable obstacles in its conduct of the campaign as a result of the arrests of its leaders and of its election directors, on the other hand, in the mood of Ireland at this time a candidate on the hustings was no match for one in prison and by arresting only Sinn Feiners the Government had convinced the Irish people that Sinn Fein was the party feared by England, an invaluable propaganda advantage. The fact that the election was held so soon after the end of the war also favoured Sinn Fein. Demobilization had but begun and servicemen, who were likely to be either Unionist or Irish Party supporters, were unable to take part in the campaign. It has also been suggested that the majority of them were unable to vote.

In South County Dublin, where the Sinn Fein candidate won over the Unionist candidate by less than eight hundred votes, it was estimated that only one-sixth of voters in the armed forces were able to vote and the Irish Times felt that, had a full military vote been cast, the Unionist candidate might well have won the seat. The taint of pro-Germanism and the anti-conscription and anti-recruiting activities of Sinn Fein did not make the party popular with soldiers. After

228 December, 1918; See also Robert Kee, The Green Flag, op. cit., p. 623.
the Armistice there were attacks by soldiers and by soldiers' relatives on the Mansion House, Liberty Hall and on Sinn Fein headquarters. Many years later Robert Brennan recalled the attack on the party headquarters and wrote:

On November 11, 1918, the screaming of sirens and the pealing of the chimes of Christ Church Cathedral announced the armistice. As if at a signal, Grafton Street became bedecked with Union Jacks. Crowds of separation - women - women who were drawing separation allowance because their husbands were in the British forces - poured into the streets and formed processions headed by the Union Jack. In a little while it became less an expression of thankfulness for peace than a jingo demonstration against Sinn Fein Dublin. A dense crowd, singing British war songs, collected in front of Sinn Fein headquarters and attacked the building. The police made faint-hearted efforts to disperse the mob, which grew larger by the hour. In the evening, reinforced by many hundreds, they attempted to set fire to the building. A section of the Third Battalion of the Volunteers was called out to defend the building and a very lively fight ensued. The Volunteers saved the building and extinguished the fire, beating back the attackers. A few companies of British soldiers then came along and occupied the street.

People who felt this way about Sinn Fein were unlikely to vote for that party within a month.

One of the factors which operated most strongly in Sinn Fein's favour during the election was the new voters' register. The size of the Irish electorate had tripled since 1910. All males over twenty-one and all females over thirty now had the vote without the property qualifications which had made the old electorate a relatively prosperous one.

229 *Freeman's Journal*, 14 November, 1918.

The electorate of 1918 was both younger and poorer than that of 1910. The young and the poor were two categories of Irish people for whom Sinn Fein had manifested a stronger appeal than it had for the older and better-off segments of the population who had been the mainstay of the Irish Party. All the "farmers' sons" who had been prevented from emigrating by the war and who had been most acutely subjected to the threat of conscription now had the vote for the first time.

Brian Farrell has pointed out that,

In effect, allowing for the usual replacements due to mortality, two out of every three voters on the register were exercising the franchise for the first time. Many members of this new "political generation" were women; others were less affluent citizens previously ineligible because of property qualifications; others were young men voting for the first time. Such a group, as Butler and Stokes suggest, "will be unusually open to the influence of issues and events which dominate national politics at the time of their entry into the electorate". In Ireland in 1918 the dominant issues and events revolved around the efforts of the Sinn Fein party to gain independence.231

The change was momentous and, allied to the fact that in twenty-six constituencies the Irish Party did not put up candidates whereas in 1910 it had won a majority of its seats in uncontested constituencies, makes an analysis of the change in voting patterns impossible. The large numbers of uncontested seats in 1910 suggests that in many parts of Ireland then the Irish Party had been supported by electors who had not established a pattern of voting behaviour supportive of the Party. Voting studies have shown that

231"Labour and the Irish Political Party System", op.cit., p.487.
voting behaviour once established tends to be more stable than political attitudes so that in 1918 the Irish Party did not enjoy the normal advantage of incumbents in election. It is interesting to note, however, that in the borough constituencies where elections were generally contested and where the electorate had grown from 122,326 to 386,667, a factor of 3.16, the total number of votes cast against Sinn Fein, adjusted for the dual riding of Cork, was 168,869 or a number somewhat larger than the total borough electorate of 1910. These include borough constituencies in Belfast where Unionists won by commanding leads but these figures demonstrate the difficulty of establishing how many in these constituencies actually changed their allegiance to Sinn Fein.

One question concerning the campaign which had important consequences was that of what divided the two nationalist parties. The Sinn Fein election manifesto, despite the censor's deletions, was a clear call for an Irish republic but the campaign itself seems to have been conducted to a very large extent on the basis of the best means of securing self-government. As Robert Kee pointed out

...in the course of the election campaign itself Sinn Fein was already revealed as the winning party. Not only did a number of prominent Nationalists of the old school publicly come down in its favour, such as William O'Brien and Colonel Maurice Moore of Redmond's National Volunteers, but in no fewer than twenty-six constituencies the Nationalist Party failed to muster even sufficient enthusiasm to raise a candidate. And these twenty-six constituencies representing nearly a quarter of the total Irish electorate had thus gone to Sinn Fein even before polling day. The manifesto, for all the mutilations of the censor, made clear that
Sinn Fein stood for an Irish Republic and that its elected candidates, refusing to attend at Westminster, would form a national assembly in Dublin, which would appeal to the Peace Conference. However, probably what most Sinn Fein voters were voting for was simply the greatest measure of independence, without partition of the county, which Ireland could get...the one thing they were certainly not voting for was an attempt to win sovereign independence by force of arms or a campaign of terrorism. This was a goal believed in only by a minority of Volunteer activists, who in the long run saw violence rather than democratic politics as the final arbiter, though they would have maintained that they were thereby expressing the national will. Publicly such thoughts remained tactfully unvoiced or even denied.232

During the campaign itself the Cork Examiner supported the Irish Party, though without hope of its victory, and it outlined in a leading article the main issues of the election as it saw them:

In Ireland the issue which is being fought at the polls is whether Irishmen are to disfranchise themselves and leave their country's concerns to the tender mercies of Sir Edward Carson and Mr. Lloyd George, or to maintain a watchful and vigorous body of Nationalists in the House of Commons who will safe-guard Ireland's cause, and carefully conserve her political and financial interests. It is true that in the wave of disappointment that is passing over the country as a result of the failure of the British Ministers to honour their pledges many Irishmen who sincerely desire the country's freedom have allied themselves with those who advocate the scrapping of the Parliamentary machine, and who hold out promises that the Peace Conference will secure for Ireland the liberty that Great Britain herself has already admitted is Ireland's right.233

In the actual election itself it was noted that unionists largely abstained from voting where no Unionist candidates were standing.234 Otherwise the rate of abstention in

233 5 December, 1918.
234 Freeman's Journal, 16 December, 1918.
contested constituencies was no greater than the norm in Irish elections and, in the days between polling and the announcement of the results, Sinn Fein leaders were forecasting victory in seventy-five constituencies while the Irish Party's most optimistic claim was twelve.\(^{235}\)

It was during this hiatus, once the die had been cast, that the Irish Party leaders joined Sinn Fein leaders and a number of Roman Catholic bishops to invite President Wilson to visit Ireland on his way to the Peace Conference.\(^{236}\) By then President Wilson had become persuaded that self-determination was only to be applied to the territories of the Central Powers and not to those of the Allies. He also had family prejudices in favour of Ulster unionism and a political bias against the Irish-American organizations allied to Sinn Fein. It has been reported that his first impulse on receiving an Irish delegation in the United States had been to tell them "to go to hell".\(^{237}\) Irish nationalists from both parties had thus over-estimated their chances at the Peace Conference. They would have no access by right of the rebellion of 1916, as its leaders had believed, nor would their cause be championed by the American President, as even the Irish Party had come to believe.

The results of the general election were a clear victory for the coalition in the United Kingdom as a whole and for

\(^{235}\) Irish Weekly Independent, 21 December, 1918.
\(^{236}\) Cork Examiner, 19, 20, 23 and 24 December, 1918; Freeman's Journal, 23 December, 1918.
\(^{237}\) See Alfred Cobban, The Nation State and National Self-Determination, op. cit., p. 66.
Sinn Fein in Ireland. The ideological gap between the two was wide. On the entire United Kingdom there was a clear Unionist majority which indicated a general lack of sympathy for Ireland. The political behaviour of Ireland since 1916 had clearly antagonized the British peoples and the former Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith, who had supported the last Irish Party motion in the House of Commons went down to defeat in his Scottish constituency. In Ireland 73 out of 105 constituencies were now represented by Sinn Fein, 26 by Unionists and only 6 by the Irish Party. The ace recruiter, Colonel Lynch, had gone down to defeat, not in Ireland but as a Labour Party candidate in South Battersea. The Irish Weekly Independent declared that "the Irish people showed by their votes at the General Election their disapproval of the present system of governing Ireland and their disgust at the humbug, muddling, and treachery of the Irish Parliamentary Party". John Dillon interpreted the result as largely an anti-Party vote. His initial reaction, even before the results had been announced, was to place a strong emphasis on the Party's lack of organization. In a letter to T.P. O'Connor, dated 20 December, he wrote:

The fight at East Mayo was a microcosm of the conditions all over the country - absolute lack of organization and helplessness on our side against the most perfect organization and infinite

238 Cork Examiner, 30 December, 1918.
239 4 January, 1919.
audacity on the other, backed by ferocious intimidation.

All my experience during the contest has confirmed and deepened the conviction mentioned in a previous letter to you - that we had plenty of support in the country, including a very decided majority of the thoughtful and intelligent men, but that during the last four years our machinery has been scrapped and cold water pumped on our supporters and the young men repulsed and driven wholesale into the Sinn Fein camp, and no effort whatever to meet the poisonous propaganda of S.F.

The bedrock of the situation is that negotiations of July 1916 struck a deadly blow at the Irish party, and since that the party has been going downhill at an ever accelerated pace. The one chance we had since those fatal negotiations was last spring, and if L.G. had not forced thro' the Conscription Act for Ireland, we might have recovered the country. But even then it could only have been done by a complete and fundamental reform of our methods in Ireland. But after L.G.'s conduct in April and May last the position of the party became desperate and there was nothing for it but to put the matter to a clear issue and force the country to take the responsibility of coming to a decision.240

Five days later, in another letter to O'Connor, Dillon painted a somewhat more complex picture of the causes of the "present chaos" in Ireland. He made an enumeration of these causes:

I. The treachery and weakness of the government.
II. The poisoning of the minds of the Irish people for many years by the Independent, the mosquito press and S.F. propaganda, without an effective effort on our part to counteract this poison.
III. The folly and ignorance of the younger generation in Ireland, who have not forgotten, but are ignorant of, what our movement achieved for Ireland, and many of whom have grown up in the nephetic atmosphere of the Parnellite split, and Healyism.
IV. The fury of a large section of the priests, who are most dishonestly using S.F. to carry out a purpose they have long nursed - the destruction of an independent party and the recovery of their power over Irish politics, which the Parnellite movement had to a very large extent destroyed.
V. The outbreak in all its old savagery of the hatred of England, due to the executions and vile and idiotic policy of the government for the past five years.

VI. And by no means last - our own blunders in not realizing what was going on, digging a gulf between the party and the younger generation, making absolutely no effort to counteract the poisonous propaganda or to maintain our organization and our movement. And Redmond's persistence in what has been called his imperialist policy long after it had become apparent to me that such a course would inevitably throw the country into the hands of S.F.\footnote{Ibid., p. 455.}

In this assessment Dillon was paying off a few old scores but most of the factors which he mentioned did have an effect on Irish public opinion. The clergy for instance may not have been primarily motivated by a desire to destroy the Irish Party but there can be no doubt that clerical influence on the whole tended to be either neutral or else pro-Sinn Fein. The Irish Party, as pointed out not long after this election, "were either blamed for the position in which the country found itself - Home Rule refused, though it was on the Statute Book, and Conscription, the "blood-tax" as it was called, threatened to be imposed - or else it was held they were of no further use".\footnote{Michael MacDonagh, The Home Rule Movement, (The Talbot Press, Dublin, 1920), p. 290.} Whatever successes the Irish Party had been able to claim over the previous forty years, what was most characteristic of the Party's position in 1918 was that they had failed to bring home the one measure which was the central object and \textit{raison d'être} of the Party, Home Rule. There had been failure on this front before, but whereas in the past these had led to alienation and apathy, now there was a political alternative which war time conditions...
had allowed to grow strong and those who had been frustrated once again turned to it in the hope that new men and new methods could win what had eluded the Irish Party.

Sinn Fein was also favoured by other factors including the ambiguous and inconsistent attitude of the Government which persecuted, harrassed and arrested many of its prominent members but stopped short of any serious attempt to destroy or contain the movement. The party was allowed to contest the elections openly while its leaders could elicit the sympathy which Ireland always extended to those imprisoned for political reasons. In fact, because a number of Sinn Fein candidates stood in more than one constituency, sixty-nine Sinn Feiners were returned for the seventy-three seats which the party won and of these sixty-nine, thirty-four were in gaol at the time, held without trial because of alleged involvement in a no less alleged German Plot. This was in itself a tremendous appeal for a sympathy vote.

