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Isaac Butt and the creation of an Irish  
parliamentary party  
1868-79

David Thornley

1959

volume two

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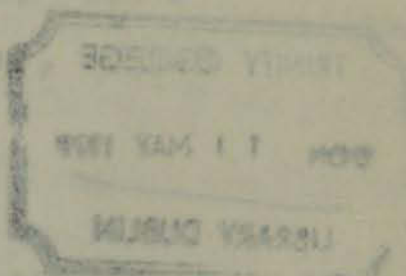
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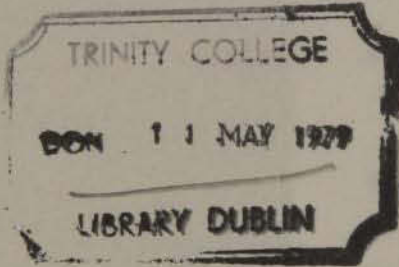
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## PART II

## THE FIRST HOME RULE PARTY, 1874-9

(A) The National League

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1 *Herald*, 21 Jan. 1874; *Freeman's Journal*, 21 Jan. 1874.2 *Herald*, 21 Jan. 1874; *Freeman's Journal*, 21 Jan. 1874.

PART II

Chapter XI: The 1874 Election - the contest.

(a) the national issue

The general election of 1874 presents a much more straightforward picture, with much less subtlety of variation, than that of 1868. It was the first of many elections in which home rule was the major issue: out of just under one hundred election addresses published in the press by popular or liberal, as opposed to conservative candidates, 91 mentioned the topic of self-government. 65 gave it first place, 15 second place, 8 third place, and 3 fourth place. Virtually no liberal candidates ventured into direct opposition to home rule; only Jonathan Pim in Dublin and the O'Donoghue in Tralee did so without any equivocation. (1) Cogan in Kildare and the two Kennedys in Donegal completely ignored the issue; (2) virtually everybody else made some pronouncement upon it, ranging from total espousal to ingenious evasion. The nature of these home rule pledges becomes, then, a subject of prime importance, and it is discussed at some length below, but it is possible to assert, in the first place, the almost total absorption of the electorate in the issue of self-government.

Denominational education, as the only one of the 1868 demands

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1 Nation, 31 Jan. 1874; Freeman's Journal 2 Feb.  
 2 Nation, 31 Jan.; Freeman's Journal 31 Jan., 7 Feb.

to survive in its original form, held the next place in the majority of election addresses; 20 gave it first place, and 44 second. The amnesty and land reform demands were the other two main issues, figuring in 64 and 63 addresses respectively. Of the minor issues grand jury reform and the defence of the pope figured most prominently, with a total of 22 and 14 respectively.<sup>(1)</sup>

The address of the average popular liberal candidate in 1874 was, therefore, one in which the home rule issue was placed first; denominational education was probably placed second, and amnesty and land reform third and fourth. It is, consequently, unnecessary for us to dwell in any great detail, as was done at the outset in relation to the 1868 contest, upon the rival claims of the different election issues. But equally important conflicts of another kind demand analysis. As has already been remarked, the dissolution came as a totally unexpected shock to a home rule organisation which still existed mainly on paper; the Nation wrote: 'In the words of Mr Butt, to suit the purposes of party, the sovereign has been advised to steal a march upon the public opinion of her people.'<sup>(2)</sup> The ability of the home rule movement to cope with this crisis was the problem

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1 There were also such hardy annuals as railway purchase, Sunday closing, fishery development, aid to agricultural labourers, the repeal of the remaining coercion acts, Shannon drainage, and the establishment of a royal residence in Ireland. In Dublin the curiously modern issue of civil service salaries had a local importance. (Irishman, 7 Feb. 1874).

2 Nation, 31 Jan.



which loomed before all else; could it reap the harvest of eighty seats so long prophesied by Butt and gain the commanding position at Westminster upon which its chances of a quick success depended? The answer to this question lay primarily in the selection of home rule candidates.

(b) The candidates.

The leaders of the movement were not so naive as to be totally unquestioning of the sincerity of some of their newly-converted followers. In chapter X the prominence which was given to the issue of parliamentary pledges at the conference in November was considered at some length, and the criteria suggested by the Nation to the constituencies for their choice of candidates have already been quoted. Had more time been given to the league, criticism of this kind, coupled with the practical tests of hard organisational campaigning, might have served to winnow the genuine from the time-serving. As it happened, the dissolution, coming only two months after the conclusion of the conference, gave the league less than three weeks in which to find eighty or more candidates. The importance of this one fact can scarcely be exaggerated; more than any other single cause, the futility of the first home rule party stemmed from the haste and the disorganisation of those hectic weeks, which compelled the supporters of the movement to scramble together as their representatives a motley collection in

which the genuine was scarcely discernible from the opportunist. The Nation recognised the seriousness of this handicap from the moment of the dissolution:

Three months was the smallest interval which, according to general expectation, could intervene between the announcement of an intended dissolution and the general election. In these three months the popular vote would have been rendered omnipotent in Ireland. In those three months the constituencies from Antrim to Cork would have been organised, home rule candidates would have been selected, the arrangements for battle concluded, and the influence and active power of the Home Rule League would have reached every corner of the land. (1)

In the same issue it added:

The home rule party which our best efforts, amidst this storm of confusion, can assemble, will, of course, number little more than half the force which a fair and true "appeal to the country" would bring forth. (2)

In an opening address from the league Butt warned the constituencies: 'The work of years is compressed for you into the next two weeks.' (3) He was only too unhappily right.

The candidates in the 1874 election can be divided into four main categories:

(1) sitting members of parliament who had been elected as home rulers or who had given the movement a long-standing support

(2) candidates not previously elected who had been similarly tested in the league

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1 Nation, 31 Jan. 1874.  
2 ibid.  
3 ibid.

(3) sitting members of parliament, elected in 1868 upon a liberal programme, who had only recently espoused the home rule demand

(4) new aspirants to parliamentary honours whose antecedents were unknown or dubious.

There were, in general, very few who cannot be classified in one of these categories. Conservative home rule candidates were virtually unknown. P. Hynes in King's County and General Francis Plunkett Dunne in Queen's County might be thus broadly described; neither pressed the contest to the poll. In Tralee Johnston Russell, a loyal home ruler of conservative background, was unable to win the confidence of the popular party and retired in favour of the liberal home ruler John Daly, ex-mayor of Cork. Lord Francis Montagu, colleague of P. J. Smyth in the home rule interest in Westmeath, was an English conservative who had lost his English seat as a consequence of his conversion to catholicism, and he made his adhesion to home rule conditional upon his being allowed to retain his conservative outlook upon general politics; but as a catholic, and as an eccentric, he was scarcely typical and had no roots in the early protestant conservatism of the movement. Of those who had carried the conservative home rule banner in the struggles of the old association, only John Madden stood again in Monaghan; he was again defeated, a defeat which he ascribed to the disunity of the catholic voters, the

bulk of whom seem to have favoured the catholic liberal  
 home ruler P. McMahon. (1) King Harman, the most prominent  
 conservative among the founder members of the association, (2)  
 protested in vain to Butt at the influx of 'whig trimmers';  
 his own name was put forward in several constituencies but  
 in each case he had to give way to rivals of a more liberal  
 complexion. (3)

The first of the four categories listed above,  
 i.e., sitting members who had given concrete evidence of their  
 loyalty to the home rule demand, contained only ten persons. (4)  
 All were re-elected, Philip Callan being returned in both  
 Dundalk and Louth to bring their total of successes to eleven.  
 But of their number only two, Callan and Shaw, had been elected  
 in 1868; the others had all been returned in subsequent home  
 rule by-election victories. In addition to these two, twenty-  
 four other members of parliament who had been elected in 1868  
 or later as liberals contested the 1874 election as home rulers  
 of one kind or another, and of their number nineteen were

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1 Madden to Butt, 6 Mar. 1874, Butt MSS.

2 Nation, 13 Jan. 1877.

3 Bowyer (Wexford Co) and Morris (Galway City) had both  
 flirted with Disraeli in the 1860's and in the liberal  
 climate of the 1868 contest had been denounced as  
 conservatives, but as catholics and supporters of  
 denominational education they can scarcely be classed as  
 conservatives in the sense applied above to some of the  
 founders of the Home Government Association.

4 Ronayne (Cork City), Shaw (Cork Co), Callan (Dundalk and  
 Louth), Henry (Galway Co), Blennerhassett (Kerry), Butt  
 (Limerick City), Browne (Mayo), Martin (Meath), Smyth  
 (Westmeath), and Redmond (Wexford Boro).

returned. In the new party this group was the largest numerically and in many ways the most influential politically, and in considering the outcome of the contest we will be compelled to consider in some detail the sincerity of their conversion to home rule.

Of the candidates who were not sitting members, not more than a score were proved home rulers. Of these nine were elected. (1) Three, Johnston Russell in Tralee, John Madden in Monaghan, and E. R. King Harman in Athlone and in Westmeath, were, as we have remarked above, rejected because of their conservative leanings. Three, the O'Gorman Mahon in Ennis, F. H. O'Donnell in Galway City, and Bernard G. Molloy in King's County, endeavoured with strong nationalist backing to wrest seats from sitting liberal home rulers, but were unsuccessful. One, J. Daly, former mayor of Cork, was defeated by an unashamed liberal in the O'Donoghue in Tralee; one, John O'Connor Power, was defeated in Mayo by a home rule candidate of less advanced sympathies. No less than twenty-one were elected from the ranks of those candidates for whose support of home rule previous to November 1873 there is no evidence.

To summarise this survey briefly: fifty-nine members were returned for sixty seats upon a programme which

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1 Bigger (Cavan), Conyngham (Clare), O'Leary (Drogheda), O'Sullivan (Limerick Co), Sullivan (Louth), McCarthy (Mallow), Ennis (Meath), McKenna (Youghal), and Nolan (Galway Co).

to a greater or lesser extent admitted the legitimacy of the home rule demand. Ten of these were sitting members of proved devotion to the cause of self-government, and nine were new members of similarly proven loyalty. Nineteen were liberals elected in 1868 whose open avowal of home rule principles dated back no further than 1873, and twenty-one were completely new members of dubious antecedents, mostly liberal in outlook.

The question of the composition of the new party is one to which we shall have to return. But enough has been said in this introductory survey to point to a conclusion of considerable significance. The vital conflict which the home rule movement faced in the general election of 1874 was with the vested interest of Irish liberalism.

then, T. ... (c) The liberals, the clergy, and home rule.

The resistance of liberalism to home rule expressed itself upon two different levels, in the open opposition of unionist liberal candidates to home rule nominees, and in the endorsement of liberal home rulers over nationalist candidates of a more singleminded variety. The latter was by far the more common and the more important; it was, moreover, in this conflict that the influence of the catholic clergy most made itself felt. Nowhere in 1874 was the participation of the clergy as striking a feature of political activity as it had been in 1868. But if catholic

priests were seldom found in direct opposition to the movement which so many of them had once viewed with disquiet - if, indeed, they were much more frequently in sympathetic association with home rule candidates - it would nevertheless be wrong to dismiss their contribution as unimportant. In participating in the campaign for home rule they made a significant contribution to the form in which it developed.

It is a striking testimony to the power of the home rule demand that only rarely were liberal candidates found in firm and open opposition to it. Of the thirty-eight sitting liberal members of parliament who sought re-election, only twelve did so without some kind of general endorsement of the programme of the home rule conference. <sup>(1)</sup> One of them, T. McClure, endeavouring to retain his seat in the face of a conservative revival in Belfast, may fairly be excluded from this analysis. Of the other eleven, we have already remarked that only Pim in Dublin and the O'Donoghue in Tralee declared their opposition to the league programme more or less openly. <sup>(2)</sup> All of them, even chief secretary Chichester Fortescue in Louth, gratefully adopted the formula of Gladstone in his Greenwich address <sup>(3)</sup> and

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1 Cogan and Fitzgerald (Kildare), O'Reilly Dease (Louth), Agar Ellis (Kilkenny Co), Fitzwilliam (Wicklow), Fortescue (Louth), Greville (Westmeath), Herbert (Kerry), O'Donoghue (Tralee), Pim (Dublin City), Power (Wexford Co) and McClure (Belfast). (Nation, 31 Jan. 1874, Irishman, 31 Jan., Freeman's Journal, 28, 30 Jan., 2, 4, and 9 Feb.

2 Nation, 31 Jan., Freeman's Journal, 2 Feb.

3 Nation, 31 Jan.

pronounced portentously in favour of the establishment of local boards to relieve, in some unspecified way, the pressure of business in the imperial assembly. Only five sitting liberals, Bagwell (Clonmel), McEvoy (Meath), Gavin (Limerick City), Barry (Cork County), and Corrigan (Dublin City) were unwilling to gamble upon even so slight a compromise, and retired gracefully rather than challenge a public opinion which they knew to be against them. (1)

Of the eleven listed above, only three, Cogan (Kildare), Herbert (Kerry), and the O'Donoghue were re-elected. The first two were large landowners with strong family ties in their respective counties, and in Tralee, despite the efforts of Dean Maude, the O'Donoghue was returned only by the narrowest of margins.

Coming, as it did, only six years after Gladstone's proclamation to Ireland of the unionist millenium, the total rout of liberal unionism is the most immediately striking feature of the 1874 election, and incomparably the most remarkable achievement of Butt's home rule movement. In 1874 home rule destroyed liberal unionism as a political force in Ireland, and ensured that the people would never again accept anything less than some form of

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1 Nation, 31 Jan. 1874, Freeman's Journal, 28, 29 Jan., also Woodlock Diary, 26, 28 Jan. 1874, MSS 4498-5011 for Corrigan. In Barry's case there was also another motive - his opposition to clerical policy on education. Sir Rowland Blennerhasset (Galway City), who had voted for Gladstone's University Bill, also retired on this latter ground. (Freeman's Journal, 29 Jan.)



nationalist party to represent them at Westminster. Some of the direct conflicts between home rule and liberalism stand out as particularly noteworthy. The defeat of Agar Ellis in Kilkenny County, where his family was universally respected, was especially acclaimed by the nationalist press. <sup>(1)</sup> The defeat of the sitting member Pim in Dublin City by the Lord Mayor Maurice Brooks was also a signal triumph for the movement, since Brooks himself, a protestant who in spite of his public statements was held by some of the liberals to be a member of an Orange lodge and a freemason, <sup>(2)</sup> was unable to command the unanimous support of the clergy of Dublin diocese. <sup>(3)</sup> But by far the most striking of these direct home rule victories was that which took place in Louth. We have already remarked that there were, in this election, few instances in which the catholic clergy were to be found in direct opposition to the home rule movement; in Louth alone, where the sitting liberal members, Chichester Fortescue, outgoing chief secretary, and the wealthy Matthew O'Reilly Dease, were opposed by Philip Callan and A. M. Sullivan, was the full force of episcopal condemnation turned upon the home rule candidates as it had been in the first contests of the movement. At the very outset of the campaign, the County Louth Independent Club had been

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1 Irishman, 14 Feb. 1874.  
 2 Woodcock Diary, 15 Feb. 1874, MSS 4498-5011.  
 3 Freeman's Journal, 6 Feb., etc.

formed, to campaign for home rule 'as laid down by the national home rule conference', denominational education 'as demanded by the catholic bishops of Ireland', and fixity of tenure. (1) At the same time the clergy of the diocese met and resolved not to support any candidate in any constituency in their area who would not bind himself to the home rule programme. (2) Fortescue, who reaffirmed his support for Gladstone, and on the national question would only go so far as to concur in those remarks of his leader which referred to 'the improvement and strengthening of local administration, and to the provision of greater facilities for the despatch of overgrown Parliamentary business', (3) could scarcely be acceptable by this criterion, nor could O'Reilly Dease, whose pleas for the establishment of local boards were dismissed by the Nation as 'twaddle' and 'humbug'. (4) But Fortescue was the symbol of Gladstone's reforming policy in Ireland, and his return had to be secured at all costs if liberalism was to survive there as a political force. The aid of Cardinal Manning was enlisted, and both he and Cullen wrote with the utmost secrecy to the primate, Dr McGettigan, urging him to exert all his influence upon Fortescue's behalf. William Monsell, now Lord Emsay, but still assiduously lobbying for

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1 Nation, 31 Jan. 1874.  
 2 Freeman's Journal, 10 Feb.  
 3 Irishman, 31 Jan.  
 4 Nation, 31 Jan.

the liberals, heard of these preparations from P. J. Keenan, the Irish commissioner for education:

The primate will write and this day too. The letter of course. Mr F. should get it posted on every gate and wall in the country. I had a long letter from his grace today. He arrives in Dundalk, as I suggested, to do duty as sentinel and oracle pending the contest - He says that even in Dundalk Callan is sure to be defeated, a certain forerunner of defeat in the county. Fiat, he adds, and a second time, Fiat. (1)

Ten to one might be laid on Fortescue, added Keenan, and the same on Charles Russell in Dundalk.