The results of the election have been variously interpreted and the question continues to be controversial. Sinn Fein tended to claim that the results were a majority declaration for an Irish Republic but that interpretation has been challenged. Edward Norman, whose sympathies are with the unionists concluded that the vote was not an endorsement of a republic and he wrote,

...since few of those who actually voted Sinn Fein intended to settle the main lines of the old Home Rule policy, the result cannot be taken as a national mandate for republicanism. Father Flanagan,
a member of the Sinn Fein executive who had been suspended by his bishop for electioneering, was quite frank about it. "The people have voted Sinn Fein", he said. "What we have to do now is to explain to them what Sinn Fein is".243

This interpretation tends to be corroborated by observers who were closer in time to the elections and in sympathy to Sinn Fein. William O'Brien characterized as "greatly exaggerated" the claim that the General Election had meant adhesion to a republic on the part of the main body of the voters and he added:

The Sinn Fein candidates put forward no rigid Republican programme - in fact, put forward no programme at all. I can answer for the half-a-million All-for-Irelanders, who turned the scale in the south that the issue for or against a Republic did not even cross their minds as a supreme decision binding them for the future. For the overwhelming mass of Irish opinion it was a choice between a Party corrupted, demoralized and effete, who had misused in the interests of an English Party the most irresistible power ever held by Irish hands - who, for the sake of establishing for themselves a boundless monopoly of patronage in Dublin, had conspired to separate nearly a fourth of the country into an Orange Free State - between a Party who to the cries of "Trust Asquith!", "Trust Redmond!" and "up, the mollies!" had for years led the most ignorant and credulous of the masses shamefully astray, and had held the most enlightened part of public opinion powerless to express itself by an unheard of tyranny of violence, bribery and Press manipulation, and on the other hand a band of enthusiasts, young, gallant and clean of heart, of whom all they knew was that whatever mistakes they might make would be those of a too passionate love of Ireland, and who would at the least clear the road of the future by disencumbering it of a Parliamentary imposture which was ending in putrefaction.244

O'Brien, like Dillon earlier, was repaying old scores in

243 A History of Modern Ireland, op. cit., p. 268.
244 The Irish Revolution and How It Came About, op. cit., pp. 390-391.
this analysis but his observation that an Irish republic was not the key issue in the general election is borne out by an active and prominent Sinn Feiner, Piaras Beaslai who wrote of the election's outcome.

This result must not be taken as indicating a sudden and complete conversion of the Irish people to Republicanism. The basis of all national and patriotic movements in Ireland, whether "moderate" or "extreme", political or cultural, had been a desire for a separate national existence for Ireland, independent of England; but the majority of the people had no reasoned political theories on the subject, and were always most interested in the removal of those grievances and disabilities which weighed most heavily on them. The desire of nationhood had been allowed, no doubt foolishly, to crystallize itself into the formula of Home Rule. The betrayal of Home Rule by the British Government, the surrender to Carsonite threats and the obvious weakness of the Party, the heroism and sacrifices of Easter Week, and the subsequent coercion and persecution by the English Government, had changed the mind of the people; and the passing of the Conscription Act had proved the final blow.245

The temptation on Sinn Fein to place a republican interpretation on the election results was naturally great. Their success, while never in doubt, had exceeded their own expectations and their manifesto had been a public claim of republicanism even if their campaign had concentrated on the weaknesses of their opponents. They had also disputed on the means of securing an ill-defined measure of self-government and the question had been that of which factors had appealed to the voters. Now that the appeal had been successful the question was that of which policy could be pursued when the opponent was the British Government rather than the Irish

Party, without alienating significant popular support in Ireland. Lucian Pye has cautioned that "In analyzing the character of an insurrectionary movement, it is particularly important to distinguish between the propaganda about objectives used by the movement and the actual appeals that attract its membership". Because Sinn Fein fought for a republic after 1918 and had an Irish Republic as one of its propaganda objectives before the election does not mean that its popular support was based on a general desire for a republican constitution. It seems clear that more voters were attracted to Sinn Fein because of the conscription crisis and because of the demonstrated impotence of the Irish Party to secure self-government than because of a deep commitment to republicanism.

Dissatisfaction with the Irish economy was also a factor influencing voters. The wholesale price index had jumped a further 27.4 per cent in 1918 and while this certainly indicated a slowing down over increases in preceding years it was still massive when contrasted to a rise in wages of roughly 30 per cent over the entire period of the war. The threat of conscription had been felt with particular immediacy in rural areas and farmers were also aggrieved at the Food Controller's rulings. Under these circumstances the election in the south of Ireland was a contest between

246 "The Roots of Insurgency and the Commencement of Rebellion", op. cit., p. 165.
two political parties; one more moderate in its demands and particularly more traditional in its methods, but identified with failure; the other, more extreme, appealing to the traditional Irish rhetoric to justify new methods yet untried. One party promising to continue a constitutional approach which had failed, the other turning its back on constitutionalism but both pursuing self-government. As James Davies observed:

The elite group most likely to succeed, more often than not, seems to be the one that has the hardest, least conciliatory program - and the hardest men. Any group which proposes to maintain any continuity with the old regime has less chance to succeed than one which at least says it will make a complete break with the past.248

The Irish people at a moment of high tension and disillusionment were offered a plausible way out of their political dilemma. This way out was offered to people who because of the old restricted franchise, the labour troubles of 1913 and the stoppage of emigration, had not developed a firm pattern of support for the Irish Parliamentary Party. The passage of the Home Rule Bill had rallied pretty general support for the Party but that support had not been consolidated by any concrete realization of this paper victory. The British Government, through an incredible series of fumblings of political problems arising in Ireland, which can be attributed at least in part to the primary imperative of fighting a war, had overlooked the growth of extremism

and of movements dominated by the Irish Republican Brotherhood until a rebellion had occurred. They had then resorted to coercion sufficiently severe when combined with other sources of dissatisfaction to inflame the smouldering anti-English feelings of the Irish but far from ruthless enough to suppress the extremist movement or even to drive it into obscurity from which their only recourse would have been terrorism which might have ranged the Church against it.

It has been pointed out that there are two types of official shortcomings which contribute to an insurrectionary temper:

One covers sins of omission: the disregarding of early warnings, the failure to take political action in time. The other covers sins of commission: actions that aggravate rather than improve a situation, policies that defer the day of reckoning, while merely ensuring that the price to be paid will be higher than it need have been.249

The British Government in Ireland sinned copiously in both fashions during the years 1912-1918. The Irish Parliamentary Party which could in a tendentious way be associated with these sins paid the price for them in 1918. From then on Ireland was once more united in its hostility to Britain and a chapter in its history had been closed.

CHAPTER XIV

Summing-up

The General Election of 1918 is a convenient breaking off point in an examination of Irish public opinion and revolution. The election marked a change by the Irish nationalist majority of the rules under which their political goals would henceforth be pursued. It was the formal acknowledgement of a change of direction which had in fact occurred at the time of the conscription crisis. Irish nationalism had then become transformed from a protest movement into a resistance movement. As such the election was more than a simple change of preference from one political party to another yet it fell far short of a commitment to violent revolution or even to the creation of an autonomous Irish republic. The electors, or large numbers of them, rejected the formerly preferred alternative of a reformist and strictly constitutional movement in favour of a more doctrinaire but untried method of obtaining self-government.

The Irish Parliamentary Party had been a protest movement against the way in which Ireland was ruled and it had demanded a change. The conscription crisis had involved a shift in its strategy, for it had then moved to resistance against the Government; but on the self-government issue it
remained constitutional and reformist. It was then virtually wiped out in the 1918 election by a coalition of forces which had adopted a strategy of resistance on all political questions. The changeover involved no mass conversion to new political dogma since ideologically Sinn Fein and the Irish Parliamentary Party differed in degree only. Both sought self-government and, while there was some disagreement over the amount of self-government which each party was prepared to accept, the major contentious issue between the two concerned the methods to be employed in pursuit of that agreed end.

The alignment of forces in nationalist Ireland was changed by the election and southern Ireland became in effect a single party state whose entire energies could be concentrated upon winning self-government without the need to be concerned with the points of view of any domestic opponents. Westminster had for many years provided a forum for the expression of a number of different Irish positions on political questions and for direct confrontation with Irish Unionists and with the representatives of British opinion. The 1918 election meant the disappearance of this forum as well as the end of political pluralism in nationalist Ireland. In the first Dail, Ireland's counter-parliament set up in Dublin in early 1919, no opinion other than Sinn Fein's found expression. This made pursuit of the goal of national sovereignty the exclusive political concern but
it also gave rise to a contempt for the values of democratic pluralism which had consequences which still affect Irish politics. It also completed the long process of psychological estrangement between Ulster unionism and Irish nationalism.

Irish nationalism became a resistance movement rather than a protest movement during 1918. The forces of resistance which had erupted in violence at Easter 1916 had failed to draw behind them the nationalist majority, but it is important to bear in mind that the majority was involved in protest against the British Government. This made the progression into a resistance movement easier as a natural development resulting from the continued ineffectiveness of protest. The boundary between protest and resistance had been crossed during the conscription crisis and the General Election permitted a formal realignment of forces.

Earlier chapters have examined the various forces operating in early twentieth century Ireland, particularly during the years between 1912 and 1918. Men rebel for a number of reasons and the Irish were certainly not without reasons for revolt or rebellion. They were obviously the victims of relative deprivation and while their perception of this deprivation and their sense of injustice suffered at the hands of Britain may have exaggerated the dimensions of this deprivation it had not manufactured it out of nothing. Nationalist Irishmen could find in eight hundred
years of close dependence on England innumerable instances of hardship which, at least in some measure, could be attributed either to the actions or inactions of the British Government. Relations between Britain and Ireland had begun to improve in the late nineteenth century as Britain demonstrated greater sympathy for the plight of Ireland and as Irish politicians learned how to manoeuvre in the corridors of Westminster and in the House of Commons. These politicians protested at the Union but were willing to settle for reform at a time when the British public and the Liberal Party in particular seemed willing to effect reforms.

The Union was a legal reality but it had never become a psychological, emotional, economic, social or even political fact and Irish separatism had reflected this situation. At the turn of the century this separatism had become modified and it seemed as if a compromise on federal lines would be worked out. Geographical factors had played an important role in separating the communities of Great Britain and Ireland though the area surrounding Belfast demonstrated that economic, religious and social integration combined with steam navigation could do much to overcome geographical isolation. In the rest of Ireland consciousness of an historical identity based in a distinct geographical area gave considerable impetus to the development of nationalism, particularly when reinforced by numerous cultural
factors. Geographical isolation, however, limited the external aid to separatist rebels and this was a factor in the failure of Theobald Wolfe Tone. In the twentieth century it limited the amount of physical support for the rebels from Irish-American and German sources.

Factors of economic geography such as the scarcity of industrial raw materials also contributed to Ireland's much slower rate of change during England's industrial expansion and made any understanding between the two communities much more difficult. On the whole, geographical factors, while subject to modification through technological development, tend to be stable over long periods of time. In Ireland during the early years of the twentieth century they must be considered as encouraging the development of regionalism or nationalism and as being beyond the capabilities of either politicians or rebels to affect.

Until late in the nineteenth century one of the most potent sources of dissatisfaction and unrest in Ireland had been the system of land tenure. Land tenure involved the very survival of the Irish tenant farmers and the reputation of Ireland as a land of perpetual dissent and instability owed much to the agrarian outrages which were one of the major forms of protest against the perceived injustice of the system. Improvements to the land were discouraged and the income from the land was drained out of Ireland, often going to absentee landlords living in luxury while their
tenants either maintained bare subsistence or starved. The frustrations resulting from such arrangements fuelled fierce resentment against the landlords and against the Government which defended their property rights and interests. The rebellion of 1798, which was instrumental in the passage of the Act of Union, brought to the intellectuals, moved by continental republicanism, the support of tenant masses totally ignorant of Rousseau or Paine but very much aware of their own position under the existing system of land tenure. From then on land agitation became linked with nationalism and separatism though the issues were not identical and ultimately the land tenure question was settled some years before the question of self-government.

The settlement of the land question disarmed the extreme nationalists and transformed the nature of agitation in Ireland. Land agitation while allied with a nationalist ideology had mobilized the masses in support of action directed at a specific political goal. Reform of the grievance which fuelled that agitation left only the vaguer and more general national issue in contention. That issue was a much broader one and involved an attack on the system of Irish government itself. On the other hand, it lacked the urgency which had been supplied by a specific grievance at the level of survival itself. The new Home Rule agitation was constitutional, in other words it was non-violent and aimed at reform rather than revolution. It involved peaceful co-operative protest
and the formulation of a demand for change which was judged to be possible and which did not challenge the authority or legitimacy of the British Government. It is of considerable significance, however, that the rhetoric of the Home Rule movement had been formed during a period of more complete rejection of the system so that the concept of revolt was kept constantly alive attracting many of the nationalist intelligentsia as well as terrifying unionist opinion.

Settlement of the land question was made easier by the phenomenal decline in population which followed the famine. This provided some relief on the pressure for land and made the question of land ownership seem soluble. After considerable agitation the landlords and the British Government agreed on a scheme of land purchase which began a process of redistribution whereby rural Ireland was transformed from a country owned by large and often absent landlords into one characterized by a peasant proprietorship. One remaining problem was that the new proprietors for the most part owned only very small farms, often too small to provide an adequate living. Nevertheless, the change had removed much of the desperate force behind nationalist aspirations and thus contributed to the noticeably more peaceful state of Ireland which prevailed until 1916. The land agitation, however, was one of the major sources of the tradition of successful resort to violence in the settlement of grievances which became part of the Irish political culture.
The settlement of the land question was the laying to rest of the major Irish grievance of the period but it was one of a large number of grievances to be dealt with according to the pattern described early in the twentieth century by L. Paul-Dubois, whereby the British Government first ignored Irish demands, then attempted suppression and finally, where that either failed or became too costly, surrendered following a period of unrest. Land purchase broke the power of the landed aristocracy in Ireland as the power of landed aristocracies was being broken elsewhere. In Ireland, however, the fundamentally agrarian character of society was left unchanged and no rising industrial bourgeoisie was available to fill the political vacuum left by the landlord class. The social structure of Ireland thus became even more unlike that of Great Britain.

The problem of overpopulation in Ireland had been relieved though not solved by the famine and land purchase by itself was not enough to assure survival to the Irish people. In the absence of industrial expansion on a massive scale, the land hunger of the Irish peasant was maintained high. Some relief was provided by the establishment of a pattern of emigration which led the surplus population of Ireland to the United States, the British colonies or other countries like Argentina. This removed from Ireland large numbers of discontented people who, on the basis of their

\footnote{Contemporary Ireland, op. cit., pp. 53-54.}
social status, age and mobility were most likely prospects for involvement in revolutionary movements if forced to remain at home. Emigration was thus another factor which contributed to the relatively peaceful state of Ireland at the turn of the century. Where these emigrants settled, and particularly in the United States, there grew up communities of deracinated and embittered individuals who made a considerable contribution to the survival and growth of an Irish revolutionary movement.

In the early years of the twentieth century declining opportunities abroad and later on the effects of the war forced many would-be emigrants to stay in Ireland where they remained landless and were confronted by high unemployment. Their position was eventually further undermined by progressive economic deterioration and by the threat of conscription. Opportunities for political participation were kept low by the dominance of Irish politics by the Irish Parliamentary Party. The Party's solidly middle-class outlook denied them not merely representation but understanding and sympathy as well. Forced to remain the the Irish political system, they became marginal men, without function in Irish political life, and it is hardly surprising that when they did become drawn into Irish politics they tended to support the political movement which most strongly reflected discontent with existing conditions.

The reduction of the population through emigration was
one of the most characteristic demographic features of Ireland following the famine but another important feature was the growth of the urban population even while the population of Ireland as a whole was decreasing. Urbanization has been identified as a destabilizing factor in agrarian societies. People find themselves cut off from their traditional and familiar environment, from the support of extended family groups and authority structures and from vertical ties of dependence. In Dublin these effects were aggravated because the growth in employment opportunities lagged behind the population growth. In addition, living conditions in the overcrowded and unhygienic tenements of Dublin were a further alienating force. In Belfast, where the urbanization process was even more rapid, aggression directed at the political system was less evident. Cultural factors were naturally a major determinant of this difference in attitude but the fact that employment opportunities were growing at a much faster rate and that housing was far more salubrious should also be taken into account. Demographic change thus worked to relieve tensions in rural Ireland at the same time as it aggravated tension in urban areas and particularly in Dublin.

Cultural factors were obviously of some importance in dividing the predominantly Protestant north-east from the rest of Ireland but they also clearly were a considerable factor in maintaining Irish distinctiveness from the rest
of the United Kingdom. The Irish were not distinguished from the English by any superficially obvious characterization. Both were products of a roughly similar ethnic mix, though in different proportions, and therefore more clearly cultural factors such as language, religion and customs had marked the boundaries of their separate identities. At one time these barriers had been erected by both sides but by the early twentieth century, the United Kingdom had become culturally homogeneous and no longer erected such barriers. The policy pursued was in fact that of integrating the Irish into a common notion of a United Kingdom political community which could accommodate some cultural diversity. This policy led to toleration of cultural differences though it certainly did not encourage them and its long term effects seemed to be a reduction in diversity.

Irish-Irelanders set for themselves the task of putting an end to the gradual erosion of national characteristics. They fought to rebuild barriers which had already largely been destroyed such as the Irish language and various other features of ancient Gaelic culture. The working arrangement which was eventually reached between Connolly and Pearse was based on the belief that at some time in the myth-shrouded past of Ireland communism as an economic system had flourished and that it could be restored as a cultural barrier against England.

While various organizations fought a battle to reverse
whatever cultural assimilation has taken place, there remained two differences which in themselves were sufficient to hold the pass for some time to come. The first of these was religious. Following the Reformation, Great Britain had become overwhelmingly Protestant and Ireland had remained overwhelmingly Roman Catholic, no great efforts having been made to implant the new church among the Irish masses. The second factor was the different socio-economic character of the two communities. Ireland had retained an agrarian character into the twentieth century while England in particular had become the world's leading industrial power. This was a comparatively recent development but it did create a substantial bar to the assimilation of Irishmen as long as they remained in Ireland. Belfast, however, had become industrialized and integrated into the British economy. Sinn Fein before 1917 was intent on the industrial development of southern Ireland, though in terms of economic rationality British interests were likely to be best served by the maintenance of Ireland as an agricultural hinterland. From the British point of view the existence of an Irish independence movement reinforced the argument against the development of Ireland along industrial lines.

The coincidence between religious and socio-economic cleavage, combined with the active efforts of the Roman Catholic Church to preserve a traditional agrarian way of life, eased the task of the cultural nationalists, most of whom tended,
like the Roman Catholic Church, to be anti-modernists. On the other hand it made it very difficult to carry on a struggle on behalf of the urban proletariat of Ireland which found itself isolated from other forces operating in Irish society.

The virtual identification of the Irish character with Roman Catholicism which made the maintenance of national self-consciousness relatively easy also meant that the Protestant community of Ulster was excluded from the popular perception of what it meant to be Irish. Some of the leading Irish-Irelanders such as Dr. Hyde, a Protestant, sought to substitute language for religion as the major determinant of Irish self-identity but Roman Catholicism was far too deeply ingrained into the notion of Irishness to be displaced by a language which the passage of time and the requirements of modern life had made otiose. The Gaelic movement in the form of both the Gaelic League and the Gaelic Athletic Association added further dimensions to the distinctive Irish notion of nationality without displacing Roman Catholicism and eventually most Protestants withdrew from the Gaelic movement. Part of the significance of the Gaelic League is due to the fact that it attracted a significant following among the younger members of the intelligentsia, a particularly marginal group in an agrarian society. The League provided such people with an opportunity to overcome their marginality and to make a niche for themselves in a restored Gaelic culture.
which was reputed to have been particularly respectful of its poets and teachers.

The Irish-Ireland movement thus failed to draw Roman Catholic and Protestant Irishmen closer together in support for a linguistically differentiated cultural identity which would apply to all of Ireland and in the end it raised the barriers not only between Ireland and Great Britain but also among Irishmen themselves. The movement also contributed to the peaceful state of Ireland by diverting the discontent and outrage of many extremists, or of many who would have been political extremists, into the Gaelic League's largely non-politicized form of resistance to manifestations of English culture.

The English attitude towards Ireland was characterized by that hostility tinged with contempt through which the country has for centuries past been viewed by the city. Ireland, agrarian and rural, presented a contrast to industrialized and urbanized England. She was also somewhat alien and was looked upon as a conquered territory, a perception which made her appear different from Scotland. The Irish had long provided someone upon whom the English could look down and they had acquired as a stereotyped image, a rather comic character, that of the "stage Irishmen", which was particularly offensive to those Irishmen whose vision was that of the golden age of the island of saints and scholars. It was, however, very much of a piece with the almost universal
"bumpkin" image of the country dweller.

The religious cleavage between Protestant and Roman Catholic in the south of Ireland corresponded pretty closely with a class division between landlords and peasants. The Land Acts had greatly reduced the significance of the landlords in Irish society but it still left them in place as a wealthy upper class. Their interests and position were often referred to as being the "Protestant Ascendancy" and their ascendant position was clearly seen to rest on the British connexion. Lawrence J. McCaffrey has put forward a fairly widespread perception of the ascendancy's role in the Home Rule struggle, saying that:

While most of the emotional content of the Irish Question centred on the religious issue, its essence was the attempt of a beseiged minority, aided by an alien legislature, to maintain religious, political, economic and social ascendancy over a deprived and resentful majority increasingly aware of the power of organized and disciplined numbers. In Ireland, religion symbolized all the interests that distinguished a parasitic aristocracy from the ambitious and aggressive peasant masses.2

Such a description applies fairly well to the anti-Home Rule position of southern unionists who were mostly of the aristocratic landlord class or closely allied to it; it is much less applicable to the position of the ordinary unionist of Protestant Ulster. There were significant differences between these Ulster unionists and their southern counterparts.

Southern unionists were mostly of English stock with family and social ties with the English aristocracy, they

2 The Irish Question, 1800-1922, op. cit., p. 2.
were almost exclusively of the upper or upper middle class of Ireland and were predominantly Anglicans in religion. They were separated from the Irish masses by class barriers as well as by the cultural barrier which distinguished Ireland from England. From the point of view of the Irish majority they were of a distinctly alien character. Ulster unionists, on the other hand, were mostly of Scottish extraction and were thus Gaels like the Irish. They were predominantly Calvinists in religion but their most important characteristic was that unlike southern unionists, they formed a separate community within Ireland incorporating a full spectrum of social classes and based on religion, not on socio-economic status. It is not quite accurate to describe this Ulster community as an ascendancy though their perception of being a beseiged minority certainly led them to align themselves with the ascendancy over the Home Rule issue.

The Protestant community of Ulster was no "parasitic aristocracy" and by the turn of the century, it was far more urbanized and modern, in the sociological sense of the word, than was the Roman Catholic majority. Its needs and its values were quite different. Religion, as the most perceptible distinguishing feature between the two communities in Ireland, came to symbolize all other cultural differences and, since it coincided as well with one of the major distinguishing features between Ireland and Great Britain, it could be used to resist Home Rule for all Ireland and eventually to demand
exclusion from it, though only at the cost of sacrificing the southern Protestant community.

Economic development, which when proceeding at different rates is considered a significant determinant of regional separatism, has been referred to in the context of cultural distinction since it was characteristic of Anglo-Irish relations in the nineteenth century. As early as 1832 the coming to political power of the English bourgeoisie had negated whatever good intentions towards the Irish had been entertained by those who had pushed through the Act of Union. The change in the British power configuration had in the end led to discrimination against Ireland in commerce and industry the effects of which had only been overcome in Belfast. The economic underdevelopment of Ireland was a crucial determinant of the demand for the repeal of the Act of Union which was substantially what the Home Rule movement envisaged.

Ireland was a fertile land poor in industrial raw materials, and this made it different from Great Britain, but in addition the inefficiency of agricultural production meant that Ireland did not achieve the full benefits of its fertility. The land purchase scheme had satisfied much of the land hunger and the occupiers of the land were increasingly becoming its owners. However, the small size of many farms made them inadequate for subsistence and thus for economic production. The days of a subsistence type of farming in a barter economy were long past and yet, in the absence of industrial employment op-
portunities, the land tenure system which emerged as a consequence of land purchase was only suitable for such a system. Irish agriculture which was highly productive in terms of yield per acre was monstrously inefficient in terms of labour intensity. Early in the twentieth century Irish productivity per person engaged in agriculture was only 56.5 per cent of the corresponding productivity in England.  

This had the effect of depressing agricultural wages and profits forcing many of the Irish peasant proprietors into a pattern of going over to Great Britain as part time harvest workers. Despite this backwardness, however, patterns of economic change before the war did not pose a threat to either farmers or workers. The initial adverse effects of war-induced change were felt in industry as the availability of raw materials decreased without a compensating growth of war-related industries. This helps to explain why the initial impetus towards revolutionary violence came in Dublin and why the Irish Volunteers were more popular in Dublin than in the provinces.

James Connolly attempted to draw the working class into what was essentially a reactionary revolutionary movement. He could find no other allies for an Irish working class which had been kept small by underdevelopment. The Irish revolutionary movement had not always been socially reactionary

---

3 See Cd. 6320, "Final Report of the First Census of Production of The United Kingdom", op. cit., p. IV.
and as long as the predominant social class had been that of land hungry tenant farmers the social and economic transformation of Ireland had been a prominent feature of Irish agitation. The Land Acts, in creating a conservative Irish peasant proprietorship intent on preserving its gains, had deflected the Irish revolutionary movement far to the right. James Connolly might put a communistic interpretation on the call for an Ireland owned by the Irish but the Irish farmers did not. The fear of the Irish peasants was primarily that of regression to their previous status and that fear was not a serious factor until quite late in the war. The workers, on the other hand, were concerned with improving their status and this inclined them to social revolutionary activity, though not necessarily in concert with the nationalist extremists.

A key factor in the crisis which occurred in Ireland between 1912 and 1918 was the performance of the British Government. The peaceful condition of Ireland at the turn of the century was largely due to the fact that the Government was meeting Irish expectations, reluctantly perhaps, but it was meeting them. Land purchase and the settlement of the university question were landmarks of this new process of accommodation. Inevitably expectations of further victories were generated. Gladstone's conversion to the principle of Home Rule had generated the highest expectations. This had led to the political polarization of Ireland and had brought
about the end of conventional politics on British lines. Suddenly all other political matters became insignificant. Those who supported Home Rule became the allies of the Liberals and those who opposed it became the allies of the Conservative Party. Thus Sir Edward Carson, the leader of the Irish Unionists, became a leading figure in the Conservative Party despite his background as a Liberal Unionist and the fact that on most issues other than Home Rule he remained closer to the Liberal than to the Conservative position. John Redmond, on the other hand, was basically far more sympathetic to the ideology of the Conservative Party than to that of the Liberals, yet, because of the Home Rule issue, he found himself committed to the Liberal Party. Parnell's strength had rested on the flexibility of his position before the Liberals adopted Home Rule as a firm policy but once that step was taken the position of the Irish Party became far less flexible and their dependence on the Liberals far stronger.