Fortescue himself was less optimistic, and his proved the truer forecast. Dr McGettigan's letter was not even read in all the chapels of the diocese; in those in which it was read, the congregation, according to the Nation, rose and left. (2) The clergy met in Dundalk on 8 February; the primate repeated his arguments for Fortescue, but 'by an overwhelming majority', according to the Nation, (3) the assembled priests resolved to adhere to their original resolution. The decision of the clergy threw the town 'en fete'. Four priests accompanied Fortescue on his canvass of Dundalk, (4) but the great majority in the diocese adhered to Callan and Sullivan in the county, Callan in Dundalk, and O'Leary in Drogheda. Callan subsequently claimed fifty out of fifty-five priests for home rule. (5)

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- 1 P.J. Keenan to Lord Emly, 2 Feb. 1874, Monsell MSS, 8317.
  - 2 Nation, 14 Feb.
  - 3 ibid., 14 Feb. The Freeman's Journal, 9 Feb., has the same report. The minority, according to the Nation, was only three or four.
  - 4 Drogheda Argus, 7 Feb.
  - 5 Freeman's Journal, 20 Feb.

In direct opposition to their bishop the priests of the diocese accompanied home rule candidates on their canvass and introduced them at after-mass meetings. <sup>(1)</sup> In all three constituencies home rule was victorious. In Dundalk Callan defeated Charles Russell, later Lord Russell of Killowen; in Drogheda Dr O'Leary won a victory over the wealthy merchant Benjamin Whitworth which surprised even his own supporters; and Callan and Sullivan left Fortescue and Dease <sup>(2)</sup> ignominiously defeated in the county.

The Louth contest was in many respects the most remarkable in the entire election. Not only was Gladstone's chief minister in Ireland symbolically routed; the church, making its only frontal onslaught upon home rule, was repudiated even by its own parish clergy. The movement had indeed come far since 1870.

From what has been said above it is obvious that clerical influence held no such commanding position in 1874 as in 1868. But if it exerted a less direct and monolithic pressure upon national policies, it did nevertheless significantly influence the course of a number of important contests. Throughout southern Ireland in this election the priests as a rule either held themselves aloof from the

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1 Drogheda Argus, 30 Jan. 1874, 7 Feb.

2 Nation, 14 Feb., Freeman's Journal, 14 Feb. The figures were

Sullivan	1,250
Callan	1,202
Fortescue	607
Dease	265.

struggle or exerted their influence in behalf of liberal home rulers who were loyal to their educational demands. It was by this latter method that the clergy made their most important contribution; there were candidates like Shaw, Henry, and Butt himself, who were enthusiastically in favour of general reform in addition to their advocacy of home rule, but all too often an enthusiasm for denominational education might be the subterfuge of the liberal, only half-heartedly in favour of home rule. In such a contest, clerical sympathy generally went with the liberal in possession rather than with the radical nationalist. In Ennis, for example, the sitting member, William Stacpoole, was a typical example of the 1868 liberal, seeking re-election on the basis of a last-minute espousal of home rule; he had not even attended the conference in the previous November. Both the Nation and the Irishman were united for once in suspicion of his motives; <sup>(1)</sup> the latter ridiculed the home rule utterances of a member who had voted for coercion. The eccentric Donal C. O'Brien first took the field against him, but a stronger candidate being found necessary, the league for once decided to intervene directly, and upon the motion of Martin and Galbraith the council requested the veteran <sup>(2)</sup> O'Gorman Mahon to undertake the advocacy of home rule.

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1 Nation, 31 Jan. 1874; Irishman, 31 Jan.

2 Nation, 31 Jan., Irishman, 7 Feb., Clare Journal, 2 Feb.

The clergy, however, remained faithful to Stacpoole; he was accompanied on canvass by the Reverend R. Fitzgerald, C.C., and in the nomination, at which Mahon was proposed by the local home rulers, Stacpoole was nominated by the Very Reverend Thomas John Mac Redmond, D.D., president of Killaloe diocesan college. (1) At the poll the sitting member was returned.

There were several similar cases of clerical partiality for sitting liberals of dubious nationalist zeal. In county Clare the contest was conducted upon a peculiar three-cornered basis. The sitting members were the liberal Sir Colman O'Loghlen, who had not attended the conference in November but who now resurrected the nationalist principles of his youth for the benefit of a new generation, and the conservative C. M. Vandaleur, who had voted for disestablishment; the third candidate was Lord Francis Conyngham, an active home ruler who enjoyed the full confidence of the league. (2) The three candidates were at great pains from the outset to make clear their total dissociation from each other. (3) The clergy worked and spoke from the pulpit for O'Loghlen, who had also the enthusiastic

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1 Nation, 31 Jan. 1874. Mahon, in addition, does not seem to have been regarded as a strong candidate by the local voters.  
 2 Nation, 21 Feb. He was the second son of the Marquess of Conyngham, one of the largest landowners in Ireland.  
 3 Clare Journal, 5 Feb.

support of the Freeman's Journal; <sup>(1)</sup> the bishop was reported  
as favouring Vandaleur as his colleague; <sup>(2)</sup> the home rulers  
worked for Conyngham and distrusted O'Loghlen. <sup>(3)</sup> But the  
ballot had made an anachronism of liberal conservatives like  
Vandaleur; Conyngham gained ground; he was adopted by the  
farmers' clubs and at the nomination was proposed by  
the redoubtable Father Quaid. <sup>(4)</sup> At the last minute priests,  
liberals, and home rulers united to return their respective  
candidates. <sup>(5)</sup>

In the single-seat constituency of Athlone,  
traditionally the carpetbagger's prey, no such compromise  
was possible. The sitting liberal, J. J. Ennis, had formerly  
enjoyed the confidence of the clergy, but as an unashamed  
camp-follower of Gladstone he was repudiated by the  
nationalists. Several candidates entered the field against  
him, including the persistent D. J. Reardon, former member  
for the borough, Edward Sheil, son of General Sir Justin  
Sheil and nephew of Richard Lalor Sheil, <sup>(6)</sup> and E. R. King  
Harman. The Nation and the Irishman both supported Harman  
against Sheil; in the words of the Nation, 'the former is a  
well-known, well-tryed, and thoroughly trusted member of the

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1 Clare Journal, 2 Feb. 1874, Freeman's Journal, 27 Jan.

2 Clare Journal, 2 Feb.

3 Irishman, 7 Feb.

4 Freeman's Journal, 2, 5 Feb.

5 ibid., 9 Feb.

6 Irishman, 31 Jan.

home rule party, and the latter is utterly untried and  
 utterly unknown.<sup>(1)</sup> But the clergy retained their old  
 distrust of King Harman; a clerical meeting under the  
 chairmanship of Dr Gillooly, Bishop of Elphin, repudiated  
 Ennis and endorsed Shiel,<sup>(2)</sup> who was returned.

In Mayo the sitting home rule member, George  
 Ekins Browne, who held George Henry Moore's old seat, was  
 secure, but the contest for the second seat produced a direct  
 if impermanent clerical victory. Here John O'Connor Power,  
 a lecturer in St Jarlath's College, Tuam, who had made a  
 marked impression at the home rule conference, entered the  
 field with the backing of the Irishman, letters of support  
 from Martin and Henry, and claiming the personal approval of  
 Butt himself.<sup>(3)</sup> The clergy, however, distrusted Power;  
 even the fiercely nationalist Father Lavelle could not be  
 charitable in his regard.<sup>(4)</sup> A meeting of the clergy of  
 Tuam, Killala, and Achonry, presided over by Dr MacHale  
 himself, appear to have ignored Power's claims; Thomas

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1 Nation, 14 Feb. 1874.  
 2 By the lowest possible margin, one vote, after a disputed  
 result.  
 3 Irishman, 7 Feb.  
 4 'My Dear Mr Butt', he wrote: 'You may have often heard the  
 question put - "Who is this Mr O'Connor Power?". I often  
 did but never could get an answer. I am, however, now in  
 a position to tell you that he is the bastard son of a  
 policeman named Fleming from Co. Cavan, and a house  
 painter by trade, who has managed to live on his wits and  
 the gullibility of others and myself for years -!!!'  
 (Lavelle to Butt, 12 Mar. 1874, Butt MSS). Power never  
 seems to have enjoyed the support of the Nation.  
 (Nation, 31 Jan.)



Tighe, a young catholic landowner, was invited to stand as Browne's colleague. (1) Power withdrew in deference to the wishes of the clergy, (2) but his supporters, and the advanced party in the home rule movement, bitterly resented the slight upon their most fluent spokesman, (3) and Tighe's election being invalidated upon a technicality, they were able in the subsequent by-election to reverse the result.

In King's County, on the other hand, the coalition of clergy and liberals was overpowering. Here the two sitting members were blatant examples of the liberal timeserver. Sir Patrick O'Brien had attended the conference, and joined the league in January 1874, endorsing its programme before the electorate; (4) David Sherlock condescended merely to incorporate a vague endorsement of the home rule demand in his election address. (5) At the outset of the campaign the Nation demanded the replacement of Sherlock at the very least; (6) neither candidate, it held, was worthy in ideal circumstances to be a national representative. (7) Bernard C.

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1 Nation, 14 Feb. 1874, Irishman, 7 Feb.  
 2 Freeman's Journal, 6 Feb.  
 3 Nation, 14 Feb., John Ferguson to Butt, 21 Feb., Butt M.S.  
 4 Nation, 31 Jan. 1874; Irishman, 31 Jan.  
 5 'It is obvious that the House of Commons cannot satisfactorily dispose of the accumulated business of the United Kingdom, and, being convinced that the people of Ireland are competent to manage their own affairs, and feeling that a large and influential portion of my constituents desire a domestic government, I am prepared to vote for "Home Rule" in Ireland.' (Nation, 31 Jan.)  
 6 ibid.  
 7 ibid., and 7 Feb.

Molloy, a former papal soldier whose membership of the league (1) had the merit of some antiquity, addressed the county; (2) other candidates were W. A. Gowing, (3) A. W. Birmingham, (4) and the conservative P. Hynes. Molloy seems to have been (5) the candidate most favoured by the home rule organisation.

But the Freeman's Journal was wholeheartedly in favour of the sitting members. Sherlock canvassed Banagher with two of the local clergy; the parish priest and curates of Personstown (6) conducted him through their town; he was similarly escorted in Tullamore, where he addressed the electors from the chapel yard. Molloy reminded them of his opponents' inconsistency on the principal issue of the hour, but on the last Sunday before the poll the clergy throughout the whole county called upon the people to vote for O'Brien (7) and Sherlock. The two liberal home rulers were elected.

Kildare was the scene of a very similar division. The sitting members, the Right Honorable W. H. F. Cogan and Lord Otho Fitzgerald, were dismissed as whigs by the Nation (8) from the outset. A county meeting called by the local tenants' defence association adopted C. H. Meldon, a Dublin

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- 1 Nation, 31 Jan. 1874.
  - 2 Irishman, 7 Feb.
  - 3 ibid., 3 Jan.
  - 4 Nation, 7 Feb.
  - 5 ibid.
  - 6 Freeman's Journal, 4 Feb.
  - 7 ibid., 10 Feb.
  - 8 Nation, 31 Jan.

barrister and a small landlord, and Captain H. F. Morgan as the home rule candidates. Meldon was chosen on the recommendation of the Very Reverend John Nolan, P. P. Cogan was refused a hearing. In the days which followed Meldon seems to have won considerable liberal support, (1) including that of the farmers and of the Freeman's Journal. A clerical meeting presided over by the Reverend Dr Kehoe, P.P., adopted Meldon and Fitzgerald as candidates, the latter on the ground that he was a popular landlord. As for Captain Morgan, said Dr Kehoe, he agreed with Father Nolan, another cleric present, who had remarked that he was not the worse for being a protestant, but he thought that:

A great Irish catholic constituency might get a better candidate than an English protestant soldier, and at this crisis it was of special importance that catholics should be sent to parliament to watch the interests of catholic education. (2)

At the poll Cogan was returned with Meldon.

A sufficient number of cases have been cited to allow the deduction that in those instances, and they were quite frequent, in which a liberal candidate who endorsed home rule was opposed by a nationalist of the new order, the Freeman and the clergy were generally willing to accept as adequate the pronouncements of the liberal, the Nation and the home rule organisation quicker to question his sincerity. In Waterford County Sir John Esmonde declared

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1 Freeman's Journal, 30 Jan. 1874; Nation, 7 Feb.  
 2 Freeman's Journal, 2 Feb.

himself in favour of 'any well-defined system which shall (without endangering the integrity of the empire) transfer to Irishmen the management of purely Irish affairs.'<sup>(1)</sup>

The Nation called for his rejection as a 'pure and simple ministerialist';<sup>(2)</sup> but the Freeman thought his reservation

might be regarded as 'supererogatory', and urged his re-election.<sup>(3)</sup> Not even their aversion to the liberal,

however, could enable the home rulers to swallow his only rival, Pearson Longbottom, an English carpetbagger of dubious origin and wonderfully comprehensive principles, and Esmonde was re-elected faute de mieux. In Tipperary the sitting liberal, Captain White, was joined by the Honorable Wilfred O'Callaghan, son of Lord Lismore, whose home rule declarations

were scarcely more explicit than those of Esmonde.<sup>(4)</sup> But here as in Waterford no suitable opponent could be found by the local organisation in the short time available. Kickham and his associates nominated John Mitchel, but the advanced vote was divided by the intrusion of Peter Gill of the

Advocate, and the nationalist contribution was largely negative. White was shouted down in Thurles,<sup>(5)</sup> but the

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1 Freeman's Journal, 6 Feb. 1874.

2 Nation, 7 Feb.

3 Freeman's Journal, 5 Feb.

4 'The British parliament is admittedly overweighted and unable to discharge the very important functions entrusted to it by the Nation, and self-government for Ireland, and the exclusive management of her own affairs, so far as it will not be inconsistent with the integrity of the United Kingdom, shall have my warm support.' (Nation, 31 Jan.)

5 Freeman's Journal, 5 Feb.

clergy, meeting in Killaloe, adopted him with O'Callaghan,  
 and the two were returned. (1) A similar division took place  
 in Cork City, where Mitchel was also unsuccessfully nominated  
 by the advanced party. The liberals worked for their sitting  
 representative N. D. Murphy, whose espousal of home rule was  
 little more than a year old, and the home rulers for Joseph  
 Ronayne. Ronayne would not coalesce with the Mitchel party,  
 but he was careful to dissociate himself from Murphy. (2)  
 In Wexford County, on the other hand, the two sitting  
 ministerialists had few adherents; interest centred upon  
 the choice of a colleague to accompany Sir George Bowyer, a  
 former representative who was returning to political life in  
 the home rule interest. The Nation and the Irishman urged  
 the claims of George Delany, a consistent and active member  
 of the league who had been invited to stand by the local  
 farmers' club. (3) But the clergy chose the chevalier Keyes  
 O'Clery in his place, a choice ascribed sarcastically by the  
Irishman to the latter's expressed determination 'to restore  
 the pope to his temporal authority as soon as he gets inside

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1 Freeman's Journal, 6 Feb. 1874.  
 2 Nation, 14 Feb. The result was: Ronayne (HR) 1,917  
 Murphy (HR) 1,643  
 Goulding (Con) 1,191  
 Pim (Con) 1,097  
 Mitchel (Nat) 511  
 3 Irishman, 31 Jan., Nation, 31 Jan.