The most important flexibility remained that of the Government in dealing with Irish demands and a key element of the history of Anglo-Irish relations at this time was that this flexibility was lost during the period 1912-1918. The introduction of the Third Home Rule Bill was a necessary move on the part of the Liberal Government not only to exorcize the ghost of Gladstone but as the price agreed upon for Irish Parliamentary Party support during the crisis of
the Lloyd George budget and the constitutional battle which had resulted in a drastic modification of the veto power of the House of Lords. The Parliament Act of 1911 now required that a Bill, in order to overcome rejection by the House of Lords, should be passed by the House of Commons during three consecutive sessions and each time in precisely the same form. In effect this meant that the Home Rule Bill just passed in 1912 could become law in early 1914 but that none of its provisions could be altered in any way. This provided the opponents of the measure plenty of time to organize in opposition and the critics of the Bill with ample opportunities to expose and publicize its weaknesses and lacunae while the Government was bound to the original text and deprived of its normal legislation flexibility in meeting objections and criticism.

The Government, deprived of one of its most important legislative assets, compounded its difficulties through ineptitude. The war later reduced the salience and urgency of the Irish problem from an English viewpoint but it retained its importance in Ireland and it became a festering sore. The difficulties of the Government were due in part to lack of conviction over Home Rule. Even those British ministers who felt that Home Rule was Ireland's due could not avoid the recognition that passage of the Home Rule measure involved tampering with the character of the United Kingdom and reducing the scope of the imperial government at a
moment when ideological pressures encouraged expansion. There were also many Liberals who from the outset had been uneasy about the fate of Ulster Protestants in a Home Rule Ireland. Ulster Protestant resistance to Home Rule had begun even before the Bill was introduced and while its main focus was religious it must always be remembered that in this context religion was symbolic of a large number of cultural and economic factors as well as representing a fear of deprivation of religious rights only recently secured. The Presbytarian community in Ulster had memories of religious disabilities somewhat similar to those of Irish Roman Catholics, though they had been of shorter duration. One of the fears of Ulster was that of a return to such disabilities if subjected to a predominantly Roman Catholic parliament in Dublin.

The Ulster Protestant community was a minority in Ireland as a whole but in the north-east corner of Ulster it formed the majority and it dominated Belfast, the strongest economic centre in Ireland. Had it been evenly distributed over Ireland this minority, in all likelyhood, would have been forced to accomodate itself to the Liberal Government's plans for the future of Ireland, much as many southern unionists eventually did to the Irish Free State. However, being a distinct community with a territorial and strong economic base in Ulster, unionists occupied a somewhat similar position in Ireland as did the Irish nationalists within the United
Kingdom. Once Home Rule appeared inevitable they were in a good strategic position to demand separate treatment, though their initial demand was for the total rejection of the Home Rule scheme. The Government's initial lack of response to the mounting threat of Ulster resistance allowed it free reign and deprived the Government of that flexibility which is usually a government's greatest asset in dealing with an explosive situation.

The unionists of Ulster were fortunate in finding as their leader Sir Edward Carson, one of the great political geniuses to emerge out of Ireland. They were further favoured by the accession of Andrew Bonar Law to the leadership of the Conservative Party shortly before the parliamentary battle for Home Rule was engaged. Bonar Law was by birth a Canadian but his family roots were in Ulster and his personal sympathies were strongly with the Ulster Protestants on this issue. This ensured that Home Rule and the Ulster opposition to it did not remain a purely Irish question but became a dominant issue in British politics. It also aligned with the Ulster unionists allies who, even though fewer than the Irish Home Rulers' Liberal allies, were more determined to win. Together they set out to defeat the key nationalist assumptions that Ulster would have Home Rule rammed down its throat and would like it and that the drilling and arming going on in the northeast was only "bluff" and would easily be overcome.

The Government which had surrendered some of its flexibility
through tolerance of this "bluff" was given a rude shock and was further circumscribed in the range of its possible responses by the events at the Curragh camp where the army's opposition to any coercion of Ulster unionists into Home Rule was allowed to be expressed publicly. The Government was then forced to recognize that through a series of bungles by generals and politicians, at a moment when the threat of war was becoming very real, the coercion option had been let slip.

The defiance of the Government involved in the arms landing on a massive scale at Larne was a further blow. It drew from the Prime Minister assurances of the Government's determination to punish the offenders but when no action was taken the credibility and authority of the Government was damaged and this contributed to the contempt with which the Government would later be treated in the south of Ireland. The sense of outrage felt in the south of Ireland was aggravated when, shortly after the Larne gunrunning, the Irish Volunteers running their own guns into Howth were met by a display of force which was ineffectual and which led directly to the shootings on Bachelor's Walk. Here the Government was perceived to be acting in a discriminatory fashion against nationalists and, possibly worse, it was made to appear ridiculous. Faith in the Government, an exotic growth in Ireland which had followed the Land Acts and the introduction of the Home Rule Bill, was severely shaken.
by these events and by the equivocal statements concerning the partition of Ireland which were being made at the same time. Perceptions of the legitimacy of the Government were being undermined and as Machiavelli pointed out long ago lack of legitimacy invites violence. The British Government in Ireland was unlikely ever to be loved but its handling or mishandling of the Ulster resistance led to its not even being feared. Whatever the Government tolerated on the part of Ulster unionists had to be tolerated also from the nationalists, or so the Liberals felt. They were unwilling to engage in the casuistry of Unionists whereby Ulster resistance, however unconstitutional, would have been held to be fundamentally loyal and thus acceptable whereas similar behaviour on the part of nationalists, being fundamentally disloyal, required suppression.

The Curragh incident and the Larne gun-running made clear that Ulster could not be coerced and the tactics of Ulster resistance were vindicated. This lesson was not lost on Irish nationalists who now felt able to engage in similar activities and to do so against, at worst, harassment by the authorities rather than attempts at outright suppression which might otherwise have been expected. The report of the commission which examined the circumstances surrounding the Howth gun-running and the Bachelor's Walk affray was obviously influenced by the Government's supine attitude towards Ulster unionist activity and in a strenuous
effort to be fair to all sides it reached, with rather tortuous legalism, the conclusion that the police had no authority to interfere with an armed column marching on Dublin. As unionists pointed out this encouraged further extremist activity while simultaneously demoralizing the police. The whole series of events are part of the process whereby the Government lost its flexibility in dealing with Ireland.

In some respect the Government's abdication of its role did impede the work of the extremists, particularly those who had a romantic conception of the role of violence. After Howth had provided the Volunteers with arms, the aim of some of the extremists became the provocation of Dublin Castle into an attack on the Volunteers. To have the Volunteers clearly in the position of being the victims of aggression would have radicalized that politically heterogeneous movement. Provoking the authorities into repressive action has long been a technique of revolutionary and protest groups hoping to consolidate their support behind more extreme measures or tactics. In Ireland before 1916 that technique failed largely because of Augustine Birrell's refusal to be drawn into repressive measures. The technique was particularly attractive to the Irish Republican Brotherhood. The I.R.B.'s influence was growing but it continued to be a very small body which had to rely on the Volunteer organization for the realization of its hopes of a mass revolutionary uprising.
Eoin MacNeill and Bulmer Hobson who dominated the Volunteer movement were both firmly opposed to taking aggressive action without provocation, though they were prepared to react violently if provoked. The Government's performance thus simultaneously restricted the actual amount of violence and permitted the growth of the potential for violence in terms of organization and of the number of people available for violence or for more determined resistance. One reason for the growth of individual alienation was the manifest failure of the authorities to adapt to the changes in the Irish situation in the wake of Home Rule, the war and the emergence of the Volunteers. The comment of Jacques Soustelle on the Algerian situation before 1954 could be applied to Ireland in 1914: "the administration floated like a rudderless raft on the surface of a deep sea which it did not know how to sound".  

The fact that Ulster unionists were perceived to be securing their ends through methods which bordered on the violent but which never quite crossed the threshold was a potent example for nationalists, most of whom saw in the Irish Volunteer movement an agency designed for a similar purpose. If the Government could be influenced by a display of force in the north-east there was every reason to expect similar methods to be successful elsewhere. Imitation played

a considerable role in the development of the organization through which much of Irish resistance would be manifested. The general climate of European opinion was also favourable to the growth of militarism and to the cult of violence. Patrick Pearse was the major propagator in Ireland of the romantic attitude towards violence but he was not an isolated figure in a European context. Indeed it would have been remarkable if some violent manifestations had not occurred in Ireland at this time. Pitirim Sorokin has pointed out that the first quarter of the twentieth century was not only "the bloodiest period in the entire history of the international conflicts of mankind but also, when internal disturbances are considered, was one of the very turbulent periods." This was not without some effect in promoting the ideology of the violent "blood sacrifice" in a nation with an already well established tradition of political violence. The difference is that with Patrick Pearse comes the justification of violence as ennobling in itself. Violence remained the means for gaining independence but in the final analysis violence was justified regardless of the end. Violence for Pearse and his friends and disciples was intrinsically justified.

Most Irishmen did not share that attitude and while inheritors of a tradition of violence it was a pragmatic tradition where the end justified the means. Given the fact

5"Fluctuations of Internal Disturbances" in George A. Kelly and Clifford W. Brown Jr., eds., Struggles in the State: Sources and Patterns, op. cit., p. 137.
that the more potent grievances of Ireland had been met through land purchase schemes and through the gradual recognition of Roman Catholic claims which had culminated in the creation of the National University, the extremists had considerable difficulty in reawakening this tradition. The one subsisting Irish claim related to self-government and it had been recognized, even if not yet met, by the Home Rule Act. That measure generated considerable optimism in Ireland which was only destroyed by the failure of the Irish Convention, though by then it was wearing thin. Faith in constitutionalism in Ireland was finally destroyed not so much through the failure of Home Rule as through the threat of conscription. It was that threat which pushed the Irish people beyond protest to an acceptance of resistance. Violence was not generally accepted as a justifiable means of resistance until after 1918 but the ideological climate of Europe and of Ulster had encouraged the emergence of potentially violent movements in southern Ireland.

One of the most fruitful hypotheses concerning rebellion which has been advanced in recent years is that of the "J-curve". James C. Davies the author of this hypothesis has argued that revolution is most likely to occur not when people are objectively deprived or oppressed over a long period of time but rather when their condition has been improving for some time, this improvement being followed by a sharp reversal or by the threat of reversal. People who
through the period of improvement have developed expectations concerning the satisfaction of their rising needs are suddenly frustrated and subjected to anxiety concerning the continued ability of the system to meet their needs. In other words rebellious behaviour is most likely when expectations which seem reasonable on the basis of the system's past performance are suddenly disappointed.  

The J-curve effect can be shown to have been applicable to a number of important groups in Ireland. It is clear that more than a simple downturn in expectations is needed; there must be a perceived frustrator who can be attacked without provoking a crushing response and there must be a sense that the downturn in expectations violates the fitness of things, that it is somehow unjust. It is a problem of political theory concerning rebellion that objective specifications are insufficient to explain rebellious behaviour without taking into account the more subjective question of perceptions. The Irish did not assume blame for any of the misfortunes of the country, these being attributed always to Britain. A simple downturn in expectations is inherently frustrating but there must be a perceived and acceptable frustrator before this frustration can be translated into political action. In Ireland Britain was always the frustrator, or at least was perceived as such, so that any frustration resulting from a "J-curve" effect was all the more easily politicized.

British rule was viewed by nationalist Irishmen as essentially unjust. Eight hundred years of dependence on England provided innumerable examples of hardships which could be attributed, at least to some extent, either to the inaction or to the actions of the British Government. Only in recent years had Irish Parliamentary Party propaganda begun to suggest that the relationship was changing that justice would prevail with the coming of Home Rule. Had Home Rule come into force it is possible that perceptions of injustice would have been more ambiguous than they were but as long as Home Rule got no closer than the Statute Book the old patterns of thought would prevail.

The Roman Catholic Church had been involved in a long process of improvement in its position in Ireland and in the United Kingdom as a whole. Disabilities against Roman Catholics had gradually been removed and the recent settlement of the university question had met the educational demands of the Church which now controlled, in fact if not in theory, an educational system which was denominational at all levels. Just as the rate of improvement had been slow and gradual, the downturn was not dramatic. The war made obvious the fact that Irish Roman Catholics were not to be treated as equal with other communities within the British isles. Irish Roman Catholics found it much more difficult than Protestants of comparable educational status to obtain commissions in the army. No Officer Training Corps was per-
mitted in University College, Dublin and Cardinal Logue encountered difficulties when he attempted to persuade the War Office to authorize what he considered the minimum number of Roman Catholic chaplains to meet the needs of Irish soldiers at the front. At the same time Ulster Volunteers were permitted to enlist in exclusively Protestant units. The British Government's disregard for the papal appeal for a truce also offended a number of clerics and later the conscription measure which would have applied to clergymen was perceived as an outrage by the Irish clergy as well as by their flocks. Conscription was obviously objectionable on nationalist grounds and this affected members of the clergy as well as laymen but in addition there were a number of Irish priests who were clearly sympathetic to the plight of the Roman Catholic Church in Belgium but who had found it very difficult or impossible to endorse the Allied course because France required priests to enlist in the army. Similar action by the British Government was bound to be strongly resented. The threat of partition which would have abandoned the Roman Catholics of Ulster to the mercy of the Protestant unionists was also a failure of the past improvement to continue and as such was the source of tension and frustration. The set-backs of the Church were admittedly minor and are certainly not the source of major Irish discontent at this time but may help to explain the Church's sympathy with other manifestations
of discontent and why it took no strong action to discourage the growth of political extremism.

Supporters of Home Rule and of the Irish Parliamentary Party, and these included members of the Roman Catholic clergy, were subjected to severe reversal of expectations during the period 1912-1918. For a generation the Home Rulers had been fighting for a measure of Irish self-government and they had finally won it by playing the game strictly in accordance with British constitutional rules. Now in 1914 these rules were being changed in what was interpreted as a deliberate attempt to rob the Irish of their great victory. The process of changing the rules went on until the failure of the Irish Convention in 1918 and the period of 1914 to 1918 was a period of reversal following upon a period of improvement. The downturn was not, however, a sudden one and the Irish Parliamentary Party was driven gradually into more determined opposition and protest rather than being driven to rebellion. In the absence of a sharp and disastrous reversal of its prospects, it seemed reasonable to continue pursuing the strategy which had proved successful. The formation of the coalition on the other hand was a sharper and more severe set-back. The Irish Parliamentary Party leaders were quite prepared for defeat should the Conservatives succeed the Liberals in office as the result of a general election; that would have been a reversal in accordance with the rules and would not have resulted in a
perception of great injustice or unfairness, but the coalition was the signal of a political defeat without even an election. The Liberals remained in office, retained the office of Prime Minister and, until 1916, that of Chief Secretary for Ireland, yet Home Rule failed to come into effect. The coalition marked a dramatic weakening of the Irish Party at Westminster which was bound to be frustrating. However, this was not all and the inclusion of Sir Edward Carson in the Government was seen as positively wicked in nationalist Ireland. That Irish nationalists be deprived of their rightful and just gains was bad enough but that their chief opponent, who had broken the rules of the constitutional game, should be elevated to high office generated a fierce sense of injustice and grievance among all nationalists. This would later be aggravated when the 1916 rebels, whose actions were frequently compared to those of Sir Edward Carson, were treated as criminals, shot and denied "a Christian burial" simply for loving their country while unionist rebels sat in the Cabinet mocking the Irish nationalists. That Home Rule should fail because the Ulster unionists resorted to the traditional methods of intimidation and violence which they had always condemned when used by nationalists while the Home Rulers had behaved with great constitutional propriety was more galling than an electoral defeat could possibly have been.

It is ironic that the tactics of the Ulster unionists
were made acceptable because they saw themselves and were perceived in Britain to be subject to a threat of severe deprivation in relation to the position which they had established for themselves as part of the modern industrial community of Great Britain. The appeal of southern unionists was still potent in Parliament but it could exercise little leverage on British public opinion. Appeals to aristocratic values were not likely to be very persuasive among followers of the Liberal Party. The Ulster unionists, on the other hand, could appeal to faith in progress and in the industrial and commercial destiny of the British Empire. This was a widespread and politically cross-cutting appeal which made the case for partition irresistible. The "J-curve" effect can thus be seen to have been characteristic of unionists as well as nationalists. Unionists and Ulster unionists in particular perceived in Home Rule a distinct threat to their economic and religious achievements. Their loyalty to the Crown and to the Union also made Home Rule appear unwarranted and unjustified. In their case as well we have an example of that potentially explosive mixture of a decline in hope combined with a burning sense of injustice. What was different in their case was that there was no clearly perceived frustrator and their rebellion was highly restrictive; against the King's ministers but not against the King, against Parliament but not its Conservative members.

The "J-curve" effect was less clear-cut for cultural
nationalists. They had been successful in developing their organizations and had recently won a significant victory when a compulsory Irish language qualification was instituted for admission to the new National University. As the struggle for Home Rule became more promising of a favourable outcome, cultural nationalism tended to be eclipsed or demoted to being a matter of lesser importance. On the other hand the prospect of Home Rule promised opportunities to do more for the Irish language than seemed possible under the Union. This tended to attach the cultural nationalists to the Home Rule movement and to reduce the credibility of their protestations of being non-political. The suspension of Home Rule thus tended to be a set-back to their aspirations. The war also dwarfed the language issue as the Irish language was clearly irrelevant to the problems created by the war such as that of trying to secure War Office contracts to offset the dislocation of peacetime industry. The Irish-Irelanders were for the most part enthusiasts who had sublimated their political concerns at a moment when politics seemed particularly hopeless. As enthusiasts they tended to be thin-skinned and when, in anticipation of Home Rule, Ireland became once again politicized they were drawn back into the fray frequently further along a nationalist direction than the Irish Parliamentary Party.

With the progress of cultural nationalism halted during the war, the Irish-Ireland movements became pawns in the
political game. The extremists sought to exploit the mood of frustration which descended upon the cultural enthusiasts and to divert their frustration into new directions. For extremists Home Rule presented a clear danger as well as an opportunity. If the Irish Party proved successful in bringing Home Rule into operation, the national issue would clearly be deferred for some time to come and a policy of physical force would be extremely difficult to pursue in a Home Rule Ireland where Irishmen were gradually assuming much of the responsibility for law and order which now rested on British administration in Dublin Castle. On the other hand, the failure to achieve peacefully a measure of self-government, at a moment in history when the principle of self-determination was central to the propaganda in support of the war, presented them with an opportunity to draw people out of apathy or complacency.

In the end, however, it was the threat of conscription which represented the sharpest reversal of growing political nationalism and which affected all nationalists. Conscription, at least by implication, was a denial of all claims to self-determining nationhood on the part of Ireland. The impact of the proposal to impose conscription was enormous, it was a challenge to basic nationalist views of the identity of the country and it drew all stands of nationalist opinion together in determined opposition. Ironically the Home Rule Act of 1914 which would have been satisfactory to almost all Irishmen
at that time vested power to decide questions concerning war, presumably including the decision of whether to conscript Ireland, in the hands of the Imperial Parliament.

Labour, which was an interest very much separate from the major political movements in the south of Ireland, had already suffered a set-back before the outbreak of war. The 1913 strike and lock-out marked a sharp reversal of what had been an improving trend in the position of labour and particularly in the organization of unskilled workers. The Irish Transport and General Workers' Union had been growing rapidly before 1913. The Union's most recent feat had been the organization of agricultural labourers, a task which had been considered practically impossible. Expectations were therefore running high when the labour troubles of 1913 dashed hopes of continued improvement. The war was a source of further set-backs in the form of prices outstripping wages, economic "encouragement" to enlist and finally the conscription threat.

The case of Dublin employees, who had also been involved in the 1913 labour troubles, and of other southern Irish industrial and commercial leaders was somewhat less dramatic than that of labour but it followed a similar pattern. Before the war there had been a modest improvement in the performance of Irish industry south of Belfast. War related shortages of raw materials had soon put an end to this and in Ireland, unlike other parts of the United Kingdom, no substantial War
Office contracts were awarded to compensate for the disruption of trade and industry caused by the war. The massive price increases of the years 1914-1918 were not translated into profits for Irish manufacturers, and southern Irish industry entered a period of stagnation which was made extremely difficult to bear by the conviction that industry in Great Britain and in the Dominions was practically minting money through war contracts.

The war meant a general deterioration of the Irish economy. Prices and taxes reached unprecedented levels, rising there by extremely rapid acceleration which was in itself disorienting. Initially rural Ireland fared rather well and high war time food prices resulted in increasing prosperity for farmers and country merchants who were the backbone of the Irish Parliamentary Party. For a time it seemed as if England's difficulty might prove Ireland's opportunity in a form undreamed of by O'Connell. The war, however, also slowed down the pace by economic reform, virtually put an end to emigration forcing more people into dependence on the land and then reduced opportunities for seasonal work in England and Scotland. Thus, just as agrarian reform slowed down, the need for land became more acute and the sense of achievement and progress of the agricultural community soured into discontent. The disastrous crop of 1916 came at a time when rising prices for manufactured goods were overtaking the now less rapidly rising prices for agricultural produce, reversing
the improvement in the economic situation of Irish farmers. The organization of food production for war and the intervention of the Food Controller into previously unregulated areas also aroused resentment. The J-curve for southern Irish labour had reached its turning point in 1913, for the employees it came in 1915 and for the farmers in the autumn of 1916, just as the imposition of martial law and the arrests of hundreds in the wake of the Dublin rising was creating an impression of unfair and unjust punishment.

The treatment of the 1916 rebels as criminals and of the whole of southern Ireland as suspect as well as subject was also a challenge to the growth of national self-consciousness. Those who had sought to combine pride in Ireland with imperial loyalty in organizations such as the National Volunteers had been rebuffed by the War Office. Forced to abandon one or the other sentiment, for most it was imperial loyalty which eventually went by the board. For the extremists it was almost providential that in this evolution of Irish opinion the Irish Parliamentary Party's popular support was shaken. The Party, as advocates of a policy of reconciliation which after 1916 was increasingly perceived as having been spurned by the British Government, lost face and were placed on the defensive on behalf of a policy which for many Irishmen involved a reversal of deeply ingrained attitudes which only success could have justified. The Government's concern for the war was also a set-back or deterioration from the pre-war position when the Irish question
had been the most prominent one occupying the attention of the Westminster Parliament. Now it was one of a number of contentious domestic issues which, according to the terms of the party truce, were not to be discussed during the war.

The "J-curve" hypothesis can thus be applied to Ireland and to the major groups in Irish society during the early years of the twentieth century. The Irish view of British rule as essentially unjust transformed any set-back which could be attributed to Britain into a political issue thus supporting some level of protest activity. The effects of the war were felt much more directly in Great Britain than in Ireland. Outside Ireland the deprivation which resulted from the war were not perceived as relative and the source of the deprivation was perceived as external to the United Kingdom so that no growth in the potential for internal violence resulted. Enlistment and conscription provided an outlet for any frustration related aggression and had the added virtue of directing this aggression to the perceived frustrator, the Kaiser. In Ireland obvious discriminations reinforced perceptions that deprivation was relative to England. England was perceived as the source of all the effects of the war rather than Germany and the threat of conscription, as distinct from its actual imposition, increased frustration without providing an outlet for aggression against the frustrator or even a surrogate and the potential for violence was raised.
What needs to be explained in Ireland during these years is that no outbreak of popular violence occurred in spite of high levels of frustration and deprivation combined with a profound conviction of injustice directed at the British Government. Three factors are involved here and the first was that there was now a Home Rule Act on the Statute Book. This generated optimism which not only faded slowly but also restrained the despair which might have carried the day in the absence of a reluctance to endanger gains already made. The aftermath of the 1916 rising generated considerable doubts about the nature and value of these gains and so weakened the inhibitions of ordinary Irishmen. The second factor was the relatively low salience for most Irishmen of the self-government goal, in spite of all the propaganda of both constitutional and non-constitutional nationalists. The people of Ireland certainly desired self-determination and thought of themselves as entitled to it but most of them were not prepared to engage in a protracted campaign involving violence in order to secure it. The third and most important factor was the restraining influence on public opinion of the Roman Catholic Church. The Church was able to deprive the Irish revolutionary movement of a moral justification for violence. However, when the threat of conscription and the propaganda surrounding it made clear that the very essence of self-conscious nationality was being denied the Church's attitude became ambivalent even though it continued to restrain
any moves towards violence on the part of Sinn Fein.

It is only under the threat of severe deprivation; first in the form of partition, which challenged a deeply ingrained sense of Irish unity, and later of conscription, which was a direct threat to the concept of separate nationhood; that self-government began to achieve for the population of southern Ireland that degree of salience necessary to lead to support for unconstitutional methods. The fact that the Home Rule Act had been passed by Parliament and yet was not in effect was vital to the development of the new attitude. The claim to legitimacy of the Government, tenuous as it always was in Ireland, was undermined by the failure the implement Home Rule and by the official reaction to the Easter rising. This made the conscription crisis all the more destructive of whatever remnants of authority it still possessed. Allied war propaganda also served to make self-determination a more salient value, its denial appear all the more unjust and it provided considerable support for the position taken by nationalist propagandists. The discrepancy between British propaganda relating to nations under German or Austrian hegemony and its performance in Ireland was bound to accentuate the perception of relative deprivation in a country already subject to strong feelings of frustration and injustice as a result of the fate of the Home Rule Act.

The role of partition as a source of relative deprivation feelings and of frustration in nationalist Ireland during the
period 1912-1918 is often understated largely because the ultimate denouement of the Irish question involved the exclusion of six Ulster counties from the Irish Free State. The issue, however, was central to the suspension of Home Rule in the first place and had the Irish Parliamentary Party been in a position to accept the partition scheme, a scheme eventually accepted by the majority of Sinn Fein supporters, Home Rule would have become effective. Partition was also a crucial factor in the downfall of the Irish Party in that it began the erosion of its mass support. The initial reaction came from those supporters of the Irish Party who, in any envisaged scheme for partition, would find themselves outside the boundaries of Home Rule Ireland. From these people it quickly spread throughout Ireland where the notion of partition conflicted with the myth of a united Ireland long nurtured by all types of nationalists and which had up to then been an integral part of the Irish Party's ideology. The partition crisis was accompanied by war related developments such as the formation of the coalition which drove home the drastically altered status and power of the Irish Party at Westminster and which combined with the anti-partition sentiment to discredit the Party in Ireland.

The revolt against the Irish Party over partition did not immediately swell Sinn Fein ranks though by weakening the Party it did improve Sinn Fein's relative position. Eventually, after all attempts at setting up an anti-partition
constitutional alternative to the Irish Party either failed or were overtaken by other developments, Sinn Fein did benefit from this revolt in the Irish Party. The accession to Sinn Fein of these deserters from constitutionalism had a moderating effect on that party's extremism and in the long run contributed to making Sinn Fein acceptable to the Church and this helped the party to win in 1918. Partition was a key to the eclipse of the constitutional parliamentary movement and it was also a key to the failure to achieve a settlement of the Irish question despite the obvious desire of the Government to settle the question following the Easter 1916 rising. The rising itself made a non-partitionist settlement more remote than ever. The unionist population was then in a highly emotional state of revulsion at what had occurred in Dublin and the nationalist population of the north-east was highly apprehensive of any settlement which would place them under the domination of hostile Belfast Protestants. Sinn Fein exploited this fear and the sense of betrayal which was spreading among nationalists to undermine Irish Party support; though in the end it was even more unlikely to be able to reach an accommodation with Ulster unionists. By the time this became clear to the general public, partition had been displaced by conscription as the major source of Irish discontent.