4 Freeman's Journal, 3 Feb.  
 5 Ibid., 9, 11, and 13 Feb.  
 6 Ibid., 7 Feb.  
 7 Ibid., 14 Feb.

the hall of St. Stephen's.' <sup>(1)</sup> Bowyer and O'Clery were adopted by a county meeting as the popular candidates and <sup>(2)</sup> elected.

There were, of course, several cases in which the clergy were totally identified with the aims of their home rule constituents. J. G. Biggar and W. G. Fay in <sup>(3)</sup> Cavan, <sup>(4)</sup> George Bryan and P. Martin in Kilkenny County, <sup>(5)</sup> M. W. O'Reilly and George Errington in Longford, <sup>(6)</sup> Mitchel Henry and Captain Nolan in Galway County, <sup>(7)</sup> R. P. Blennerhassett in Kerry, <sup>(8)</sup> P. J. Smyth and Lord Francis Montagu in Westmeath, were all swept into parliament with enthusiastic clerical and in some cases outspoken episcopal support, and the work of the parish clergy in defiance of their bishop in Louth, Drogheda, and Dundalk has already been mentioned. But even in some of these cases the clergy showed a preference for a certain type of candidate. In Galway, it will be recalled, Nolan rather than Henry had always enjoyed clerical support. After the election Henry wrote to Butt:

A few days before the polling a vast number of priests instigated I think by all three of the bishops went round and begged the voters to plump for Nolan - fearing he might

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1 Irishman, 7 Feb. 1874, Freeman's Journal, 4 Feb.

2 Irishman, 14 Feb.

3 Nation, 14 Feb., Freeman's Journal, 4 Feb.

4 ibid.

5 Freeman's Journal, 3 Feb.

6 ibid., 9, 11, and 13 Feb.

7 Nation, 7 Feb.

8 ibid., 14 Feb.

be left out. Darcy plumped 495, Nolan 385, and I had only 67. (1)

In Kilkenny and Longford Bryan and O'Reilly had been elected as liberals in 1868; O'Reilly declared his life to be devoted to the cause of catholic education. (2) Errington, his colleague in Longford, was a distinguished catholic layman and honorary secretary of the Catholic Union; Martin in Kilkenny was a barrister of uncertain origins. None seem to have been members of the Home Rule League; Bryan and O'Reilly had attended the conference. The address of the Bishop of Ossory, Dr Moran, in support of Martin in Kilkenny, made no mention of home rule; at this crisis, it declared, it is most important that our catholic people should have as their representatives in parliament men able and willing to defend our religious as well as our national interest. Your address, like that of Mr Bryan, is most catholic, and sets forth, in no uncertain terms, the popular principles of this country. (3)

This ambivalence between the claims of denominational education and of home rule expresses much that was latent in the conflict between liberal and nationalist home rulers. Home rule was 'the one great object to which all our energies should be directed', declared Isaac Butt in his address to the electors of Limerick City; (4) 'the Irish

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1 Henry to Butt, 20 Feb. 1874, Butt MSS.  
2 Freeman's Journal, 27 Jan.  
3 ibid., 4 Feb.  
4 Irishman, 31 Jan. He did, however, promise to agitate also for franchise and grand jury reform, industrialisation, repeal of the coercion acts, tenant right, denominational education, and amnesty.

platform is home rule and denominational education',  
 announced the Freeman: 'Let no one get a vote who is not  
 in favour of these two principles' <sup>(1a)</sup> ... It is appropriate  
 that Butt's own constituency should provide a final  
 illustration of this tacit distinction. Never again did  
 Butt enjoy the support of the advanced party to a degree as  
 enthusiastic as in this election. John Daly, 'leader of the  
 nationalists', <sup>(1)</sup> and later to become a bitter critic of  
 the home rule party, spoke and worked for Butt throughout the  
 campaign;

he defended the prisoners without fee or reward. He took the  
 parts of the priests of Galway when they were assailed by  
 Keogh, and he conducted the home rule conference with an  
 ability which any prime minister might envy. The other  
 candidates promised everything which Ireland wanted - if  
 necessary, they would bleed for their country. But after  
 the election they would probably forget all their promises. (2)

At another meeting he declared:

He was a man of peace, and would willingly lead them in the  
 fight for home rule, as he had led them before in time of  
 trouble and danger (cheers). (3)

W. H. O'Sullivan, Daly, and others of the same persuasion  
 took part in monster torchlight processions and demonstrations  
 in Butt's interest; thousands of people marched in trade  
 organisations and bands. <sup>(4)</sup> The clergy and the liberals did  
 not, of course, oppose Butt; they appear, however, to have

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1a Freeman's Journal, 3 Feb.  
 1 Irishman, 24 Feb. 1874.  
 2 Limerick Reporter, 3 Feb. Also Irishman, 14 Feb.,  
Freeman's Journal, 30 Jan., 2, 4, and 5 Feb.  
 3 Irishman, 7 Feb.  
 4 Freeman's Journal, 5 Feb.



taken little part in his campaign, devoting themselves to the cause of Richard O'Shaughnessy, a catholic barrister who had made a special study of the education question, whose claim to the second seat was challenged by several other candidates, including the conservative home ruler Sir Peter

(1)  
Tait. O'Shaughnessy found no favour among the advanced party, and the rival parties clashed violently one Saturday night; (2) but at the poll he was returned with Butt and both factions were satisfied.

So far in this section two general principles have been advanced. Rarely, in 1874, did the catholic church in Ireland put itself forward as the opponent of the home rule movement. In the one notable instance where a catholic bishop did thus intervene directly, in Louth, he found himself repudiated, not only by the electors, but by the majority of his own parochial clergy. On the other hand, the clergy could frequently exert a less direct influence; where two or more home rulers were in opposition, or where a sitting liberal member who had lately endorsed home rule was opposed by another home ruler, the clergy in a considerable number of instances threw their weight decisively upon the side of the liberal. In this way they added the power of clerical opinion to the forces making for the preservation,

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1 Irishman, 7 Feb. 1874, Limerick Reporter, 30 Jan.

2 ibid., 3 Feb.

under a new guise, of the liberal character of the Irish representation.

Mention must, however, be made in conclusion of some notable exceptions to this rule. In some cases the wishes of the clergy were ignored, and alternative candidates, usually of more advanced views, were elected. In Meath, where Edward McEvoy had retired from the representation because of his inability to accept the home rule plan,<sup>(1)</sup> the majority of the clergy seem to have favoured as the colleague of John Martin Alderman P. P. MacSwiney, who addressed the electors as a 'lifelong repealer', prepared now to accept the home rule plan as a substitute.<sup>(2)</sup> The Freeman also acclaimed MacSwiney the 'popular' candidate; his success, it commented, would be 'hailed by the catholic party as a valuable accession to their parliamentary force.'<sup>(3)</sup> But Nicholas Ennis, a tenant farmer of the county, was the choice both of his class and of the local home rule association.<sup>(4)</sup> MacSwiney had to retire, recognising 'the danger to nationality and conscience by having four liberals in the field',<sup>(5)</sup> and the clergy, realising that Martin and Ennis 'would be regarded by the

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1 Freeman's Journal, 28 Jan. 1874.  
 2 ibid., 2, 4 Feb.  
 3 ibid., 3 Feb.  
 4 Nation, 7 Feb., Freeman's Journal, 3 Feb.  
 5 Freeman's Journal, 4 Feb.

vast majority of the electors as the most suitable and eligible men', waived all personal inclinations and endorsed their candidature. <sup>(1)</sup> In Galway City the clergy were able to compel the retirement of Sir Rowland Blennerhassett, not on account of his views upon self-government, which were somewhat indeterminate, but because of his approval of and unrepentant support for Gladstone's university bill. <sup>(2)</sup> They were unable, however, to secure the election of the candidate whom they favoured as his successor, Frank Hugh O'Donnell. This young lawyer, returning from London to attend the home rule conference the previous November, had antagonised many at that gathering by his outspoken reverence for the imperialist tradition, but he had, in any case, constructed his political position at this stage of his career rather upon his reputation as an expert advocate of denominational education than as a home ruler, and he arrived in Galway armed with a testimonial from Cardinal Manning. <sup>(3)</sup> But the former member for Galway, George Morris, whose expulsion from the representation in 1868 was discussed in an earlier chapter, <sup>(4)</sup> now returned as an advocate of home rule and denominational education, and in the less enthusiastically pro-liberal context of this election won

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1 Freeman's Journal, 4 Feb. 1874.

2 ibid., 29 Jan., 2 Feb.

3 ibid., 31 Jan.; a gambit which drew sarcastic comment from the Irishman.

4 see above, chapter IV, pp. 67-75.

back his seat. The other sitting liberal, Viscount  
St Lawrence, was re-elected.<sup>(1)</sup>

But by far the most remarkable of these exceptional cases was that of Limerick County. Here the elevation of William Monsell to the peerage as Lord Emly in December 1873 caused a by-election which in the event was run off as part of the general contest. The campaign, however, naturally commenced a full month before Gladstone's decision to dissolve parliament. First in the field was James Kelly, son of John J. Kelly, a onetime member of the Repeal Association.<sup>(2)</sup> But his candidature was unacceptable both to the tenant farmers and to the nationalists. The former recalled his father's record as an evictor,<sup>(3)</sup> the latter were doubtful of the sincerity of his home rule pledges. He had only lately joined the Home Rule League, and, wrote John Ellard, one of Butt's most loyal supporters in Limerick, possessed the support both of all Monsell's 'little whigs and satellites' and of the Dublin Evening Post, 'enough to damn him in my estimation as a politician';

The opinion here is that he is a mere nominee of Monsell's and the bishop, and that he has been allowed to come forward for home rule, which he makes a secondary question to education in his address.<sup>(4)</sup>

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1 St Lawrence's father, the Earl of Howth, dying suddenly on polling day, the member for Galway succeeded to the title; in the ensuing by-election O'Donnell was this time successful, but was subsequently unseated on the ground of clerical intimidation. He did not re-enter parliament until his election for Dungarvan in 1877.  
2 Ellard to Butt, 23 Dec. 1873, Butt MSS.  
3 W.H. O'Sullivan to Butt, 24 Dec. 1873, *ibid.*  
4 Ellard to Butt, 25 Dec. 1873, *ibid.*

The Limerick Farmers' Club met on 31 December, and on the proposal of Johnston Russell and Michael Ryan of Bruree, two more of Butt's most active supporters in the county, resolved to return W. H. O'Sullivan of Kilmallock free of expense. <sup>(1)</sup> O'Sullivan was a prosperous tenant-farmer and hotel proprietor, and an exceptionally strong candidate insofar as he possessed the affection of both the main popular groups, not normally noted for their co-operation, the farmers, to whose class he belonged, and the advanced nationalists, with whom he had close ties, not least through the long imprisonment of his son as a suspected fenian in 1867. This latter association, however, made him anathema to clerical authority. Butt himself seems to have first suggested to O'Sullivan that he should stand, <sup>(2)</sup> and in private the home rule leader certainly favoured him more than Kelly, and was confident of his success. <sup>(3)</sup> But the selection of O'Sullivan was met with unexpected resolve by the clergy. A meeting of eighty priests, under the presidency of Dr Butler, bishop of Limerick, adopted, with only five dissentients, a manifesto in favour of Kelly; the return of O'Sullivan, it declared, would be a disaster to home rule which would confirm the worst fears of those who already suspected the movement to be no more than

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1 O'Sullivan to Butt, 3 Jan. 1874, Butt MSS.

2 O'Sullivan to Butt, 24 Dec. 1873, Butt MSS.

3 Butt to Henry, 3 Jan., 13 Jan., 1874, Butt MSS, vol 111, MS 832.

(1)  
 a cloak for separatism. The clerical pronunciamento precipitated a struggle of extraordinary bitterness, in which rival mobs frequently clashed and one of O'Sullivan's supporters was shot dead. (2) Both sides appealed repeatedly to Butt for some public declaration of his support; (3) such appeals were transmitted to the home rule leader, busily canvassing in the north and midlands of England, by his son Robert, with accompanying advice to stay out of a dangerous controversy. (4) This was the kind of advice which Butt was glad to be able to take; to the request of Kelly's agent, Jonas Blackall, for a statement he replied declining to be drawn into correspondence concerning the contest; to Ellard (5) he sent a copy of Blackall's letter.

As their campaign gathered way, however, the supporters of O'Sullivan became confident that Butt's intervention would be superfluous. Ellard wrote:

You will not be asked again to interfere in our election and you should not do so, we can win in a canter without you, the bishop's manifesto notwithstanding.

The Limerick priests, he asserted, were not in fact

1 Nation, 17 Jan. 1874. O'Sullivan, writing in this issue, denied that the minority at this meeting was as small as the figure quoted in the press and above.

2 Nation, 14 Feb. 1874.

3 J. Russell to Butt, 30 Dec. 1873; O'Sullivan to Butt, 4, 6 Jan. 1874; H. O'Shea to Butt (with signatures of John Daly and others) 7 Jan. 1874; J.F.X. O'Brien to Butt, 8, 12 Jan. 1874; and for Kelly, J. Blackall to Butt, 7 Jan. 1874. Butt MSS.

4 R. Butt to I. Butt, 30 Dec. 1873, 5 Jan. 1874, Butt MSS.

5 Butt to Blackall, 9 Jan. 1874; Ellard to Butt, undated; Butt MSS.

unanimously in favour of Kelly, while the Cashel priests supported O'Sullivan. (1) Protests had stopped the reading of the manifesto in some churches, (2) and the archbishop of Cashel, while declining to intervene on the ground that he could not oppose Dr Butler, had admitted that out of thirteen parishes in the Limerick part of his diocese, twelve were for O'Sullivan, the odd one being Kelly's own parish priest. (3) The farmers' club met again and reaffirmed its support for O'Sullivan; by a majority of 28 to 17 it decided to leave the issue as between Kelly and Synan, the sitting member, to the electors. (4)

With O'Sullivan obviously gaining ground, the clergy began to look for a way of retreat. Synan telegraphed to Butt asking him to receive a deputation from the bishop and clergy to appeal to him to stand as a compromise candidate; (5)

The parties who accepted a candidate without consultation with the people regret what they have done.... The advanced section of the home rulers having proposed Mr O'Sullivan I believe as a protest against dictation may be induced by you and the council of the league to withdraw him in your favour. If matters proceed as at present, all moderate men and all ecclesiastics tell me they will despair of any good from home rule. (6)

As to Kelly he would be abandoned by the priests at a moment's notice. In fact he is a mere puppet and you

1 Ellard to Butt, undated, Butt MSS.

2 Ellard to Butt, 12 Jan. 1874, Butt MSS.

3 Ellard to Butt, 8 Jan. 1874, Butt MSS; Irishman, 21 Feb.

4 Freeman's Journal, 2 Feb.

5 Synan to Butt, 6 Jan., Butt MSS.

6 Synan to Butt, 9 Jan., Butt MSS.

must regard him as nothing more.... The contest here had assumed two aspects, one of division between home rulers - the other of a fight of class against class, and both are equally fatal to the cause. (1)

Butt, however, while unwilling to come out openly on O'Sullivan's side, was not so gullible as to allow himself to be used to extricate the whigs from an untenable position, and in the process of so doing to leave the city open to a similar conflict. The three candidates went to the poll amid tremendous excitement, and the result was a crushing defeat for the clerical nominee:

O'Sullivan	3,521
Synan	2,856
Kelly	995.