Economic grievances, largely linked to the war but which the Irish Party proved powerless to remedy, were also an
important factor in the relative growth of Sinn Fein's popularity. Significantly Sinn Fein during this period was not able to capture nationalist support in the six Protestant counties of Ulster to anywhere the same extent as in the rest of Ireland. The feeling that accommodation of unionists with Sinn Fein was even more unlikely than with constitutional nationalists was a factor but so was the relatively greater prosperity of the area which did not encourage the same willingness to gamble all on the Sinn Fein option. The growth in support for the extremists in fact followed the emergence of economic grievances throughout Ireland.

Initially the first nationalist rebellion against Redmond's authority occurred at the splitting up of the Volunteer movement and it was only in Dublin that MacNeill's Volunteers retained any significant support. Dublin was then characterized by unemployment, under-employment and overcrowding. The labour troubles of 1913 had left an alienated and demoralized proletariat, whose difficulties had been ignored by the Irish Party, to cope with the further frustration of the soaring and ill compensated price rises of the war. The rising of 1916 was a Dublin affair which met with little support outside the city and the leadership of the extremist movement was Dublin based. The discontent which had been characteristic of Irish life for generations now seemed to have retreated to Dublin, a reversal of the historic role of
the Pale. The discontent of the country areas, crucial to previous rebellions, had been laid to rest through land reform and as long as prosperity lasted confidence in constitutional methods was not easily shaken. The mood of rural Ireland began to change when the bad crops of 1916 and the rapid overtaking of agricultural prices by the prices of manufactured goods destroyed the feeling of prosperity. This reversed the advantage which the food producing regions of the United Kingdom had enjoyed in the early months of the war. At the same time the British Government, reacting to the Dublin rising, acted in a manner which could only be seen as a scornful rejection of the loyalty which for once in its history the Irish people had extended to Britain.

Even so it would take conscription to turn the Irish majority definitely away from the Party which had enjoyed their support for years and they were led in this by the hierarchy of their church. The Roman Catholic Church in Ireland had a tremendous reserve political power which, while not normally used, could change the political complexion of the nation with startling rapidity. The last exercise of this power had been to break the hold of Parnell on Irish public opinion. In the twentieth century the Church had been supporting John Redmond, particularly once the question of a suitable university for Roman Catholics had been settled. The claim to self-government had been
legitimized by the hierarchy and, until the war, movements which were more extreme than the Irish Party had failed to gain any support from the hierarchy.

The war imposed strains within the hierarchy itself. The reported atrocities of the German army in Belgium which were confirmed, at least in part, by representatives of the Belgian hierarchy naturally tended to attach Roman Catholic sentiment to the Allied cause. In the minds of some Irish bishops this was not sufficient to overcome a profound reluctance to side with godless France which conscripted priests and with Protestant England, the source of so many ills of Ireland and of Roman Catholic disabilities in particular, against Catholic Austria. An additional element of caution had been introduced by the Vatican's deliberate policy of non-alignment, the Pope having appealed to both sides for a cessation of hostilities so that peace could be canvassed. These were sufficient grounds for most Irish bishops to be restrained in their support of the Allied war effort. Enlistment in the British army was never given the moral approval of the Irish hierarchy which it received in Great Britain. The Irish Roman Catholic hierarchy also viewed with considerable suspicion the involvement of the Irish Parliamentary Party with Liberal nonconformism. The transparent faith of the leaders of the 1916 rising and the mysticism of Patrick Pearse, even when he called for the sanctification of violence, were altogether more attuned to
their own attitudes than was John Dillon's anti-clericalism or the presence of Irish Roman Catholics in nonconformist pulpits.

After 1916 it gradually became apparent that the British connexion no longer offered rural Ireland the favourable balance between advantages and disadvantages which had become apparent through land purchase. The conscription crisis came on the heels of this changing perception and provided a further dramatic instance of frustration as well as providing the Church with an opportunity to modify its attitude to Sinn Fein. The crisis permitted a release of the severe frustration which had grown in rural Ireland since 1916 and the first manifestation of this release was the anti-conscription pledge. This was followed shortly by the general election where voting for Sinn Fein provided a further opportunity for the release of frustration. With the immediate future looking bleak the Irish people embraced the chiliastic vision of Sinn Fein. There was no more to be gained from the Irish Party.

The leadership of the extreme nationalist movement in Ireland was obviously conscious of the need to avoid an open clash with the Church and violence, even rhetorical violence, became more restrained as the hierarchy's support for the Irish Party was seen to falter. This leadership, like that of almost all such movements, was drawn from the middle class. When the first Dail was formed from this
leadership, professionals were over represented and farmers under represented to a remarkable degree.  

Earlier the leaders of the 1916 rising had been mostly intellectuals, and intellectuals have almost invariably played a prominent role in revolutionary movements, particularly in underdeveloped countries. The Irish rebel leadership of 1916 also contained a high proportion of poets and playwrights of the romantic school. Plays by Pearse, MacDonagh and Plunkett were all performed in Dublin shortly before the rising and some of them had been prophetic. The leadership contained more men of words than has generally been the case in insurrections and this was a function of the tolerant attitude of the British authorities. The revolutionary activity of the Irish leaders was in a sense an extension of their role as dramatists and much of the non-realistic character of the rising as well as the lack of planning for unexpected contingency was due to this. It is clear that one role of the British army assigned to it in these dramatists' minds was to mount a bayonet charge on the General Post Office and that the leaders were nonplussed by the failure of the army to do any such thing. To the three poets one must add Eamonn Ceannt as an intellectual. A fervid enthusiast for all facets of ancient Gaelic culture he found himself in a prosaic function as a functionary in Dublin Corporation. Neither Sean MacDermott nor James

Connolly were intellectuals by occupation, background or training but both were skilful manipulators of symbols.

Most of the leaders of the Irish revolutionary movement before 1916 were men faced with the prospect of rejection which they found difficult to bear. Most of them had found difficulty fitting into existing society. Patrick Pearse was haunted by the prospect of failure. Thomas MacDonagh, an ambitious man, had failed in a bid for a chair at University College, Cork. James Connolly had failed to carry the labour movement into the extreme nationalist camp and was meeting stiffening resistance from the trade union leadership to his political activities. Even James Larkin was protesting from America at the direction in which Connolly was trying to lead the Irish labour movement.\(^8\) Sean MacDermott had been drifting from one job to another until he became a professional revolutionary and Tom Clarke's past had twice barred him from employment in local government posts. Intellectuals nursing personal grievances against society have long been recognized to be promising material for the leadership of a revolutionary movement.

After the rising the British policy of imprisoning large numbers of Irishmen, many of whom were at most tenuously connected with the extremist movement, was well designed to produce a new crop of aggrieved and resentful leaders. The

1916 leaders failed to provoke a revolution in Ireland in spite of having virtual control over an armed force to whom the idea of fighting Britain had been made familiar through propaganda. However, their propaganda of the deed did move Ireland into a more rebellious mood and the British reaction to the rising did much to further the rebel's ultimate success. Before 1916 revolutionary propaganda in Ireland failed largely because of the relative contentment of the population and of the rural population in particular. The leaders, deeply discontented with their own perceived marginality were unable to find, in the prevailing conditions of Ireland, any issue affecting the lives of ordinary Irishmen over which discontent was sufficiently acute to cause widespread disaffection from the Irish Party or its constitutional approach.

The leadership of the nationalist movement in Ireland was riven by factionalism. The most obvious division and the most important one was between those who favoured a constitutional approach and those who rejected it but within each of these there were a number of significant sub-divisions. The constitutional side was dominated by the Irish Parliamentary Party but the All-for-Ireland League represented a competing stand of constitutionalism. Following the Irish Party's agreement to temporary partition new competitors emerged, such as the Irish Nation League, which drew away some of the Irish Party's support. The situation on the
constitutional wing of the nationalist movement was that of a very strong and dominant movement which fell apart as the goal of Home Rule failed to materialize. The prevailing trend among the extremists was in the opposite direction. Before the war those nationalists who favoured a stronger assertion of nationalism than did the constitutionalists were split into a number of groups ranging from the cultural nationalists, who were officially apolitical but whose ranks did include a disproportionate number of politicized extremists, to the physical force movement of the Irish Republican Brotherhood. Between these two poles were the non-violent but clearly political Sinn Feiners. The drawing together of these groups was facilitated by considerable overlapping in the leadership and in the membership of these groups as well as by their broadly shared anti-English prejudice. All of them shared an antipathy to English rule and English ideas without sharing a common plan to deal positively with the situation prevailing in Ireland.

The labour movement had some difficulty finding a place in the political spectrum. The movement as a whole was split along the same Unionist-Nationalist lines as was the country. Most of Belfast labour had sided with the unionists in presenting a solid front against the proposal to introduce Home Rule. Labour's case in the south was more complicated. The labour troubles of 1913 had led to a definite estrangement of labour from the Irish Parliamentary Party but neither
Sinn Fein nor the Irish-Ireland movement had encouraged labour to join with them. Both were solidly middle-class movements and while Sinn Fein did favour the economic modernization of Ireland this was clearly going to be accomplished at the expense of the working class. The Irish-Ireland movement was socially reactionary and its vision of the future of Ireland was not one which allowed much room for an industrialized working class. Labour thus found itself in a political limbo. A very small number of workers, mostly unskilled, followed James Connolly into a close alliance with the Irish Republican Brotherhood, but the majority remained politically unaffiliated though they too shared the anti-English attitude of the extremists. It was the conscription crisis of 1918 which finally drove Irish labour into an uneasy alliance with the rejuvenated and by then unified Sinn Fein movement.

By 1918 the actions of the British Government had driven the leadership of the various extremist factions towards unity and this united leadership was finally in a position to make a strong appeal for support based on a platform which, while deliberately ambiguous on some fundamental points, was at least a clear alternative to the Irish Party's now vague and unrealistic plea for continued support of a policy which had been proved ineffective. Before 1916 the extreme nationalists had been too divided to entertain any realistic hopes of success. Bulmer Hobson's plan, which had been
accepted by Eoin MacNeill, was to count on the British Government to provide a unifying impetus through a hostile move directed at the Irish Volunteers rather than to strike a blow before unity was accomplished. The fanatical fringe of the Irish Republican Brotherhood circumvented this plan and staged their sacrificial insurrection but in so doing they provided the occasion for a British reaction which did much to fuse the elements of the extremist movement into a unified force.

The leadership of the Irish revolutionary movement was middle class, the rank and file membership seems to have been drawn predominantly from a lower stratum of society. Shop assistants and members of the working class formed the Dublin nucleus of the MacNeill wing of the Volunteers and in country areas agricultural labourers and unemployed or under-employed "farmers' sons", marginal men in the Irish agricultural system, made up the bulk of the movement. It was the good fortune of Irish extremists that there was not in Ireland enough land to satisfy the peasant's land hunger. The Land Acts had dramatically raised the proportions of owner-occupiers throughout southern Ireland but they left a relatively large number of peasants for whom there was simply no land to be had. Emigration had provided a way out of the frustration of being landless in Ireland but that form of relief became blocked in 1915. Shortly after that, opportunities for seasoned employment in Britain for those
whose land holdings were insufficient to provide an adequate livelihood were also blocked. The sharp rise in agricultural prices minimized the impact of these blockages and made smaller holdings adequate to sustenance at least until the autumn of 1916 when the boom in rural Ireland came to an end. Sinn Fein benefited from the coincidence of this economic reversal of rural prosperity with the British drive against Sinn Fein sympathizers following the Dublin rising. Most of the extended families in rural Ireland were affected, at least indirectly, by this policy and dissatisfaction increased. The initial reaction was reformist rather than revolutionary and demanded the application of the Home Rule Act but the Irish Party had gone as far as it could along that road and gradually the peasants became available as supporters of alternative methods of securing Home Rule or some other form of self-government but they did not become supporters of any social revolution. Their support for the extremist movement, which became established during the conscription crisis, easily overwhelmed whatever small impression Connolly had made on the movement. The absence of Larkin and the death of Connolly had deprived Irish labour of its two outstanding leaders and no one of their stature emerged after 1916 to maintain the prominence of the working class in Irish politics. In the absence of extraordinary leaders it was inevitable that, in so overwhelmingly agrarian a country as Ireland, farmers' interests would count for more
in the nationalist movement than those of the numerically insignificant working class.

The Irish peasant's progression towards Sinn Fein must not be understood as a revival of the deep and socially radical alienation of the late nineteenth century where the peasants were in more or less open revolt against the landlords. The British Government had then acted to preserve order and to defend the rights of property and this had reinforced the feelings of hostility characteristic of peasants' attitudes towards what they regarded as alien authority and that hostility was outliving the social radicalism of the earlier agitation. The land purchase scheme had, however, resulted in a remarkable transformation of the attitudes of Irish peasants. As the Irish tenants became owners they moved much closer to acceptance of the prevailing values of British political culture and Irish radical nationalism ceased to be socially radical in spite of Connolly's support and influence.

Irish peasant proprietors continued to support the agitation for self-government but the shedding of social radicalism did diminish the intensity of that support. On the other hand it made the goal of Home Rule more acceptable to the Roman Catholic Church which would be an important source of strength and continuity. The Church moved into open support for the Irish Parliamentary Party and thus legitimized the Home Rule goal being pursued constitutionally.
at Westminster. Lack of success in the pursuit of Home Rule while disappointing and frustrating did not give rise to nearly the same desperation and anger which had been generated by land hunger. The alienation of the Irish peasants had been to a large extent overcome so that the appeals of extreme nationalism evoked little response from the new class of proprietors. The passage of the Home Rule Act was greeted with considerable satisfaction but its postponement, even with the prospect of partition did not give rise to sufficiently acute dissatisfaction to provoke a mass desertion of allegiance from the Irish Party. The demand for Home Rule or for a measure of self-government only became so urgent and so strong as to provoke a transfer of political allegiance and a denial of the legitimacy of the British Government when severe political, social and economic set-backs all occurred simultaneously in 1916. Once that occurred Sinn Fein began to play its crucial role as a focus for manifestations of disillusionment with the Irish Parliamentary Party. The last moral barrier to the transfer of allegiance from the Irish Party to Sinn Fein was removed by the Roman Catholic hierarchy's response to the threat of conscription in 1918.

For the Irish working class the position was not as clear cut. They had socially radical goals and after 1913 it was clear that these would not be well served by the Irish Parliamentary Party. Independent political action by Irish
labour was one possibility which appealed to many, including James Connolly, when Home Rule seemed on the verge of being realized. With Home Rule postponed that option seemed forlorn, the Irish working class in the north-east had laid aside its social and economic goals in order to rally to the support of the Union and the Irish working class in the rest of Ireland was too weak to be an effective political force. It could align itself with British labour which was beginning to have a real political impact at this time and this would have been the tendency of Belfast labour, had Home Rule not been an issue. It seemed preferable to joining what was bound to be a small minority interest in a predominantly agrarian Ireland where Roman Catholic hostility to socialism would be a feature of the political culture.

James Connolly preferred the alternative of forming an alliance with the extreme nationalist forces but these forces were socially reactionary and Connolly's hopes were contingent on the presence at the head of the movement of either Connolly himself or of some other socialist leader of the same calibre. In effect Connolly chose to postpone the pursuit of socialism until the republic had been won. The bulk of the working class of southern Ireland refused to follow his lead and attempted to pursue limited social and economic objectives independently of both the Irish Parliamentary Party and the extreme nationalists. The difficulty with this policy was that the Irish Trade union movement was too weak to win
concessions from either side. Even the conscription crisis failed to draw organized labour into the Sinn Fein net though the movement became convinced that self-government must be won and that Sinn Fein had the best chance of winning it. While keeping Sinn Fein at a distance labour stepped aside from the General Election of 1918 and, like Connolly, postponed the pressing of its social and economic objectives until the political battle was won. Thus it condemned itself to the political limbo from which it has but recently emerged.

The alliance between the Irish Parliamentary Party and the middle class was shaken by the willingness of John Redmond to compromise over the exclusion of Ulster and later over the financial powers of the proposed Irish parliament, issues which also shook the Roman Catholic hierarchy's support. Unity of the whole island had become one of the major symbolic elements in the nationalist conception of Ireland and partition was a direct attack on that notion. The venomous hostility of many Ulster Protestants also made the notion of abandoning northern nationalists extremely distasteful, just as abandoning Ulster Protestants had been distasteful to many English Protestants. The Home Rule Act had not envisaged partition and from the point of view of the nationalists partition did involve a real threat of deprivation over the position which had earlier been reached. Northern nationalists faced with this threat were the impetus behind the attempt to establish an anti-partitionist alternative to the Irish Party which led
to the desertion from the ranks of the Party of a large number of clerics, businessmen, professionals and other representatives of the bourgeoisie who, at this stage, still looked upon Sinn Fein with undisguised suspicion. To the Irish Party, which had long drawn a large proportion of its most active supporters from the bourgeoisie, this was a severe blow and the evident malaise spreading through the hitherto most loyal and solid ranks of Party supporters was to have repercussions on the confidence of the peasant masses even though they tended to be less affected by the symbolic issues involved.

The fact that Father O'Flanagan, who gave many indications of a perspicacious understanding of the Irish peasant mind, could accept partition as logical suggests that partition by itself was unlikely to prove the kind of issue which could shift the support of the masses away from the Irish Party either to Sinn Fein or to the anti-partitionist Irish Nation League. The issue of partition lacked the cross-cutting appeal necessary to provoke a mass revolt against the Irish Party. The weakening of clerical support was nevertheless ominous in rural Ireland, while middle class disaffection undermined Party support in the cities and larger towns. This support had so far been retained by the Party though only at the cost of alienating the working class so that no compensatory gains could be made.

By the time the conscription crisis occurred Sinn Fein
had been reorganized and presented a more moderate image than it had earlier thus easing the transfer of loyalty. The fight against conscription also had that cross-cutting appeal which anti-partitionism had lacked. The symbolic denial of the claim to separate nationhood offended middle class susceptibilities while the threatened direct impact mobilized urban workers and peasants alike. The fact that the Irish Parliamentary Party had wavered over partition and that Party notables had been prominent on recruiting platforms, indeed that some of them were engaged in recruiting during the conscription crisis, could be used to undermine and divert support to what appeared as the more determined, less compromising party. Here was the ideal issue drawing together labourers and farmers, workers and employers, priests and bishops, constitutionalists and physical force men, dual monarchists and republicans, reformers and revolutionaries, into a determined resistance to the British Government, Parliament and people.

The Irish Party leaders launched themselves into the anti-conscription movement but they cut a rather pathetic figure, having lost the initiative and having to share what had earlier seemed their rightful dominance of centre stage. Other groups no longer fell respectfully behind as the Party carried on the political struggle. Leadership now had to be divided not only with the Roman Catholic hierarchy, the Party's allies in many an earlier struggle, but also with
Sinn Fein and with organized labour. Sinn Fein was clearly the major threat. It had openly challenged the political hegemony of the Irish Party and in the process had swallowed up the Irish Nation League. The hopelessness of the Irish Convention attempt and the Sinn Fein by-election successes had drawn to the ranks of the challengers all the fragmented and disorganized domestic opponents of the Party. Only the labour movement had resisted the attraction of Sinn Fein and it held out until the last days before the general election when, still conscious of Sinn Fein's hostility to its interests, it withdrew from the contest. The most important effect of the conscription crisis was, however, that it moved the Roman Catholic hierarchy to adopt an attitude of benevolent neutrality towards Sinn Fein. This confirmed the impression that Sinn Fein was the strongest champion of the Irish cause which permitted its triumph.

The impact of the conscription threat was so widespread because it occurred against the background of a nationalist ideology which was shared by groups agreed on neither tactics nor detailed goals. Conscription was seen as a direct attack on the fundamental values of the common ideology. Nationalism in Ireland rested on an established tradition with heroes and martyrs, it was a tradition endowed with a well developed structure of myth which could be called upon to provide a demonstration of the superiority of things Irish. The tales of the island of saints and scholars reinforced cultural
nationalism while legends of the military might of pre-
conquest Ireland provided a contrast to the position of
Ireland as a rather backward province of the United Kingdom.
A cure for the dismal state of Ireland had come to be
sought in either outright separation or in self-government
of a more limited nature which would release the now repressed
potential of Ireland. This was a potent dream of intellectuals
which both the Irish Party and Sinn Fein encouraged, though
its appeal for the mass of ordinary Irish people was more
limited.

It seemed clear in the early twentieth century that
complete separation would only be wrested from Great Britain
through war. The Fenians had faced this prospect of war
against great odds but the fervour necessary for such a war
had been dependent on a perception that the political union
with Great Britain somehow endangered physical survival it-
self. Kindness might never have killed Home Rule but a more
sympathetic response to the problems of Irish peasants had
moderated the despair which had sustained nineteenth century
separatism. The ideology of Irish nationalism had been mod-
ified and the millenium was now described as easier to attain
and as susceptible of realization without recourse to war.
The new plan called for a political war to be waged in
Parliament along strictly constitutional lines. The prize
had also been changed; the dream of an independent sovereign
republic had become too costly for the majority of Irishmen
and Home Rule would replace it. Home Rule was a more modest goal but one which it was argued would confer much the same benefits as separation as well as all the advantages which it was alleged accompanied membership in the British Empire. This more prosaic dream had not captured the romantic nationalists but it had deprived them of popular support.

The later transition of public opinion from Home Rule to separatism was made all the easier by the absence of fundamental ideological conflict between the two positions. Both accepted the argument of romantic nationalism that each nation has a right to self-government and both agreed that Ireland was a nation. The claim to self-government was one which was being advanced throughout Europe at this time on behalf of a number of nations and the fact that Britain as part of her war policy was recognizing most of these claims with the notable exception of that of Ireland bred a considerable amount of frustration. One of the chief characteristics of nationalism as an ideology has been its wide appeal which can cut across class and other divisions in society. The symbols of national unity have long been recognized as one of the most potent appeals for mobilizing support for revolution. In Ireland in 1912 nationalism was mobilizing support for reform rather than revolution and this was due to the success of constitutional methods in bringing Home Rule to the point of realization as well as
to the Roman Catholic Church's condemnation of revolution. Because both the Irish Party and Sinn Fein were in the same nationalist camp, Sinn Fein was ideally placed to take over should the Irish Party's efforts fail. Both parties were challenging the legitimacy of continuing British rule in Ireland and both claimed for themselves the mantle of an ancient Irish national tradition.

The conflict between the Irish Parliamentary Party and Sinn Fein was over the precise content of the concept of self-government and over the techniques to be employed to secure it, not over the goal itself. The Irish Republican Brotherhood favoured the open use of mass violence to achieve the establishment of an Irish republic so much so that for many members of the organization the means became indistinguishable from the ends. But before the war the I.R.B. was a small oath-bound secret society condemned by the Roman Catholic Church and in no position to realize its objective as long as the population of Ireland continued to anticipate an adequate measure of Home Rule from the British Government. Sinn Fein eschewed violence and advocated withdrawal from Westminster and passive resistance to make continued British rule in Ireland impossible, leading eventually to separate status under a common Crown. The Irish Parliamentary Party's objectives were more modest - a separate parliament for Ireland charged with domestic affairs under the overview of the Imperial Parliament at Westminster. This goal had the great
virtue of appearing more realistic and less costly. In 1912 it became a virtual certainty and this put the Irish Party's nationalist opponents in the shade. The Party's technique for victory then consisted in simply sticking by the Liberal Party while it honoured its pledges to Ireland. Nothing appeared simpler, the Liberals might need a bit of spine stiffening periodically if the going got sticky but otherwise the great labours of the Home Rule party at Westminster were virtually over and in one of John Redmond's favourite analogies they only needed to await the rising of tomorrow's sun.

The first major flaw in this plan was that it assumed that the Liberal Party's commitment to Home Rule was based on a recognition and acceptance of the nationalist ideology as understood by the Irish Party. The Liberals were willing to grant Home Rule to Ireland as a solution to the Irish question which had so long harrassed Parliament and they recognized the existence of historic Irish grievances against Britain but they were not sympathetic to the doctrine of romantic nationalism. The British reformers were part of a utilitarian tradition owing much to Jeremy Bentham and his school. They were willing to contemplate Irish self-government on purely utilitarian grounds. One of Parnell's achievements had been to demonstrate that the presence at Westminster of too many Irish politicians was inexpedient and that it would be advantageous to Britain to send them back to Ireland.
Irish Home Rulers were of a far more absolutist frame of mind. Their mental cast had been formed by a morally absolutist church and they had been more influenced than the English by the French revolutionary practice of treating rights as absolute. The agreement reached between British Liberals and Irish Home Rulers in 1912 was on a political solution to the Irish question but the rationale behind this solution was different for each party to it.

The second major flaw of the Irish Party's plan was that the Irish nationalist dream ignored the existence and aspirations of Ulster Protestants. Irish nationalists tended to define Irish character as including Roman Catholicism and few Irish Protestants attempted to transcend that identification. The Protestants of Ulster, who were predominantly of Scottish stock, did not see themselves as part of an "English" garrison in Ireland but they clearly saw the best guarantee for the survival of their distinct culture in a heterogeneous and multi-national state rather than in any increase of Irish autonomy. In addition to the cultural factors which led them to resist Home Rule, economic factors led them to seek the maintenance of a close union with Great Britain. The fact that Britain had never accepted the nationalist ideology of southern Ireland made the British more sympathetic to the plight of Ulster. Lacking any ideological commitment to Irish nationalism, the reaction of Britain, once Ulster agitation made clear that the grant of Home Rule for Ireland
would not be expedient, was to back away and look for another solution which would be expedient. This proved impossible since Irish nationalists were not operating according to the same criteria.

From the point of view of the British Government the claims of the Ulster unionists had to be taken into account particularly when it became clear that their opposition was so strongly motivated that it would require force to impose Home Rule upon the Protestant north-east. To grant Home Rule to an Irish population which clearly desired it was one thing but to launch on a civil war in the process of implementing a principle in which they did not really believe was an altogether different proposition. Not only did such a move threaten violence in Ireland but also disaffection in the army. The main attraction of Home Rule for the British Government was that at long last it would put an end to the Irish question but Ulster's attitude made clear that far from doing so it might lead to greater violence than ever in Ireland and prove severely disruptive of British political life. Home Rule thus lost its major attraction for British politicians even though their promises and obligations to the Irish Party led them to persist in trying to find a solution.