(2)

The contest in Limerick County, however, was in no sense typical of the 1874 election: it was rather the exception that proves the rule already stated - that a candidate of liberal background, and clerical support, who was prepared to make some concession to home rule feeling in his public statements, was usually able to overcome the opposition of a possibly more genuine home rule candidate who had little more than his nationalism to recommend him, even where the latter had the more or less official support of the home rule organisation. The liberal home ruler represented in a sense an effort to prolong pre-1870 political

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1 Synan to Butt, 10 Jan. 1874, Butt MSS.  
2 Nation, 14 Feb.



techniques into a new era; the advanced home ruler like O'Sullivan, on the other hand, was entirely the product of the nationalist conflict. The latter was to triumph under Parnell; for the moment the former was able to preserve a semblance of his political oligarchy. Limerick County showed the power of arbitration which an active home rule organisation could hold throughout the constituencies, but its current national leader would not, as he considered, stoop to exert that latent strength. O'Sullivan's victory, the exception in 1874, looks forward to Parnell's historic intervention in Ennis in 1879.

(d) Ulster

This chapter has been concerned largely with the individual contests in this election. Different instances have been cited to illustrate some consistent principles. In the next chapter we shall endeavour to draw these strands together, and to analyse the result of the contest as a whole. But before doing so passing reference must be made to one aspect of the election so far neglected. In the chapters dealing with the 1868 election, it will be recalled that a section was devoted to the consideration of the reactions in Ulster to the issues of that contest. This was appropriate enough since in 1868 the same issues were at the forefront of political controversy throughout the whole

island; Ulster as much as the south was aroused by the church issue, and the liberal viewpoint was not without an active body of supporters, albeit a minority and largely confined to the catholics and a section of the presbyterians. But it is perhaps not too much to say that 1868 was the last contest in which the political divisions of the rest of the country reproduced themselves inside the northern province.

The explanation for this state of affairs in 1874 did not lie in any dearth of political activity in Ulster. Of her nineteen constituencies, no less than seventeen were contested at the poll, compared with only six in 1868. But home rule candidates figured in only two of these contests, in Cavan and in Monaghan. In Monaghan John Madden, who, it will be recalled, addressed the county in 1871, and P. MacMahon, whose name had also been canvassed at that time, both stood again in the home rule interest. The catholic voters tended to favour MacMahon more than the Orange home ruler, and once again Madden was compelled to withdraw. In the poll the two conservatives, John Leslie and S. E. Shirley, were elected. In Cavan a sweeping home rule triumph, claimed, incidentally, for the liberal party by the Derry Standard, was won by W. G. Fay and

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1 Madden to Butt, 6, 12 Mar. 1874, Butt MSS.  
 2 Leslie 2,481  
 Shirley 2,417  
 MacMahon 2,105  
 3 Derry Standard, 4 Feb.

J. G. Biggar, at the expense of the liberal-conservative E. J. Saunderson, who had represented the county since 1865.<sup>(1)</sup> But Cavan was scarcely typical of Ulster constituencies; it possessed a large catholic population organised, unlike that of Monaghan, vigorously and unanimously by the local clergy behind two agreed home rule candidates.<sup>(2)</sup> The nomination papers of the two home rulers were signed by the bishop, Dr Conaty, the vicar-general, and the vicar-foreign of the diocese.<sup>(3)</sup>

But home rule held no place as an issue in the other Ulster contests. Out of forty-three election addresses examined, only two, those of Biggar and Fay, supported it.<sup>(4)</sup> John Leslie in Monaghan expressed his doubts as to what the phrase meant;<sup>(5)</sup> R. P. Dawson (Londonderry County),<sup>(6)</sup> Lord Claude Hamilton (Tyrone),<sup>(7)</sup> Thomas Conolly (Donegal),<sup>(8)</sup> and Lord Crichton (Enniskillen)<sup>(9)</sup> were sure it meant something subversive of the constitution. The Marquis of Hamilton, in Donegal,<sup>(10)</sup> and William Whitworth, in

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- |   |            |       |
|---|------------|-------|
| 1 | Fay        | 3,229 |
|   | Biggar     | 3,079 |
|   | Saunderson | 2,310 |
- 2 Nation, 7, 14 Feb. 1874.
  - 3 Freeman's Journal, 4 Feb.
  - 4 I was unable to trace the addresses of Madden and MacMahon.
  - 5 Belfast News-Letter, 31 Jan.
  - 6 Derry Standard, 28 Jan.
  - 7 ibid., 31 Jan.
  - 8 ibid.
  - 9 Belfast News-Letter, 2 Feb.
  - 10 Derry Standard, 31 Jan.

(1)  
 Newry, expressed a vague sympathy with the vaguer proposal to establish local boards in Ireland to lighten the work of parliament. The other candidates did not consider it necessary even to refer to the agitation. The issue in Ulster was that of liberal policy in Ireland, with especial reference to the land. The national tenant right conference, attended by such members of parliament as William Johnston, Thomas McClure, and Philip Callan, and such other public figures as the Reverend William Johnston, Moderator of the General Assembly, J. G. Biggar, and Sharman (2) Crawford, was in session in Belfast at the end of January, and the issue of tenant-right remained at the forefront of controversy in the majority of the contests, especially those in the counties. A considerable number of the conservative candidates, in accordance with immemorial custom, confined their public statements to a terse re-assertion of their loyalty to the protestant constitution, and their hatred of Gladstone and all his works - especially his experiments with education; but amongst those who specified their political policies to any extent, two-thirds placed the land question first, and in most cases grand jury reform second. Some candidates, notably J. S. Crawford in Down, J. W. Ellison McCartney in Tyrone, R. Smyth in

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1 Freeman's Journal, 31 Jan. 1874.  
 2 Derry Standard, 24 Jan.

Londonderry County, and F. W. MacBlaine in Armagh, stood almost exclusively upon the tenant-right programme, and three of them, the conservative Macartney and the liberals Smyth and Crawford, were thus able to win seats formerly in orthodox conservative hands. At the end of the poll Ulster was represented by 19 conservatives, 1 tenant-right conservative, 7 liberals, and 2 home rulers, compared with 26 conservatives and 3 liberals in 1868. Liberalism, on the defensive throughout the rest of the country, had still some grounds for satisfaction with its performance in Ulster. But home rule, which had once called so enthusiastically to the protestant conservatives, had been able to penetrate no further than the southernmost county of the province.

during the election, begs the question. The poll  
 obtained sixty home rule victories, including 10 in Londonderry

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1 Derry Standard, 31 Jan. 1874; Freeman's Journal, 14 Feb.

liberal power, on the other hand, secured the election of the home rule members as liberals; some Conservatives joined the ranks of the home rule party, and some of the latter obtained George Davis (Galway City) for their party. The final answer has not been given to this most serious of questions: how many home rule candidates were elected in 1874?

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1 G. S. O'Brien, Life of G. S. Mitchell (1894), vol. 1, p. 69.  
 2 Galway, 21 Feb. 1874.  
 3 1874, 14 Feb.

Chapter XII

The 1874 election: the home rule victory

The election resulted in what the nationalists claimed as a sweeping home rule victory. R. B. O'Brien, in his *Life of Parnell*, followed the majority of the nationalist newspapers in claiming fifty-nine seats for home rule. <sup>(1)</sup> This estimate would have produced a result of:

home rule	59
conservatives	32
liberals	12.

But in the definition of a home rule member, the criterion adopted, i.e., his having endorsed the home rule demand during the election, begs the entire question. The Nation claimed sixty home rule victories, including in its list <sup>(2)</sup> Sir John Esmonde, member for Waterford County; some liberal papers, on the other hand, classified the majority of the home rule members as liberals; some conservative journals <sup>(3)</sup> claimed George Morris (Galway City) for their party. No final answer has yet been given to this most obvious of questions: how many home rule candidates were elected in 1874?

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1 R. B. O'Brien, Life of G. S. Parnell (3rd ed., 1899) vol 1, p. 69.  
 2 Nation, 21 Feb. 1874.  
 3 ibid., 14 Feb.

In endeavouring to answer this question, it is necessary first to reiterate one point. It has been repeatedly stressed above that there was no home rule party in the election; few candidates had the official support of the league, and its endorsement was in no way essential as a criterion for acceptance in the constituencies. The majority of the home rule candidates fought virtually as independents. This initial factor compels us to adopt different tests from those of today in assessing the size and homogeneity of the home rule representation.

In the last chapter we divided the home rule candidates into four types:-

- (1) sitting members of proven loyalty to home rule
- (2) new candidates who had similarly demonstrated their sincerity in the organisation
- (3) sitting liberal members of more recent conversion to home rule
- (4) new candidates of dubious origin with no record of service in the home rule movement.

Let us now, in an effort to answer the question posed above, apply these same tests to the sixty home rule members claimed by the Nation.<sup>(1)</sup>

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1 The number of members was actually 59, Callan being listed twice as stated above. For the full list of the sixty seats claimed and their representatives see Appendix Vt.

Ten fall immediately into the first category: Ronayne, Shaw, Callan, Henry, Blennerhassett, Butt, Martin, Browne, Smyth, and Redmond. Of these, P. J. Smyth had already given clear indication in public controversy with the leaders of the movement, of his lack of enthusiasm for the federal programme.

*cf. p. 289*

Ten of the newcomers to this parliament had already demonstrated their loyalty to home rule by service of one kind or another in the association or the league. These were: Biggar, Conyngham, O'Leary, Nolan, O'Sullivan, Sullivan, Ennis, MacCarthy, McKenna, and Bowyer. (1)

The new party thus had a nucleus of at most twenty members upon whose loyalty it might with any confidence have relied. The other thirty-nine were doubtful quantities. Nineteen of them had held seats in the outgoing parliament; one of them, Charles French, had been elected the previous June, at the age of twenty-two, as a liberal home ruler in

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1 In classifying these members I have erred if anything on the side of generosity, accepting long-standing membership of the Home Government Association as evidence of sincerity, an expectation which might appear reasonable but which was not always borne out. Sir George Bowyer joined the association in October 1871 and is included in the above list; returned to parliament in 1874 he sat habitually on the conservative front benches and usually accepted the government whip (Nation, 21 Oct. 1871). But any such apparent generosity arises from my desire to endeavour to estimate the strength of the home rule party as it appeared at the end of the general election of 1874, not as it seems to a later observer who knows the history of what followed.



Roscommon - the other eighteen had all been elected as liberals in 1868. These were:

- |                                |                               |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| N.D. Murphy (Cork City)        | E. J. Synan (Limerick Co)     |
| M. Downing (Cork Co)           | J. Brady (Leitrim)            |
| Sir C. O'Loghlen (Clare)       | M. W. O'Reilly (Longford)     |
| W. Stacpoole (Ennis)           | K. Digby (Queen's Co)         |
| Lord St Lawrence (Galway Boro) | E. Desse (Queen's Co)         |
| Sir J. Gray (Kilkenny City)    | The O'Conor Don (Roscommon)   |
| G. Bryan (Kilkenny Co)         | D. M. O'Conor (Sligo Co)      |
| Sir P. O'Brien (King's Co)     | Capt. C.W. White (Tipperary)  |
| D. Sherlock (King's Co)        | Sir J. Esmonde (Waterford Co) |

Let us examine, a little more closely, the degree to which these people had identified themselves with the home rule movement.

Six of them, O'Loghlen, Stacpoole, St Lawrence, Sherlock, White, and Esmonde had not attended or even held tickets for the home rule conference less than three months previously. One of them, Captain White, had offered the death of his father, Lord Annaly, on 3 September, as the reason for his absence; 'You know my views', he wrote to Butt:

'and I can only hope that a wise and prudent course of action may benefit the country in whose prospects and dearest interests we are all so deeply concerned. (1)

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1 White to Butt, 14 Nov. 1873, Butt MSS.

In his election address he had promised to support:

the proposal for such a federal arrangement as will give to an Irish parliament the management of exclusively Irish business, without detracting from the just influence of the imperial legislature. (1)

He does not appear to have been a member of the league.

Of the other five, O'Loughlen had represented Clare as a liberal since 1863, never previously feeling it incumbent upon him to support the home rule agitation. The taint of whiggery clung to him, said the Irishman. (2)

Steeple had neither attended the conference nor joined the league, and in the election had been opposed, it will be recalled, by one of the few candidates directly sent out by the leaders of the movement. St Lawrence had never previously shown any support for home rule; in his address he did not directly endorse the league programme:

I advocate that Irish affairs, as apart from those of Imperial interest, should be managed by the Irish people themselves, through their chosen representatives, in their own country. (3)

The last two, Sherlock and Esmonde, were probably the least reliable. Sherlock's pronouncement upon the question will be recalled:

It is obvious that the House of Commons cannot satisfactorily dispose of the accumulated business of the United Kingdom, and, being convinced that the people of Ireland are competent to manage their own affairs, and feeling that a large and

- 1 Nation, 7 Feb. 1874.
- 2 Irishman, 7 Feb.
- 3 Freeman's Journal, 2 Feb.

influential portion of my constituents desire a domestic government, I am prepared to vote for "home rule" in Ireland. (1)

Sherlock's guarded endorsement of home rule, coupled with his record of subservience to the liberal whip, had led the Nation and the local home rulers to agitate furiously for his removal; he 'ought not to get a vote from any patriotic elector in the county', wrote the Nation, (2) and it was the support of the local clergy and of the Freeman's Journal which had succeeded in returning him over the home rule candidate Molloy. As for Esmonde, he can scarcely be accused of insincerity, having made his attitude quite plain during the election, and being now included in the list of home rule members only by an enthusiastic stretching of the imagination on the part of the nationalist press. Dismissed by the Nation during the campaign as a 'pure and simple ministerialist', (3) but supported by the Freeman's Journal, (4) only the paralysing shortage of candidates had permitted him to escape the active opposition of the home rule organisation.

Of these eighteen liberals, the other twelve had either attended or held tickets for the national conference in the preceding November. But even amongst these no absolute loyalty to the league programme, let alone to its

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1 Nation, 31 Jan. 1874.  
2 ibid., 7 Feb.  
3 ibid.  
4 Freeman's Journal, 5 Feb.

leadership, can be assumed. None of them had given any striking evidence of their enthusiasm for the movement in previous years; in Gray alone, a timid and ponderous individual, had time given any evidence of a rationally developing attitude. Murphy had been induced to express sympathy with the movement by Ronayne's election as his colleague in the Cork City by-election in November 1872, but he had dissociated himself from the amnesty movement in the end of the previous decade and was disliked as a whig (1) both by the nationalists of Cork and by his own colleagues. He had declined to sign the requisition for the home rule conference because of his doubts as to the feasibility of the federal scheme, and at the conference had urged an adjustment of the union to incorporate the best points of federalism. (2) McCarthy Downing had made an enthusiastic declaration in favour of home rule at the conference, but it will be recalled that he was suspected by Butt and his intimates of having endeavoured to use his ecclesiastical connections in an effort to take over the leadership of both the home rule and the tenant-right movements; (3) he had opposed not only the imposition of a parliamentary pledge,

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1 Nation, 31 Jan. 1874; Ronayne to Butt, 27 Nov. 1872, Butt MSS.  
 2 Conference proceedings, pp. 111-13.  
 3 J. Russell to Butt, J.B. Kennedy to Butt, 14 Apr. 1873, Butt MSS; Butt to Callan, 16 Sept. 1873, Butt MSS, vol 11, MS 831. See also above, Chapter X, pp. 251-4.

but even the proposals for the holding of periodic national conferences and for the prior consultation of home rule members of parliament before the introduction of a bill by any one of their number, and he had urged that they should be bound to vote together only 'when it shall appear to them calculated to advance the cause of home rule and the general interests of Ireland.'<sup>(1)</sup> George Bryan had given no sign of active support for home rule before the conference, but in his election address he declared himself fully pledged to its programme.<sup>(2)</sup> Sir P. O'Brien had only joined the Home Rule League in January 1874.<sup>(3)</sup> Synan was another who had bitterly opposed the idea of a parliamentary pledge; the pledge of 1852, he said, 'was intended as a substitute for character, failed as a check, and produced the perjury';<sup>(4)</sup> the plan of periodic conferences he also thought absurd. Brady had not spoken at all at the conference; his sole reference to the topic of home rule in his address to the electors was his observation that their new power, if used with judgment and discretion, would lead to their future progress and social advancement - even to home rule.<sup>(5)</sup> The protests of his constituents compelled him to add a more formal endorsement of home rule by telegraph.<sup>(6)</sup> O'Reilly,

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1 Conference proceedings, pp. 182-3.

2 Nation, 7 Feb. 1874.

3 ibid., 31 Jan.

4 Conference proceedings, pp. 163-4.

5 Freeman's Journal, 2 Feb. 1874.

6 ibid., 13 Feb.

who was a prominent member of the Catholic Union and devoted most of his attention to educational questions, had also shown no previous interest in home rule and does not seem at any stage to have been a member of the league. At the conference he supported the plea of the O'Conor Don that the maximum amount of latitude should be allowed to the home rule representatives. (1) In the opinion of W. H. O'Sullivan, he was only a 'mock home ruler'. (2) Of the two O'Conors the younger, Denis, member for Sligo County, had given a 'cordial adherence' at the conference to the full federal programme, (3) but his elder brother had been the chief spokesman of those liberal critics of federalism who sought that complete freedom of interpretation should be allowed to the protagonists of the home rule demand; his speech at the conference had brought down upon him the criticisms of Butt and Sullivan, and their exchanges had been reckoned among the most crucial in that assembly. (4) Even the Freeman described as 'guarded' and 'not easy to paraphrase' his promised resolve:

to support any scheme which would, consistently with the preservation of all justly recognised rights, confer on my country the inestimable benefits of real self-government. (5)

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1 Conference proceedings, p. 92.  
 2 O'Sullivan to Butt, 24 Dec. 1873, Butt MSS.  
 3 Conference proceedings, p. 124.  
 4 ibid., pp. 81-91, 94-9.  
 5 Freeman's Journal, 30 Jan. 1874; Nation, 31 Jan.

Of the two representatives of Queen's County, Digby and Dease, Digby had distinguished himself at the conference by his carpings at the projected revival of the Irish House of Lords; <sup>(1)</sup> in the past he had endeavoured to substitute for the old Home Government Association a body of a more liberal character. <sup>(2)</sup> Dease had expressed himself at the conference with much more enthusiasm, <sup>(3)</sup> but his support was subject to a qualification of another kind. At the dissolution of parliament he had been extremely anxious to retire from public life, and had gone so far as to draw up his farewell address. It was only the pleadings of the Independent Club, unable to find a substitute at such short notice, which prevailed upon him to change his mind, on the understanding that he would not be able to give his full time to his parliamentary duties. <sup>(4)</sup> His constituents appear to have been uneasy about the sincerity of his home rule principles, a disquiet which would have mounted had they known <sup>(5)</sup> J.A. Dease's version of his cousin's relationship to them.

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- 1 Conference proceedings, p. 61.
  - 2 see above, Chapter VIII, pp. 179-80
  - 3 Conference proceedings, p. 144.
  - 4 M. Cahill to R. Lalor, 21 Jan. 1878; R. Lalor to E. Dease, 24 Jan. 1878; Lalor MSS, 8566.
  - 5 'I know not what his friends will expect of him in Queen's co nor how far he will be prepared to go when the time comes....' (J.A. Dease to Monsell, Undated, 1871). See also his refusal to his cousin to 'nibble' at home rule (J.A. Dease to E. Dease, 15 June 1871), and his letter to Monsell on Edmund's vote on the land bill (22 Mar. 1870). All in Monsell MSS, 8317.

It is, naturally, often much more difficult to ascertain the political antecedents and qualities of those twenty representatives who had not been members for Irish constituencies in the outgoing parliament. (1) Two of them possessed parliamentary experience, Lord Robert Montagu (Westmeath), and George Morris (Galway City). Montagu was a younger son of the Duke of Manchester; he had represented Huntingdon as an English conservative, voting, as late as 1869, against the disestablishment of the Irish church. His sudden conversion to catholicism terminated his career as a member of the English conservative party, which formally expelled him in 1873. (2) In 1872 he approached Butt in search of an alternative political venture:

I have spoken to our archbishop on the subject, and he expresses himself as very favourable to my project for standing for a seat in Ireland on the home rule platform (but remaining, in other respects, a conservative). (3)

How would Montagu reconcile these dual loyalties? In April 1873 he expressed the belief that the home rule members

- 1 These were:
- |                          |                               |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Brooks (Dublin City)     | Morris (Galway City)          |
| Collins (Kinsale)        | O'Byrne (Wicklow)             |
| Dunbar (New Ross)        | O'Callaghan (Tipperary)       |
| Errington (Longford)     | O'Clery (Wexford Co)          |
| Fay (Cavan)              | O'Gorman (Waterford City)     |
| Lewis (Carlow Boro)      | O'Keefe (Dungarvan)           |
| Martin, P. (Kilkenny Co) | O'Shaughnessy (Limerick City) |
| Meldon (Kildare)         | Power, R. (Waterford City)    |
| Montagu (Westmeath)      | Sheil (Athlone)               |
| Moore (Clonmel)          | Tighe (Mayo)                  |

2 Montagu to Butt, 1 May 1873, Butt MSS.  
 3 Montagu to Butt, 9 Mar. 1872, ibid.



should act 'in strictest discipline' on all questions under Butt, <sup>(1)</sup> but when asked the following autumn to sign the requisition for a national home rule conference, he insisted that his name should be published separately from those of the other signatories, together with the terms upon which he had signed, viz., the preservation of his conservative attitudes and his preference for that side of the house. <sup>(2)</sup>

When Butt objected to the making of this exception in his case, <sup>(3)</sup> he insisted upon writing himself to the press to make his position quite clear. 'Did you see Lord Robert Montagu's silly letter?' wrote Butt to Henry: <sup>(4)</sup>

'I could not help publishing it.' On this evidence Montagu was an eccentric rather than a reliable ally. As for George Morris, there is little indication of political activity in his career subsequent to his expulsion from the representation in 1868. He does not appear to have been at any time a member of the association or of the league, and <sup>(5)</sup> his return was claimed as a victory by the conservatives.

Finally, in the case of the eighteen members who had never previously sat in parliament, one is faced with an obscurity only partially penetrable. None seem to have been

1 Montagu to Butt, 24 Apr. 1873, Butt MSS.  
 2 Montagu to Butt, 30 Sept. 1873, Butt MSS.  
 3 Copy letter Butt to Montagu, 1 Nov. or Dec. 1873, *ibid.*  
 4 Butt to Henry, 3 Jan. 1874, Butt MSS, vol iii, MS 832.  
 5 Nation, 14 Feb. 1874.

members of the league. Maurice Brooks was a protestant merchant, now lord mayor of Dublin, who had been active in the liberal interest in 1868. (1) Endorsing home rule, he stood with the active support of the Nation and the local home rule leaders. (2) George Errington (Longford), was nephew of the archbishop of Trebizond, (3) and honorary secretary of the Catholic Union, (4) an organisation regarded by several home rulers as a device of Cardinal Cullen's to subvert the movement for independence. In the past of Charles Fay, a catholic solicitor and colleague of Biggar in Cavan, little of a political character is discernible, but he had at least, with Biggar, been bound by his supporters to the most stringent of all pledges in this election; at a special meeting on 1 February under the chairmanship of the nationalist Father O'Reilly, P.P. Kingscourt, it had been resolved;

That for the success of the home rule movement it is essentially necessary that our representatives hold themselves entirely independent of English ministers and English parties; that, therefore, the candidates chosen by Cavan - Messrs Fay and Biggar - be required and are hereby asked to pledge themselves, on entering parliament, to take their seats on the opposition benches; to vote on all party divisions, and on all divisions on questions of no concern to Ireland, against the present government, and against every government opposed to the concession of our legislative independence, and neither to accept for themselves, nor ask

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- 1 Freeman's Journal, 11 Nov. 1868.
  - 2 Nation, 31 Jan. 1874, Freeman's Journal, 31 Jan.
  - 3 Nation, 5 Sept. 1874.
  - 4 Freeman's Journal, 3 Feb. 1874.

nor take for their friends nor supporters, any place, grant, or favour from any British minister whatsoever. Lastly, should their constituents at any time judge them to have failed in the fulfilment of their pledges - that, in such an event, they promise to resign their seats when called upon by the majority of a meeting convened in the same manner, and composed of such elements as the meeting by which they were adopted in Cavan, on 30 January 1874. (1)

The example of the Cavan electors, unfortunately, inspired no other constituency to the imposition of a similar discipline upon its representatives.

Of the political career of Henry Owen Lewis, member for Carlow Borough, we have, on the other hand, some knowledge. In his election address he gave an unqualified adherence to the programme of the league, (2) which he had joined a few days previously, (3) but this enthusiasm must have been in some manner awakened since 1871, when in the Monaghan by-election he had stood as a liberal candidate in opposition to the home rule nominee John Madden. (4) Arthur Moore, member for Clonmel, was the only surviving son of Charles Moore who represented Tipperary as a liberal from 1865 to 1869; his explicit declaration for home rule was accepted without reserve by the Nation, (5) but his return was secured mainly upon the issue of education, upon which his opponent Bagwell had taken the Gladstonian viewpoint. (6)

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1 Nation, 7 Feb. 1874.  
2 ibid., 31 Jan.  
3 ibid.  
4 see above, Chapter VIII, pp. 184-6.  
5 Nation, 14 Feb. 1874.  
6 Freeman's Journal, 2 Feb. 1874.

Of the remainder, O'Callaghan in Tipperary, second son of Viscount Lismore, was distinguished mainly by the classic ambiguity of his home rule pronouncement, quoted in the last chapter. (1) The only previous political activity in the young life of Keyes O'Clery, member for Wexford County, had been as a soldier in the papal army, for his services in which the knighthood of the order of St. Gregory was conferred upon him. (2) John O'Keeffe, member for Dungarvan, on the other hand, was known to the citizens of that borough, wrote the Nation after his election, as 'a consistent and steadfast nationalist'. (3) O'Shaughnessy in Limerick was a young man who had acquired some reputation as an educationalist. Of the rest nothing of any political relevance can be discerned to prove whether they were genuine home rulers or carpetbaggers.

The conclusions which can be drawn from this systematic analysis are now, perhaps, apparent in all their simplicity. Fifty-nine members, representing sixty seats, were claimed for home rule by the Nation at the conclusion of the contest. (4) In this estimate it was followed at the time more or less exactly by the leaders of the nationalist movement and by the home rule press, and in later years by

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1 Chapter XI, p. 304, note 4.  
 2 Dod's Parliamentary Companion, 1876.  
 3 Nation, 14 Feb. 1874.  
 4 ibid., 21 Feb.

the historians of the period. The analytical consideration of those fifty-nine members, their political origins, their published statements, and the circumstances of their selection and return demonstrates the unreality of this estimate; valid perhaps then as a piece of political propaganda, its acceptance by the students of the period as a basis upon which to assess the potential power of the movement, and a yardstick against which to measure its failure, has forced the study of the period into a standpoint from which it is difficult to obtain a true perspective.

The Nation, it will be recalled, had warned the cautious of the scope for the opportunist and the carpetbagger on the one hand, and the deliverance for the liberal in retreat on the other, which were offered by Gladstone's precipitate dissolution of parliament; Butt himself had doubted that he could secure the return of a party one half in size the force which he had once hoped to command. The contest fought, home rule claimed the victory; but it claimed it as a political movement, playing the game of politics in an effort to win English opinion to a realisation of Irish discontent. The elements whose return Butt and <sup>the</sup>Nation had feared had seized their opportunity with thankfulness; the opportunists were only too numerous in the ranks of the fifty-nine.

From the normal sources of liberal education, and

In this chapter and the one before, these members have been classified by their pledges and by their antecedents, and by the circumstances of their return, in an effort to adduce some proof of their sincerity or insincerity, and, perhaps, to give <sup>an</sup> answer to that most obvious and least well-answered of the questions posed by this period - how many home rule members were returned in 1874. Fifty-nine men secured election after making some pledge to the movement. But these include the Esmondas and the O'Callaghans, whose dicta could have proceeded almost from the mouth of Gladstone. A mere endorsement of these two magic words is not then enough, and one is driven to adopt other criteria, which reveal the divergencies between the fifty-nine.

Twenty of these, it will be recalled, were men who had given some proof of their loyalty to the movement; these could fairly be claimed for home rule, though several in fact disappointed, and one, P. J. Smyth, defected within twelve months. Of the others, twenty were relatively unknown quantities. Some of these no doubt would prove loyal and useful representatives; Power and O'Gorman were to move to the forefront of the struggle. But Errington, Lewis, Montagu, Morris, and O'Callaghan, at least, had political origins or had made political statements scarcely conducive to confidence. Most of these twenty were drawn

from the normal sources of liberal representation, and appear to have been politically unknown and untested.

Last, and politically most typical, eighteen members went back into a parliament to which they had been elected before in the totally different context of 1868, when the political issues were social and denominational and when the possession of independent nationalist principles was not merely irrelevant but positively disadvantageous. By a slight and in several cases ambiguous extension of a creed which had secured political power to them for half a century, they found themselves the spokesmen of something to which they were by instinct foreign. Never before members of a party, would they now reconcile themselves to the leadership of a man who represented another tradition, the tory opponent of O'Connell who arrived at home rule via Davis, while they were coming to it via Gladstone? Could they be reconciled with the advanced nationalism of the Biggars and the O'Sullivans, over which they sought to retain a hereditary role as spokesmen and interpreters?

In Chapter XIV the establishment of the new party will be considered, and it will be possible at once to answer some of these questions. But the fifty-nine men whom Butt sought to incorporate in a home rule party were only partially home rulers. Perhaps one third genuinely

regarded themselves as elected to a new party discipline; one third were unknown; one third represented the dead hand of Irish liberalism. It was a triumph to have compelled the majority of the Irish representatives to accept home rule, but it was only a first step in a long process of political realignment. The calamities which followed can only be understood if a basic principle be conceded. The 1874 election was a victory for the home rule programme; it was, if anything, a defeat for the home rule movement, the defeat and the disappointment which Butt foresaw when the news of the dissolution first leaped to the headlines of the United Kingdom.

John Cashel Hoey wrote to Monsell during the election prophesying that the majority of Butt's party would be 'though home rule in the carnal part still good liberals at the heart'<sup>(1)</sup>. John Barry wrote to Butt from Newcastle;

There is no use disguising the fact that honest earnest Irishmen both at home and abroad are bitterly disappointed at the calibre of the majority of the men returned; the history of the next few years will endorse the correctness of their political foresight. It is said on all sides that you have not around you a sufficient number of the right stamp to keep the others in a straight line....<sup>(2)</sup>

'The victories we have just won are a great advancement to

1 Hoey to Monsell, 4 Feb. 1874, Monsell MSS, 8317.  
 2 Barry to Butt, 27 Feb., Butt MSS.



CHAPTER III.

The 1874 election - a study of the

our national cause;' concluded the Nation in a moment of candour, 'but we shall have to win them again, and to add to their number, before we reach the final settlement of the Irish question'.<sup>(1)</sup>

1 Nation, 14 Feb. 1874.

It has been remarked, in connection with the 1874 election, that the period between the two elections is far discussed, those of 1868 and 1874, and, however, the application of our irregular franchise, the ballot, to Irish politics. Even without the passing of the ballot, it would still be of interest to ask whether the character of the Irish representation altered at all in this period, in the launching of the home rule movement brought into politics a new and more placid type of representative. The first and the first of these two elections was conducted with the ancient formality of the open hustings, and the secret ballot the scarcity of the modern system, which such a procedure oblige.

It has already been remarked, in connection with the Cork City and Londonderry City by-elections in 1872, that the possible effect of the ballot was the subject of the most conflicting predictions. Some prophesied an end to the political power of the clergy; some the assistance from

CHAPTER XIII.