These attempts failed to make inroads against the obstinacy of either Ulster unionists or nationalists and the Irish Parliamentary Party which was closely identified
with these efforts has gone down in Irish history as a failure. Yet the true measure of its performance should be gauged in the light of the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 which revealed that by 1918 the Irish Party, through constitutional activity, had won most of what could be won from Great Britain. Sinn Fein, on the other hand, emerged in history as victors yet their success is perhaps more closely related to Irish public opinion and to its perceptions than to actual accomplishments. Certainly Sinn Fein did increase the scope of the measure of Irish independence which was secured in 1921 but at great cost for a limited return. What is more difficult to measure are the psychological advantages of having taken the enemy's measure in battle which were considerable for a nation just asserting its independence. Against such advantages must be set down the psychological consequences of providing new utilitarian and normative justifications to support an already well established tradition of political violence. The blood sacrifices which such a tradition still demands in Ireland today are a high price to offset the lesser satisfaction which would have followed the granting of self-government "as a peaceful present...given away with a pound of tea". Public opinion forbade such a course until the exhaustion of battle led to acceptance in 1921 of what would have been refused earlier.

In 1918 Irish voters did not choose war but rather a
measure of self-government which Sinn Fein claimed it could win through an appeal to the Peace Conference. The idea of self-government at the Peace Conference is an element of the political struggle of these years which has often been treated as less important than it was at the time because it came to nothing. However, it exerted a powerful appeal on Irish opinion from Easter 1916 until the spring of 1919, when it became clear that the Irish case would not be heard. One of the few practical results which the leaders of the Easter rising claimed was that the rising had won Ireland a place at the Peace Conference. The device itself had the tremendous advantage that it bypassed the British Government and held out a prospect of success which was not dependent on negotiations with Britain. One of the Irish Party's assertions was that by virtue of their presence at Westminster they were better placed to engage in direct negotiations with the British Government than Sinn Fein could possibly be. The record of the Party since 1912 in such negotiations may not have been very successful but it could claim to be better fitted, through experience and position, to negotiate with the Government. The Peace Conference solution destroyed this advantage and was thus very attractive to Sinn Fein. The Irish Party undermined its own position when, during the conscription crisis, John Dillon admitted that the Peace Conference, through the intervention of President Wilson on Ireland's behalf,
represented one of Ireland's best hopes of gaining self-government.

The hopes in the Peace Conference and in President Wilson's intervention were unrealistic. Wilson's attitude towards Ireland was well known and the Allied victory in the war meant that Britain held the upper hand. The French, who on the whole had been well disposed to Ireland's claim to self-determination, had interpreted the Dublin rising as a stab in the back and were not in a mood to press Irish claims. Germany was in no position to do so. For Irishmen who had remained relatively insulated from the war the Peace Conference solution had become a powerful myth consecrated by the last hopes expressed by the Dublin leaders of 1916. The conscription threat had destroyed much of the hope in parliamentary tactics yet the Irish were not prepared to fight a war with Britain. The appeal to the Peace Conference provided a non-violent alternative to the parliamentary struggle for Home Rule and became a major element in Sinn Fein's electoral appeal in 1918. It was a new tactic not tainted by failure as was parliamentary agitation and being non-violent it could rally the Roman Catholic Church and the rather conservative peasant-proprietors of Ireland who would have rejected an appeal to violence at this stage. Yet, being linked to the expressed aspiration of the rebel leaders of 1916, it was useful in retaining the allegiance of the "physical force" men. Sinn Fein shunned
violence until after the defeat of constitutional forces in the 1918 election and even then great caution was exercised to ensure that any violence engaged in by the Irish would be seen as a response to official violence and not as a policy of deliberate attack upon Crown forces in pursuit of the republic.

The relationship between the Irish revolutionary movement and public opinion involved a long courtship from the rebellion in 1916 until the election of 1918. The radicalization of Irish public opinion which was demonstrated by the Sinn Fein election victory involved a transformation which is in no way unique to Ireland given the circumstances prevailing in the country at this time, an increase in the level of systemic frustration, in resistance and in the potential for violence was inevitable. Violence did not break out because initially British force was perceived as overwhelming; though this contained violent manifestations at the cost of increased frustration. This frustration was aggravated in the long run by the inconsistent use made of force by the British Government so that the overall effect of the actions of the authorities was to restrain the outbreak of violence in the short run while increasing the long run potential for revolution which worked to Sinn Fein's advantage.

The changed character of Irish society also inhibited

manifestation of resistance to the government. The social structure of nationalist Ireland was dominated by a commercial middle class and by a class of peasant owner-occupiers who were not only socially conservative but also conscious that they had much to lose in any revolutionary war. This encouraged a great deal of caution which was only overcome through the combination of the severe deprivation threatened by conscription together with the moderate stance adopted by Sinn Fein.

The extremism of the Irish revolutionary movement led to the rising of 1916 and following its defeat the movement adopted a far more moderate stance. The elitist conspiratorial agency which had been dominated by the Irish Republican Brotherhood was transformed into a mass political party with a broad appeal designed to compete with the Irish Party particularly in rural Ireland. The policy of reliance on the Peace Conference rather than on force was part of this new appeal. Sinn Fein had found a solution similar in kind to that pursued by the Party and no more threatening to the secure enjoyment of their prosperity by Irish peasants.

The political influence of the Roman Catholic Church dovetailed with that of the social structure to restrain the impetus to violence. The Church's outlook was socially conservative and Sinn Fein had to demonstrate that it had not been contaminated by the ideas of James Connolly before the Church would endorse its programme. The Church feared
social revolution more than violence itself and when the partition question shook its confidence in the Irish Parliamentary Party there was no question of moving to the support of the non-violent labour movement. The Church's initial reaction was to create or to support the creation of a middle class movement of a strictly constitutional character and the reorientation to Sinn Fein only came after these efforts failed and the British Government, by invoking the threat of conscription, deprived the Church leaders of the time necessary to pursue them any further. By then Sinn Fein had purged itself of advanced social radicalism and had so muted its endorsement of violence, at least in public pronouncements, that it had become acceptable in the eyes of the Irish Roman Catholic hierarchy. Michael Collins and others were working to prepare the movement for violence but this was hidden from public view and what was public and reassuring was the refusal of Sinn Fein to make concessions to the demands of labour.

The character of public opinion on political questions is inevitably related to perceptions of the legitimacy of the regime. In Ireland the legitimacy of the British Government tended to be perceived as low and there was usually a substantial minority which denied any such legitimacy. However, participation in British politics at Westminster did involve some recognition of the legitimacy of the Irish administration even though the goal of that
participation was protest and rather drastic reform. Land purchase and the Liberal commitment to Home Rule meant that in 1912 perceptions of legitimacy were at a high point. The entire Home Rule movement and the Roman Catholic Church recognized the legitimacy of the British Government. Only Sinn Fein, which advocated passive resistance, and the Irish Republican Brotherhood, which advocated active resistance, denied this legitimacy in the south of Ireland. The prospect of Home Rule, however, led to a questioning of this legitimacy by Irish unionists in general and by Ulster unionists in particular. Had the Government taken firm action when its legitimacy was thus questioned it might have been able to maintain its authority in southern Ireland for a longer period of time and it might have prevented the growth of private armies but it could not have enforced Home Rule on all Ireland without a civil war and the wrecking of the army so that conflict was inevitable. The Government, however, exercised far less control over events than it could have.

One clear indication that the climate of opinion in Ireland during the war was explosive and that Ireland's condition was in no way unique is the parallel which may be drawn with the well documented urban race riots in the United States in 1967. The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders reported that the ingredients behind those riots were (1) frustrated hopes generated by the civil rights struggle, (2) a climate of approval and encouragement of
violence, (3) a frustrated feeling of powerlessness to achieve a transformation of the system, (4) a new mood of self-esteem and racial pride and (5) the view of the police as symbols of white repression.\(^{10}\) It takes little imagination to translate these into ingredients which were present in Ireland. The attitude of the Roman Catholic Church and the non-vital nature of the goal restrained the eruption of actual violence but Irish nationalism did pass over from protest to resistance, from the Irish Parliamentary Party to Sinn Fein. By the end of 1918 Irishmen in the mass were once again willing to face the gallows even if they were not yet ready to kill.

Select Bibliography

I. Contemporary Newspapers

Contemporary newspapers constitute the most important source for this study. Every issue of the Freeman's Journal, the Cork Examiner and the Irish Weekly Independent was consulted for the entire period. The Irish Independent, the Irish Times, An Claidheamh Soluis, the Irish Catholic, the Irish Nation, Irish Freedom, The Irish Worker, The Northern Whig, The Weekly Freeman, The Wicklow People and the Workers' Republic were consulted for specific events or periods.

II. Public Documents

Annual Register 1912-1918.
Parliamentary Debates, 5th series, 1912-1918.
Documents Relative to the Sinn Fein Movement. Parliamentary Papers 1921 [Cmd. 1108]. Vol. XXIX.


Minutes of Proceedings of the First Parliament of the


III. Books and Articles


Briollay, Sylvain. Ireland in Rebellion. Dublin (The Talbot Press), 1922.


"What is a Nation?" Studies, Vol. I (1912).


Burke, John F. Outlines of the Industrial History of Ireland. Dublin (Browne and Nolan), 1940.


Chorley, Katherine. Armies and the Art of Revolution. London (Faber and Faber, Ltd.), 1943.
Christian Brothers. *Irish History Reader*. Dublin (M. H. Gill and Son Ltd.), 1916.


———. "Irish History from Within". *Studies*. Vol. VIII (1919).


Connery, Donald S. *The Irish*. London (Eyre and Spottswode), 1968.


———. Labour and Easter Week. Dublin (At the Sign of the Three Candles), 1949.

———. *Labour in Ireland*. Dublin n.d.

———. *The Reconquest of Ireland*. Dublin, n.d.
Socialism and Nationalism. Dublin (At the Sign of the Three Candles), 1948.

The Workers' Republic. Dublin (At the Sign of the Three Candles), 1951.


Fergusson, James. The Curragh Incident. London (Faber and Faber Ltd.), 1964.


et. al. The Revival of Irish Literature and Other Addresses. London (Fischer and Unwin), 1894.


Gogarty, Oliver St J. As I was Going Down Sackville Street. London (Sphere Books Limited), 1968.


---


---


---


---


---


---


---


---


---


---


---


---


---


---


Horgan, John J. *Parnell to Pearse*. Dublin (Browne and Nolan Ltd.), 1948.


Inglis, Brian. The Story of Ireland. London (Faber and Faber), 1965.


———. *The Open Secret of Ireland*. London (W. J. Ham-Smith), 1912.


Lyons, F.S.L. "Decline and Fall of the Nationalist Party". Irish Times, Special Supplement, 7 April, 1966.


McCann, John. War By the Irish. Tralee (Kerryman Ltd.), 1946.


McDonald, Walter. Some Ethical Questions of Peace and War with Special Reference to Ireland. London (Burns and Oates Ltd.), 1919.


McDowell, R.B. British Conservatism 1832-1914. London (Faber and Faber), 1959.


Men of Martin "Casement and German Help" in Leaders and

MacLysaght, Edward. "Larkin, Connolly and the Labour
Movement" in Leaders and Men of the Easter Rising: Dublin

MacNeill, Eoin. "How the Volunteers Began" in The Irish
Volunteers 1913-1915: Recollections and Documents. ed.

McNeill, Ronald. "The Irish Maze: The Ulster Standpoint".
Nineteenth Century, Vol. LXXXI (1917).

Malone, Andrew E. "Irish Labour in War Time". Studies.
Vol. VII (1918).

Mansergh, Nicholas. The Irish Question 1840-1921. London
(Unwin University Books), 1965.


Martin, Augustine. "Anglo-Irish Literature" in Irish
(Allen, Figgis), 1970.


_______. "1916-Myth, Fact and Mystery" Studia Hibernica, No. 7 (1967).


_______. "The 1916 Rising - a Coup d'Etat or a "Bloody Protest"?" Studia Hibernica. No. 8 (1968).


___________. "The Embers of Easter". Irish Times, Special Supplement, 7 April, 1966.


___________. The Irish Revolution and How It Came About. Dublin (Maunsel and Roberts Limited), 1923.


________. No Other Law. Dublin (The Irish Press Ltd.), 1954.


________. "Volunteer 'Actions' in 1918". Capuchin Annual, 1968.


1966.


O'Shannon, Cathal, ed. Fifty Years of Liberty Hall. Dublin (At the Sign of the Three Candles Ltd.), 1959.

"Cathal O'Shannon's Column". Evening Press.


Paul-Dubois, L. Contemporary Ireland. Dublin (Maunsel and Company Ltd.), 1908.

___________. The Irish Struggle and its Results. London (Longmans, Green), 1934.

Pearse, Padraic H. Political Writings and Speeches. Dublin (The Talbot Press), 1952.


The Man Called Pearse. Dublin (Maunsel and Roberts, Ltd.). 1923.

"Margaret Pearse". Capuchin Annual, 1942.


"General Post Office Area" Capuchin Annual 1966.


Shannon, Martin. Sixteen Roads to Golgotha. Dublin (Red Hand Books), n.d.

Shaw, Desmond. The Drama of Sinn Fein. London (W. Collins, Sons and Co. Ltd.), 1923.


__________. "Three By-Elections of 1917" *Capuchin Annual* 1967.


Thompson, W. H. War and the Food of the Dublin Labourer. Dublin (The Women's National Health Association of Ireland), n.d.


---


---

White, Terence de Vere. *Ireland*. London (Thames and Hudson), 1968.


_________. A State of Disunion. London (Frederick Muller Ltd.), 1972.