The 1874 election - class and representation under the ballot

It has been remarked, at the outset of this study, that the majority of nineteenth-century measures for the reform of the franchise were extended to Ireland only in part, and that the important measure introduced by Disraeli in 1867 touched scarcely at all upon the Irish representation. The period between the two elections so far discussed, those of 1868 and 1874, did, however, see the application of one tremendous innovation, the ballot, to Irish politics. Even without the passing of the ballot, it would still be of moment to ask whether the character of the Irish representation altered at all in this period, if the launching of the home rule movement brought into politics a new and more plebeian type of representative. The fact that the first of these two elections was conducted with the ancient formality of the open hustings, and the second under the secrecy of the modern system, makes such a comparison obligatory.

It has already been remarked, in connection with the Cork City and Londonderry City by-elections in 1872, that the possible effect of the ballot was the subject of the most conflicting predictions. Some prophesied an end to the political power of the clergy; some the exclusion from

politics of the landlords; some, perhaps wisest of all, expected matters to remain much as they were before. (1)

In appendix VII there is a list of the members elected to parliament in 1874, together with the occupation and religion of each. In the table (A) at the end of this chapter a statistical analysis of these members can be found. In this analysis the members are classified in three groups, which might be loosely described as the landed interest, middle class and lower middle class. In each case the occupation of a member has been defined as the means from which he drew his main financial support; for example, although Sir John Gray was a qualified medical practitioner, it is obviously more correct to classify him as a newspaper proprietor. In the case of the landed interest, Dr Conor Cruise O'Brien's definition of a landowner has been adopted, (2) i.e. the possession of a landed property valued at at least £1000. Some of those who fall into this category possessed professional qualifications; in such cases the criterion I have adopted has been their employment in practice. Charles Meldon, for example, had landed property, although somewhat less than the amount necessary for qualification; he practised as a barrister, and has been listed as such. McCarthy Downing, on the other hand, a qualified and practising

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1 T. M. Ray to O'Neill Daunt, 25 Feb. 1873, Hickey MSS, PC 411.  
2 Conor Cruise O'Brien, Parnell and his party, 1957, p. 18.

solicitor, is listed as a landowner, since his possession of over 4,000 acres in Cork and Kerry valued at £1,413 seems to argue not only his deriving a considerable income from the land but also his identification with its interests. (1)

It is this question of identification of interest which has above all dictated the classifications. It led me to include as separate sub-sections of class one the elder and younger sons of landowners, the former because obviously their interests would be in all likelihood those of the class to which they would inevitably belong, the latter because of the presumption of a similar identification, though here, the link being more tenuous, I have taken care to exclude those like Shiel in Athlone who had been put to some profession. The sum of these three groups I have taken as representing, within class one, the landed interest.

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1 The sources for my information have been the Return of owners of land in Ireland, [c. 1492], H.C. 1876, LXXX.61, and U. H. de Burgh: The landowners of Ireland, 1878. For other occupations I have consulted the relevant volumes of Dod's Parliamentary Companion, Thom's Directory, Complete Peerage (G.E.C.), Debrett's House of Commons Annual, Boase: Modern English Biography, and the DNB; the occasional item of information is given in the contemporary newspapers. For the educational backgrounds of members I have consulted the same reference works; also: Burtchaell, G.D. and Sadleir, T.U.: Alumni Dublinenses, 2nd ed., 1935; the Senior Lecturer's entrance matriculation lists, Trinity College, Dublin (MSS), and the relevant volumes of the Catholic Directory. In two cases where I was unable to obtain other information, those of E. G. Dease and G. Errington, I have followed their classification as landowners in Return... of the persons holding the commission of the peace in Ireland, pp. 62 and 74 H.C. 1884, (13), lxiii, 331.  
H.C. 1884, (13) lxiii, 331.

The second group is self-explanatory, except in the case of the 'rentiers'; I have placed in this category those members who appear to have followed no paid occupation but the source of whose means cannot be traced. The third class, that of farmers and shopkeepers, represents a lower stratum of society which is only beginning to gain its first representation in 1874.

With these terms defined, it is possible to answer some of the questions posed at the beginning of the chapter. The first and most obvious conclusion is the tremendous political importance of the landlords. Out of 105 seats in 1868, 54 were held by landowners, and 73 by representatives of the landed interest. Merchants, financiers, and newspaper owners supply the next highest total with 17 representatives; only 11 professional men are returned. The strength of this landlord representation had survived the forty years since emancipation and the first reform act, and it would not be overturned at a blow by the introduction of the ballot; the Irish elector in 1868 was only too glad to find a spokesman from the ranks of his social superiors; of the 65 liberal members returned, no less than 37 were drawn from the landed class. This was by modern standards a striking preponderance, but it is still more striking that of 40 conservative members 36 belonged to the landed interest. Commerce supplied 3 conservatives and

1. Dublin and Sligo Borough had been disfranchised, and Dublin held two seats.

17 liberals, the professions 1 conservative and 10 liberals. The more popular cause had the more plebeian representatives.

If this is an important conclusion, it is still more underlined in 1874. Between these dates two fundamental political upheavals had taken place. Not merely had the ballot replaced the open vote, but a new constitutional national movement had given some expression to the pent-up nationalism of the people. It has already been remarked that the introduction of the ballot did not immediately overturn the landed representation; but the combination of these two forces none the less had its effect. 73 out of 105 representatives were grouped in class one in 1868, but only 52 out of 102 came from the landowning class in 1874. <sup>(1)</sup>

The representation of the commercial classes remained steady, but the number of professional men rose from 11 to 25, and two tenant-farmers became the first representatives of their class to be elected.

Striking as these comparisons are, they can be pressed further with even more notable results. It was hardly to be expected that the combination of the ballot and home rule would produce an immediate purging of the representation; in the previous two chapters I have emphasised the number of liberals who were able to preserve their seats for the moment as home rulers. 65 of the members elected in 1874 had sat

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1 Cashel and Sligo Borough had been disfranchised, and Philip Callan held two seats.

in the outgoing or previous parliaments; only two of them, Ronayne, an engineer, and G. E. Lewis, a solicitor, had been elected under the ballot. The classification in the table (A) of the other 37, now sitting for the first time, produces most significant results. Only 12 of this number came from the landed class; 23 came from group two, and 2 were tenant-farmers. In other words the proportion of representatives from group one had dropped from almost 70% of the total in 1868 to 51% in 1874, and of the newly elected representatives only 32% came from this group.

It is clearly, then, possible to deduce that the ballot produced an immediate effect upon the calibre of the representation. But it is questionable whether the ballot alone, without the further democratising influence of the home rule movement, could have produced such swift results. Much has been written concerning the aristocratic and conservative nature of Butt's home rule party, and undoubtedly it numbered in its ranks a higher proportion of wealthy men than was to be found in the party of Parnell. But this view of the first home rule party is one which I have been compelled frequently to criticise above, and it must now again be qualified. Of the 52 members in group one

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(1) 1874 election alone. But certain conclusions can undoubtedly be drawn from the evidence.

in 1874, no less than half were conservatives; only 23 out of 59 home rulers came from the landed class, and 19 were from the professions, a higher total than the entire professional contribution in 1868. Moreover, it was in the home rule ranks that the two tenant-farmers made their historic appearance.

Were the home rule members, then, drawn from origins more plebeian than those of their political opponents? Such a conclusion is at complete variance with the normal picture of Butt's party. On further analysis, the two views can, however, be quite simply reconciled. Those liberal survivals who littered the right wing of the party were, broadly speaking, the same who gave it its traditionally aristocratic complexion. Of the 35 home rulers elected before 1874 16 came from group one, the landed class, 19 from group two; of the 24 new members 7 came from group one, 15 belonged to the second group, and 2 to the third. In other words, only 29% of the new home rulers came from the landed class, compared with 46% of those previously elected, and 51% of the entire representation in 1874.

It is, of course, folly to argue from the particular to the general; only two elections are here considered, and the influence of the ballot act upon the representation can scarcely be deduced from the results of the 1874 contest alone. But certain conclusions can undoubtedly be drawn from the evidence.



There was an immediate and sharp decline in the representation of the landlords. Yet despite the appearance of two representatives of the tenant class, one cannot yet go so far as to argue a general democratisation. The landlord representation remained high, and the class which benefited most from its decline was so far the middle class, the professional men from whom the political careerists had traditionally sprung. The representation of this class more than doubled between 1868 and 1874.

This conclusion is supported by a study of the educational backgrounds of the new members: the proportion of university graduates remained constant at around 50% of the representation in 1868 and 1874, and amongst the new members. The army, traditionally the career of aristocratic younger sons, supplied no new members in 1874. The denominational balance, on the other hand, was noticeably altered. Of the 105 members elected in 1868, 68 had been protestants and 37 catholics; these proportions were now altered to 54 protestants and 48 catholics; only 2 of these catholics were to be found outside the home rule party, in which the members of their faith had a majority of 46 to 13.

In this context it is important to remember that the ballot had not merely diminished the opportunities for corruption and intimidation. Accurate figures are not obtainable, but there can be little doubt that the introduction

of the secret vote greatly decreased the cost of political campaigning which faced a prospective candidate and at once reduced the disadvantage at which a candidate of slender means had been placed in competition with a wealthy man. Again, the professional classes would be naturally the first to benefit from this change.

In regard to the home rule party, some definite conclusions can be drawn. Despite the traditional picture of Butt's party, it is obvious that in fact its parliamentary representatives were of a lower social scale than their predecessors or their rivals. Landowners were to be found within its ranks, but they were mostly men who had been elected in previous contests, and whose political careers had survived into a new period. The new members were on average from a lower social stratum; one third of them were professional men, and two, O'Sullivan and Ennis, were tenant-farmers.

In sum, there was an alteration in the representation between 1868 and 1874, perceptible but not catastrophic. The ballot, then, did have an immediate effect, but it is questionable if this alteration can be ascribed to it alone. The relatively much greater change in the class structure among the home rule members than amongst the rest of the representation argues that the new nationalist movement played a complementary part in producing the change;

subverting the liberal order, it lowered also the social standard of the national representation. The survival of so many landlords, even in the home rule party, warns us against exaggerating the extent of this change. But the entry of Ennis and O'Sullivan, the increase in the representation of the professional classes, and, on the whole, the comparatively much swifter reaction of these forces upon the nationalist representation, compel us to conclude that the nostalgia of Frank Hugh O'Donnell in later years for the aristocratic golden age of Butt (1) has a questionable basis in fact, and that the leavening of the representation which he ascribes to the influence of Parnell was in fact the acceleration of a process already obvious in 1874.

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1 F. H. O'Donnell, History of the Irish parliamentary party, 1910, vol 1, p. 467.

TABLE (A)

Class and representation under the ballot

	1868			1874				1874-new M.P.'s			
	Con	Lib	TOT	Con	Lib	HR	TOT	Con	Lib	HR	TOT
Landowners	26	28	54	21	3	18	41	5	-	6	11
Eld. sons of landowners	5	7	12	4	-	1	5	-	-	-	-
Younger do.	5	2	7	1	-	4	5	-	-	1	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>12</b>
Rentiers & land agents	-	4	4	1	1	7	9	-	1	3	4
Merchants, financiers, newspaper props., etc.	3	14	17	3	4	8	15	1	4	4	9
Professions	1	10	11	3	2	19	25	-	2	8	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>23</b>
Farmers, shopkeepers.						2	2			2	2

1. *Irish Times*, 10 Feb. 1874.  
 2. *ibid.*, 14 Feb.  
 3. *ibid.*, vol. 11, no. 211 (1874).  
 1874.  
 4. O'Byrne, *Countrymen*, 1874, p. 100.  
 5. *ibid.*, p. 100.  
 6. O'Donoghue to O'Byrne, 10 Feb. 1874.

## Chapter XIV

The new party.

(a) the organisation

On 9 February, while the last contests were still being fought, Mitchell Henry wrote urgently to the Freeman's Journal urging the summoning of a public conference of the home rule members to decide upon a common line of action. His proposal was taken up at once both by the Freeman<sup>(1)</sup> and by the Nation,<sup>(2)</sup> and on 16 February a circular was dispatched to the sixty members claimed as home rulers, calling a conference of 'the members who have been elected for Ireland on home rule principles'; it was signed by Redmond, John Martin, Butt, Henry, and Digby.<sup>(3)</sup> On 3 March the conference assembled in the city hall.

At once the first defections were apparent. Only forty-six members arrived to take part in the discussions. Eight sent letters of apology;<sup>(4)</sup> four sent no answer at all.<sup>(5)</sup> Of these twelve Esmonde refused to join the party and never supported it in parliament;<sup>(6)</sup> Morris never became

1 Freeman's Journal, 10 Feb. 1874.

2 Nation, 14 Feb.

3 Butt MSS, vol ii, MS 831 (letters to P. Callan, 16 Feb. 1874).

4 O'Byrne, Conyngham, White, O'Connor Don, O'Connor, French, Bowyer, and Montagu.

5 Moore, Morris, O'Callaghan, Esmonde. The number had been reduced to 58 by the Galway vacancy.

6 O'Shaughnessy to Butt, 17 Sept. 1874, Butt MSS.

(1) a member; nor did Colonel White. (2) P. J. Smyth, who attended this meeting, had defected openly from the party by the following April. (3) The O'Conor Don, now judiciously absent, subsequently objected to the resolutions passed at this conference and refused to join. (4) N. D. Murphy, whose loyalty had always been suspect, after a long career of backsliding formally dissociated himself from the party in January 1876. (5) The initial membership of the party was thus fifty-three, including for the moment Smyth and Murphy. The addition of G. H. Kirk and Dr M. Ward who filled the vacancies in Louth and Galway City brought the number to fifty-five.

At this meeting a number of resolutions were passed. As they were to be frequently recalled and the obligations which they carried as often disputed, the texts of the most important are given here in full:

That in the opinion of this conference the time has arrived when the Irish members who have been elected to represent the national demand for home rule ought to form a separate and distinct party in the house of commons, united on the principle of obtaining self-government for Ireland, as defined in the resolutions of the conference held in Dublin last November.

That while our future action must depend upon the course of events, and the occasions that may arise, it is essential to the due discharge of our duties to our constituents and the country that we should collectively and

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1 Nation, 21 Mar. 1874.  
 2 ibid., 2 May.  
 3 ibid., 25 Apr.  
 4 ibid., 21 Nov.  
 5 ibid., 8 Jan. 1876.

individually hold ourselves aloof from, and independent of, all party combinations, whether of the ministerialists or of the opposition.

That, deeply impressed with the importance of unity of action upon all matters that can affect the parliamentary position of the Home Rule party, or the interests of the Home Rule cause, we engage to each other and to the country that we will use our best endeavours to obtain that unity by taking counsel together, by making all reasonable concessions to the opinions of each other, by avoiding as far as possible isolated action, and by sustaining and supporting each other in the course which may be deemed best calculated to promote the grand object of national self-government which the Irish nation has committed to our care.

That nine gentlemen, three of whom shall be a quorum, be appointed, and requested to act as a parliamentary committee to the Irish Home Rule party during the ensuing session. That the committee be provided with funds to meet all requisite expenditure by a subscription of two guineas each from each member of the party. That the committee, or their honorary secretary, shall at any time summon a meeting of the party on requisition signed by any ten of its members; the requisition to state the object of such proposed meeting.

Shaw, Butt, Henry, Downing, D. M. O'Conor, Gray, Callan, Browne and Redmond were at once elected to form the first parliamentary committee. It was finally resolved that copies of these resolutions should be sent to the absent members with a request that they should reply adhering to them.

(1)

Despite the initial plea of Henry for a public conference, the meeting was in fact held behind closed doors, and no inkling was given of its proceedings beyond the publication of its resolutions, and the note that Biggar and

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1 Irishman, 28 Feb. 1874.

Fay had withheld their approval from the first resolution until they should have been released from the much more stringent pledges exacted from them by their constituents in Cavan. <sup>(1)</sup> The Irishman strongly criticized this secrecy; the meeting published neither its programme nor its plan of campaign, but simply appointed a committee to assemble the members whenever it should appear advisable; in the meantime rumours of a paralysing disunity were rife. <sup>(2)</sup> The Freeman's Journal, on the other hand, was delighted at the 'dignified moderation' of the resolutions; <sup>(3)</sup> the Dublin Evening Post praised the conference in almost the same words; <sup>(4)</sup> the Dublin Evening Mail remarked that a movement 'begun in the open, honest day' had 'degenerated into a dark and subterranean enterprise'. <sup>(5)</sup>

On the whole, however, the home rule leaders seem to have been satisfied with the achievements of the conference. 'It was a great and blessed day's work that laid finally and securely the foundations of an Irish national party in the house of commons', <sup>(6)</sup> wrote the Nation. 'I hope you approve of what we did at the conference of Irish members', wrote Butt to Daunt: 'We have, I hope, formed a

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1 This was done at a public meeting in April (Nation, 18 Apr. 1874).

2 Irishman, 7 Mar. 1874.

3 quoted, *ibid.*

4 Dublin Evening Post, 4 Mar.

5 quoted in Irishman, 7 Mar.

6 Nation, 7 Mar.



compact party and I feel confident we will act up to our resolutions.' <sup>(1)</sup> To critics from a later age it seems incredible that the home rule members should emerge from this conference pledged only to 'take counsel' with each other and to make 'all reasonable concessions' to each other's opinions. Without any really authoritative executive, it was scarcely at all a party in the modern sense of the word. Yet these decisions were no more than the logical consequence not merely of the diversity of its membership but of the clear disavowal of parliamentary pledges by the conference the preceding November. At a league meeting a few days later, Butt asserted his willingness to justify all that was done at the conference; he did not believe that a single member could possibly desert the cause. Henry also defended the meeting on the ground that it would be impolitic for the movement to reveal its plans to the enemy. Even O'Connor Power believed the conference had gone just as far as discretion demanded. The members of the league unanimously approved its decisions. At the same meeting they resolved to contest the impending by-election in Dublin County on the motion of Butt and O'Sullivan; they chose as their candidate a young man named Charles Stuart Parnell. <sup>(2)</sup>

In London the party took offices at King Street,

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1 Butt to Daunt, 7 Mar. 1874, Hickey MSS, PC 411.

2 Irishmen, 14 Mar.

(1)  
 Westminster. Whips were appointed, first O'Shaughnessy  
 and Nolan, and later, on O'Shaughnessy's resignation owing  
 to ill-health, Conyngham and Nolan. (2) Butt was chosen as  
 leader, (3) and Hugh Heinrich, former travelling-secretary  
 of the league, was appointed secretary to the Irish home rule  
 members. (4) Most typically, a fortnightly home-rule dinner  
 was arranged, 'with songs and all that', wrote John Martin,  
 'the only objection to which is that it is a little too  
 expensive.' (5)

But despite these manifestations of unity, there  
 was little real authority in the party at any stage. The  
 committee summoned meetings of the members intermittently,  
 but attendance was not obligatory, and even at the outset  
 rarely exceeded twenty or thirty. The attendance of the  
 members in parliament was equally spasmodic; as early as  
 1874 the parliamentary committee was deploring the absence  
 of twenty-one home rule members from the division in which  
 Butt's Municipal Franchise (Ireland) Bill was defeated by  
 125 votes to 88. (6) This neglect was to grow steadily worse  
 despite all efforts to check it. At the outset there was  
 little co-ordination of the party's activities; members

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1 Nation, 25 Apr. 1874.  
 2 ibid., 13 Feb. 1875.  
 3 ibid., 18 July 1874.  
 4 ibid., 5 Sept. 1874.  
 5 Martin to Daunt, 24 May 1874, Daunt MSS, 8047.  
 6 Nation, 25 Apr. 1874.

spoke and voted as they pleased with an eye to their  
constituents rather than to any party condemnation. (1)

With Butt's first home rule motion tabled for 30 June, (2)  
Martin wrote to Daunt on 8 June that its terms were not yet  
settled, nor had there been any meeting of the home rule  
members to discuss them or the procedure of the debate. (3)

After the debate a sympathetic correspondent noted:-

The home rule party exhibited neither direction nor  
discipline . . . . . Mr Butt appeared to be content with making  
his speech. He then seemed practically to abandon the field,  
and to let the rank and file of his party scramble into action  
in any way they could. There was not a vestige of plan of  
arrangement; no direction; no discipline; nothing of that  
generalship which, in a great debate, is so essential. The  
result was confusion. (4)

After the debate Butt conceded the justice of these  
criticisms, and expressed the hope that they would encourage  
the members of the party to allow him a little more authority.  
Arrangements were at once initiated to appoint sub-committees  
for the consideration of particular bills, and to assign  
certain subjects to individual members, (5) but the decision  
of the national conference not to limit the right of members  
to introduce private bills bore its inevitable fruit in lost  
measures and embittered minority votes. The whips for

1 Nation, 11 July 1874.

2 Daunt Journal, 6 June 1874, MS 3041.

3 Martin to Daunt, 8 June, Daunt MSS, 8047.

4 Nation, 11 July 1874.

5 ibid., 1 Aug. 1874, 13 Feb. 1875.

(1)  
 crucial divisions were phrased in the form of appeals; disobedience to them was subject to no other sanctions than those of popular disapproval. Members of the party sat wherever they chose in the house; Bowyer, Montagu and later King Harman sat on the government benches, the ex-liberals upon the opposite side. Butt himself and his closest allies appear to have sat below the gangway on the opposition side, which became traditionally Irish in later years, but their colleagues were not bound to join them. John Martin wrote to Daunt before the 1875 session:

I don't expect ever to see such perfect discipline and union among the home rule representatives as to cause them all to vote on one side. In fact I myself would be exceedingly reluctant to hold my vote at the disposal of the leader of my party or of a majority of my party. Only one question commands the votes of us all - home rule. (2)

Not unnaturally, the backsliders habitually absented themselves, and in desperate efforts to arrest the steady decline of the party vote in the divisions upon its measures, the force of public opinion was deliberately enlisted by the home rule leaders through the publication of the attendance records of party members, first in the Nation, and later in the Parliamentary Green Book of the party. (3)

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1 Butt to Callan, 29 Mar. 1875, 5 Aug. 1878, etc., Butt MSS, vol 1, MS 830.

2 Martin to Daunt, 2 Feb. 1875, Daunt MSS, 8047.

3 This book, drawn up for the league each year from 1875 on by its secretary McAlister, is frequently quoted from in the press, but I have been unable to find a copy of it.

These are topics which were constantly to recur in the ensuing sessions, and it has not been the aim of this chapter to anticipate the story of these years by touching upon them more than briefly, in an effort to give some appreciation of the body which Butt now led to Westminster. But one instance, minor in itself, may perhaps be quoted here as conveying an understanding of the situation of the party more fully than many pages of interpretative study.

In the summer of 1874 a new liberal club, the Cavendish, was formed. The Irish members were repeatedly circularised and asked to join; Butt, however, wrote refusing to do so on the grounds that it would be incompatible with his position as a home rule member, and Power replied to the same effect. 'Mr Butt's letter may be taken as a type of the majority of the nationalists' rejoinders', reported the Irish Times.<sup>(1)</sup> We are not told of the action of the minority, but the Nation commented that any other course would be a breach of the home rule pledge.<sup>(2)</sup> Many of the home rulers, however, such as Callan, Bowyer, and O'Loghlen, saw no inconsistency in retaining the Reform Club as their political head-quarters, until some were expelled from it for their frequent voting against 'the party'.<sup>(3)</sup> In 1875

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1 quoted in Nation, 1 Aug. 1874.

2 ibid.

3 Rev. T. Morley, Reminiscences, (1882), vol 11, pp. 231-5.

Gladstone announced his 'fixed and irrevocable' decision, at the age of sixty-five, to retire from the Liberal

(1)

leadership. Forster, Goschen, and Hartington were all named as likely to succeed him, and considerable interest attended the deliberations of the party meeting which was called in the beginning of February to elect a new leader. On 30 January a circular letter, signed by Browne and O'Shaughnessy as party secretaries, was dispatched to the home rule members, apprising them that at an informal meeting of the available members of the party, fifteen in all, held in Dublin on 21 January, it had been unanimously resolved;

that in the opinion of those present it would be inexpedient and inconsistent with the position we have taken as home rulers that any of us should attend the meeting about to be convened in London to elect a successor to Mr Gladstone.

We have been requested to communicate to you this expression of their opinion in the hope that it may meet with your approval and concurrence. (2)

This circular produced an immediate response to Butt from Sir Colman O'Loghlen:

My dear Butt,

I was sorry to receive this morning a circular, signed by Browne and O'Shaughnessy, about the proposed meeting of the Liberal party at the Reform Club on Wednesday next. I write to you on the subject as I see you were present at the "caucus" from which this circular emanated.

It seems to me altogether beyond the ordinary practice of parliamentary parties that the "whips" should write to individual members telling them that they should

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1 Nation, 23 Jan. 1875.  
2 30 Jan. 1875, Butt MSS.

not - or rather ought not - to attend this meeting or that meeting . . . . They might as well tell me with whom I should dine - what club I should have - or what club I should not join - as call on me not to attend a meeting as "inconsistent" with my actions as a Home Rule member.

Every member must judge for himself what is "inconsistent" with his political avowals . . . . I am not to be, or rather I should not be "denounced" by official whips if I take different views from you and act differently.

I am not going to attend the meeting of the Reform Club on Wednesday - because I will not be in London on that day . . . . But the fact of my being a member of the Home Rule party would neither prevent me from attending, nor voting, if I felt inclined to do so at the proposed meeting.

I cordially approve of the principle of being attached to the Home Rule party in the House of Commons - but the fact of being a Home Ruler does not make me indifferent to the distinction between the Conservatives and the Liberals.

I have been, and am, and always will be, a Liberal in politics; and when consistent with my duty to Home Rule I shall always vote with the Liberals and not with the Conservatives, and I never can or will consider anything that concerns the Liberal party in the House of Commons foreign to me. (1)

O'Loghlen was not an untypical representative of the followers whom Butt now led forward to do battle for nationality. One endeavours with difficulty to imagine the dispatch of such a letter to his leader by one of the members of the home rule party of Parnell.

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1 O'Loghlen to Butt, 31 Jan. 1875, Butt MSS. Of the question of the new liberal club, referred to above, he remarked: 'Last July I saw that you declined to join the Cavendish Club - if I could afford it I would have joined it - I could not afford it so I did not join it. But why should you and I fall out, or resort to "whip" circulars because I should join a club which you should refuse to join?'

of not arranging his references so that he can find them when he wants to use them. (Spring, 21 July 1874.)

(b) the leader.

It would be impossible to conclude this appreciation of the new party without some reference to the position of its leader. The career of Butt to this date has already been traced. Now sixty-one years old, naturally indolent and haphazard, <sup>(1)</sup> and not over-endowed with moral courage or the capacity for ruthless decision, he returned to Westminster as home rule leader just at a time when he was becoming subject to increasingly frequent fits of despondency about the difficulties of his own situation, in particular those of his financial position.

Butt's long career of dissipation in London, his notorious improvidence, and his unrewarded services for the fenian prisoners, had left him with a crushing burden of debt. Endless stories abound of his lifelong battle with the bailiff; it is enough for the purposes of this study to record that in 1871 his debts were estimated by one of his closest friends, Maurice Barnett of London, at ten thousand pounds. So far as the home rule movement was concerned, this situation had one damaging result: the necessity to

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1 The same commentator, already quoted, upon the first home rule debate in the commons, remarked that although Butt's speech upon this occasion was 'truly great', 'its effect was in parts marred and broken by that unfortunate habit he has of not arranging his references so that he can find them when he wants to use them.' (Nation, 11 July 1874.)



avoid a second period of incarceration in the debtors' prison compelled Butt to pursue his professional practice, leaving only a part of his time for political leadership. These twin obligations inevitably produced failure at both; he never cleared himself from debt, and the party suffered badly, particularly in the sessions of 1876 and 1877, from his intermittent attendance at Westminster. In 1872 began the first of his many requests to be allowed to withdraw from the leadership. (1) As Butt wrote to Henry in December 1873:-

When I am asked to continue to take the part I do in the movement - it is exactly the same thing as if I asked you or Mr Shaw to do something to serve the cause which would at once cut down the profits of your mercantile business by at least one half.

It requires familiarity with four courts life to realize this fully - it is not the time that is abstracted from professional pursuits that does the mischief so much as the impression that I cannot be depended upon to be present in a case when I may most be wanted. (2)

Perhaps most important of all, Butt's health and powers of concentration began in the years from 1876 onwards to succumb to the strain of his dual task.

For a long time Butt had considered various devices to enable him to free himself from debt, including a lecture tour in America, (3) an elaborate scheme of life insurance which would have reduced his yearly payments to

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1 Ferguson to Butt, 23 Aug. 1872, Butt MSS.  
 2 Butt to Henry, 8 Dec. 1873, Butt MSS, vol 111, MS 832.  
 3 M. Barnett to Butt, 26 Aug. 1872, 11 Sept. M. Hewson to Butt, 11 Dec. 1872. Butt MSS.

his creditors to £1,440,<sup>(1)</sup> and the organisation of a national tribute to him on the lines of that which had been so successfully raised for O'Connell.<sup>(2)</sup>

In the period between the national conference and the general election, a formal effort was made by some of the leading men in the movement to relieve Butt's difficulties as a compensation for asking him to undertake the responsibility of the parliamentary leadership. The scheme appears to have originated in a meeting of Shaw, Henry, Sullivan and one or two others in Morrison's Hotel around the beginning of November. At this meeting various plans for assisting Butt were put forward; the discussion culminated in the dispatch of Shaw and Sullivan to Butt with the proposal that a certain sum of money should be guaranteed to him by a number of individuals to relieve his immediate difficulties, in return for which he would agree to undertake a lecture tour of the United States in order to raise funds both to recompense them and to establish his finance upon a permanently healthy footing.<sup>(3)</sup> Butt at first concurred in the proposal, of which it is extremely probable he had previous knowledge. He confided to Henry:

If a sum of £2000 is provided it will be ample for all the

1 Barnett to Butt, 1 Feb. 1871, Butt MSS.

2 J. Ellard to Butt, 4 Sept. 1871, *ibid.*

3 J. A. Blake to M. Henry, 24 Dec. 1873, Butt MSS, vol III, MS 832; Butt to Henry, draft letter, 24 Dec. 1873, Butt MSS.

purposes we wish.

£500 ought to be placed at my disposal now.

£500 more at the meeting of parliament.

expenses.

£500 placed at the disposal of Mrs Butt for home

need.

£500 to provide for any deficiency or unexpected

I can hand over two policies of £1000 each but a premium of £125 is to be paid.

I must engage to provide for the repayment of the money at the end of a year. If I could not do it any other way I would feel bound to go to America in the autumn.

Independently of this I have made up my mind to do so. (1)

Not wishing to take a prominent part in the financial negotiations, Butt appointed J. A. Blake, former member for Waterford City, to act for him. Blake approached Callan,

Harman, Bryan, and McKenna, (2) and by the end of November a sum of £1500 had been provisionally guaranteed, apparently consisting of £500 each from Shaw, Henry, and McKenna. (3)

From the outset, however, there were severe handicaps to the plan. Shaw at least had no confidence in Butt's ability ever to repay the money through the American scheme, which appears to have been Sullivan's; nor was this his only misgiving:

I don't think till after the general election there is any great point in Butt's spending the whole time of the session in London. You may be quite sure the Irish M.P.s will not give Butt any leadership on general questions in the house, whilst they may be quite willing to follow his lead on the Irish question. Then being in London with very

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1 Butt to Henry, undated, Butt MSS, vol 111, MS 832.  
2 Blake to Butt, 18 Nov. 1873, Butt MSS.  
3 Blake to Henry, 29 Nov. 1873, Butt MSS, vol 111, MS 832.

little to do he would be sure to fall into mischief of some sort that would be damaging to himself and to the cause. Then are you quite sure if we guarantee the money to a bank, that it is not already used, that we won't be only securing a debt already incurred. I have a strong suspicion from some matter that came to my own knowledge that he and another of our men are deeply in with Power's Bank . . . . . It will give me pleasure to join in the matter (not to the same extent as you) and so will Ronayne, but we should like to know who are the others that you think likely. They should all be men who would not do it with the object of having a grip on Butt and some day throwing it in his face or using it in any shape as a means to some personal ends . . . . . Whatever I put my name down for I feel certain of having to pay. (1)

Meanwhile, unknown to Shaw, Butt was also having second thoughts. The American proposal was one which he had resisted for several years; it appealed to him no more now. To Henry he argued that it would defeat the purpose of the whole scheme by compelling his withdrawal from Ireland, and he suggested a 'modification' of it, (2) apparently to the effect that the guarantors should be recouped from the proceeds of a national tribute to the home rule leader.

For the hard-headed Shaw, this was the last straw. Together with Henry he drew up and conveyed to Butt via Blake as conditions for the continuance of the project, firstly, that Butt should bind himself to go to America as originally planned, and secondly, that he should give fuller details of his indebtedness. (3) To this Butt replied by

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1 Shaw to Henry, 2 Nov. 1873, Butt MSS, vol 111, MS 832.  
 2 Butt to Henry, 24 Dec. 1873, Butt MSS.  
 3 Blake to Henry, 1 Dec. 1873, Butt MSS; and 2 Dec., Butt MSS, vol 111, MS 832.

cutting off the negotiations and reiterating his decision  
 to retire. <sup>(1)</sup> But the old threat had been used too often,  
 and from Henry it drew only the unruffled rejoinder that  
 he also contemplated withdrawing from politics - 'it would  
 not break my heart'. <sup>(2)</sup>

On receipt of this rebuff from his colleague,  
 Butt after much redrafting produced a lengthy apologia;  
 parts of it show a straining after effect, but as commentary  
 upon the situation of the leader it has passages which are  
 both pathetic and revealing:

I have been thrown by circumstances not of my  
 own seeking into a position of great honour, but one, the  
 exigencies of which I am not prepared to meet. I am quite  
 sure that any man to guide the home rule movement as it  
 ought to be guided must be able to devote to it the main  
 portion of his energies and thoughts.

The time has come when the conduct of it must  
 engage the attention of the world, when at the same time  
 the demands upon the thoughts and energies of its leader  
 will be immensely increased. And when a very deep  
 responsibility will rest upon the man who leads the people  
 to believe in its success.

I have thought deeply and earnestly upon the  
 subject, and I believe that, if I were able to guide it  
 as it ought to be guided for three years, it would succeed.

But, apart from all under or over-appreciation  
 of myself, unless I do so guide it I have no confidence that  
 it will.

And more than this; I mean by guiding it to be  
 able to plan, to think over, to execute, in many instances  
personally what I plan and think.

No one knows how much of our past success has

1 op. cit., and Butt to Henry, 1 Dec. 1873, Butt MSS, vol 111,  
 MS 832; Henry to Butt, 2 Dec. 1873, Butt MSS.

2 Henry to Butt, 2 Dec. 1873, Butt MSS.

depended on this. You will not accuse me of self-conceit if I say that much of our present success depends on my having done so - on the result of combinations which I planned and carried out alone, and of which in the beginning no one saw the meaning.

The present position of the movement requires all this more than ever. I could occupy a long day's thoughts over and over again in devising plans of action which in time would have their effect. Even to guide and direct the mechanical part of the movement here - the meetings of the Council and of the League - would make vast demands upon my time and energies. It cannot be done without incessant watchfulness and labour. Even the correspondence my position involves would occupy, if attended to, some hours a day. It will every day increase.

It is not easy for anyone who has not tried it to judge of all this. You know something of what I have done, but no one knows how much I have left undone - how many plans I have abandoned because I could not find time to execute them - how much and how often the cause has lost by this.

I believe that such omissions now would tell with far more injurious effect. I believe the next year will be one that will tax all the resources and all the energies of home rule. I do not think the next session of parliament will be an uneventful one to that cause. I do not believe it can be so. I am sure that a well-directed plan of parliamentary action would do an immensity to serve the cause - the want of it great harm. But I am sure that you cannot avoid a number of parliamentary skirmishes in which repeated small defeats will be great disasters, and repeated small successes be great triumphs, and in which the conduct of the Irish members may cover our cause with honour or with shame. How often have you told me that my presence in the House of Commons was essential? In matters like this I believe it is.

I want you to judge me fairly and you must read over and weigh every word I have written, and say if I have one particle exaggerated the demands the cause must make upon its leader.

I need not tell you that for me to meet them is a physical impossibility. You might as well put a man who was working 12 hours a day in some absorbing occupation to fulfil the duties of Prime Minister in the snatches of his leisure hours, or call on him to be general of an army in the field. And now I ask you as my friend - anxious for my character now - anxious for my place in history - ought I

to continue to seem to fill a place the duties of which I cannot discharge? - Is it fair to myself? - Is it just to a great cause? - Is it honest to my countrymen - many of whom have joined it on the faith of my leading, when, in any true sense, I am not leading and cannot lead?

Can I with honour and truthfulness tell the people to have faith in its early success when in my inmost soul I know that the conditions upon which I believe success depends cannot be fulfilled?.....

Will I stand higher as the inefficient leader of an ignoble failure, or as one who gave up regretfully but honourably the place he could not fill? (1)

'If the Irish nation want you they must secure you', replied Henry: in the meantime, Butt's duty was clear - to organise the league for an election. If he was prepared to accept the American project the guarantee could (2)

be revived. Shaw wrote in the same terms to Butt and Henry; he was still prepared to participate provided only the most intimate friends of Butt were involved. (3)

Blake resumed negotiations with Henry. The final arrangements hinged upon the agreement of Shaw. (4)

But this was not forthcoming. Suddenly Shaw announced that he would not be associated with Sir Joseph McKenna in the guarantee; Ronayne concurred in this attitude. (5) Their aversion to McKenna was based partly upon his doubtful reputation as a financier, partly upon the current rumour

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1 Butt to Henry, 3 Dec. 1873, Butt MSS, vol 111, MS 832. There is also a copy in the general body of the Butt MSS.  
2 Henry to Butt, 6, 10 Dec. 1873, Butt MSS.  
3 Shaw to Butt, 5 Dec. 1873, Butt MSS; Shaw to Henry, 5 Dec. Butt MSS, vol 111, MS 832.  
4 Blake to Henry, 17 Dec. 1873, Butt MSS, vol 111, MS 832.  
5 Shaw to Henry, 16, 20, 31 Dec. 1873, Butt MSS, vol 111, MS 832; Blake to Butt, 19 Dec. 1873, Henry to Butt, 4 Jan. 1874, Butt MSS.

that he had gained an ascendancy over Butt. (1) Shaw in addition had other misgivings as to the possibilities of repayment. The American trip he felt to be a dubious proposition financially;

He will stump it about as the great Irish orator ..... then as to the national tribute on which from his letter to you he has evidently set his mind I don't think neither does Ronayne that it will ever produce much ..... No large sum can be got without the active aid of the priests and if you subtract a half-dozen of them who are his personal friends the great body of them are indifferent, and many of them look on him with absolute distrust ..... Something should be done. I think Mr Butt should be placed in a position to reckon with certainty on £1000 or £1200 a year while the agitation lasts. An arrangement should be made with a bank that his cheque for £100 say should be honoured on the first of every month. Butt should be able easily to earn enough at his profession with this to keep himself free from all entanglements ..... If we guarantee now £2000 we must reckon with certainty on having to pay it. I don't believe he will ever be able to repay us from any source. Instead of this I would propose that we should get a private subscription spreading over this year. I am ready to join in this so is Ronayne or if you don't think this can be done both of us will join in the guarantee you formerly proposed provided other unobjectionable parties come forward ..... (2)

The fact that Blake had already invited McKenna to participate, however, caused Ronayne to withdraw altogether. (3) He and Shaw demanded a postponement of the project; it was never revived. (4) The plan of a national tribute was to be attempted in 1875 with results as gloomy as Shaw had foretold. (5) Meanwhile, nothing had been achieved

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1 Shaw to Henry, 20 Dec. 1873, Butt MSS, vol 111, MS 832.  
 2 Shaw to Henry, 24 Dec. 1873, 1bid.  
 3 Shaw to Henry, 31 Dec. 1873, 1bid.  
 4 Henry to Butt, 4 Jan. 1874, Butt MSS.  
 5 See below, Chapter XV, pp. 425-8.



beyond the humiliation amongst his friends of the national leader. The new year found the landlords of Butt's house in Eccles Street pressing him for the arrears of rent. (1)

It brought to him the ultimate responsibility of party leadership; it left his time and his vital powers burdened as heavily as before by a dual obligation, the dangers of which to the parliamentary movement he had so ominously predicted.

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1 Messrs Battersby's to Butt, 10 Jan. 1874, Butt MSS.

until 1890, he declared his belief

in joining the new CHAPTER XV

Three sessions of argument, 1874-6.

(a) The session of 1874.

*Butt's amendment to the address, Mar. 74*

The opening of parliament in March compelled the leaders of the new party to consider the expediency of an immediate demonstration, and when the customary motion of an address in reply to the queen's speech was moved by the new conservative administration, Butt, in accordance with a decision which he admitted had been taken only the previous night, rose to propose an amendment calling for a parliamentary investigation into the dissatisfaction of the Irish people with their system of government. The debate occasioned only a brief preliminary skirmish. 'He did not at present ask the house to concede home rule to Ireland. That question remained to be discussed, and perhaps to be discussed for many years.' The amendment was supported by Brooks, MacCarthy, and Sullivan. But even so soon as this first debate the party demonstrated its characteristic lack of cohesion. When Gladstone questioned the wisdom of Butt's immediate challenge, Lord Robert Montagu, technically a home ruler, hastened to concur; he would not, he said, have supported the proposal of an amendment to the address if he had been consulted in advance. He further agreed with Gladstone that it would be illogical to retain the Irish representation at Westminster after the concession of a separate legislature. 'What the Irish members demanded existed in Ireland

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until 1800', he declared: his leader had done 'an unwise thing'  
in coining the new expression - home rule. <sup>(1)</sup>

The amendment was defeated by 314 votes to 50. Defeat had been inevitable, and the Nation expressed itself more than satisfied with the debate. <sup>(2)</sup> But the outcome was not altogether happy. In addition to Montagu's peculiar contribution, the division lists had provided an unexpected result. Much emphasis had been laid by Butt during the election upon the necessity to conciliate the English democracy; it was in pursuit of this aim that he himself had devoted almost the whole of his energies in the campaign to the canvassing of the northern English industrial towns. As a result of the promises exacted by the Irish voters in the election, no less than twenty-nine English and Scottish liberals had been claimed by Butt as pledged to support the demand for a parliamentary inquiry into the home rule proposal. <sup>(3)</sup> Only four of these in fact supported the amendment, while of the Irish home rulers, only forty-six and the two tellers were in evidence. The exposure of these figures, wrote the Irishman, had been one beneficial result of the debate:

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1 Hansard, 3rd series, ccxviii, 110-71.  
2 Nation, 28 Mar. 1874.  
3 ibid., 21 Feb. 1874.

That is the first winnowing of the corn heap, and about one sixth of it has turned out to be mere chaff....

Mr Butt pleaded with his accustomed force and eloquence.... if English ministers were statesmen they should look upon Mr Butt as a negotiator of peace.

The debate furnishes no ground for flourishing declamations, about the rapid progress of the parliamentary policy. It will tend, on the other hand, to chasten and correct any vain ideas and fond fancies which may have sprung up under the balmy breath of electioneering. (1)

The debate was followed by an immediate conference of the party in the Westminster Palace Hotel, at which an attendance of thirty-nine was mustered. It was agreed that the home rule demand should be brought formally before parliament during the session. The form in which this should be done was not as yet decided. The Nation added threateningly:

a game of obstruction is one at which two can play, and the home rulers, although they are a minority of the whole, may, if they are put to it, be able to find means of making themselves troublesome at unexpected times. (2)

Butt put down his name for a day upon which to discuss home rule; at first he was allotted 23 June, but later his motion was deferred by the government until 30 June. (3)

In the meanwhile home rule members gave notice of bills to assimilate the borough franchise of Ireland to that of England, and to assimilate the municipal franchise and privileges of the two islands, together with motions calling for the state purchase of Irish railways and for immediate state action to

1 Irishman, 28 Mar. 1874.

2 Nation, 28 Mar.

3 Daunt Journal, 25 May, 6 June 1874, MS 3041.

revive the Irish fishing industry. Two of these had a certain amount of success. The fisheries motion was carried unexpectedly by 95 votes to 93, the home rulers enjoying the support of a number of Irish and English liberal and

(1) conservative members. The second reading of the Municipal Privileges (Ireland) Bill, which sought to obtain for the Irish corporations the rights of their English counterparts, (2) was permitted to pass by the government. The nationalist

press heralded these minor triumphs as the first victory of the Irish party. (3)

But the municipal privileges bill, after passing through its committee stage in the commons, (4) was rejected by the lords. (5)

The second reading of the Municipal Franchise (Ireland) Bill, a far more important measure which would have greatly increased the Irish municipal electorate, was defeated by 125 votes to 88. (6)

The meeting of the party committee which followed deplored the absence of no less than twenty-one home rule members from this midnight division. (7)

The railways motion was rejected by 235 votes to 59, of whom only twenty-five were home rulers. (8)

In this division Major P. O'Gorman (Waterford City) voted with the government on the

1 Hansard, 3rd series, ccxviii, 1498-1530.

2 ibid., 945-56.

3 Nation, 25 Apr., 9 May 1874.

4 ibid., 4 July.

5 ibid., 25 July.

6 Hansard, 3rd series, ccxviii, 784.

7 Nation, 25 Apr. 1874.

8 Hansard, 3rd series, ccxviii, 1263-1335.

ground that he was opposed to any extension to the power in Ireland of the ancient enemy. The Borough Franchise (Ireland) Bill, which sought to equalise the urban franchise in the two islands, did not come up for discussion until the end of the session, when it was withdrawn by Butt without a division after a short debate. (1)

Land bill  
St May 74

Undeterred by such reverses, Butt transferred his attack to what was, after home rule, the most important of the popular issues, that of the land. On 5 May he introduced his land bill or Ulster Tenant Right Bill, so called because it sought as its main aim to extend to the rest of Ireland the protection afforded by the Ulster custom in relation to compensation for eviction. (2)

Butt's speech in moving the bill was praised as an exceptionally fine effort; the proposal possessed, moreover, the support of the Ulster presbyterian Richard Smyth (Londonderry County) in addition to that of the home rule members. After this auspicious introduction, however, the fortunes of the bill languished under the pressure of government business, and in August it was finally withdrawn. (3)

On 19 May C. H. Meldon for the home rulers obtained a select committee to enquire into the registration of voters in Ireland and the prevention of frivolous objections thereto; (4) the same day, on the other hand, saw the rejection, without a division,

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1 Hansard, 3rd series, cccxi, 1262-4.  
 2 ibid., ccxviii, 1699-1705.  
 3 ibid., cccxi, 1256.  
 4 ibid., ccxix, 529-30.

(1)  
of Richard O'Shaughnessy's Poor Law Relief (Ireland) Bill.

*Home rule motion*  
*30 June 74*  
All these were only preliminary skirmishes to the two main battles of the session. On 30 June Butt introduced his home rule motion. Martin and Daunt had been invited by him to co-operate in drafting the terms of the proposition to be laid before the house, (2) but insufficient planning seems from the outset to have attended this vital debate. Defeat was of course expected; but a grave issue was the disposition of the Irish vote, and a special urgent whip was prepared by the parliamentary committee. (3) The form finally taken by the motion was to propose in the first instance:

That this house resolve itself into a committee of the whole house to consider the present parliamentary relations between England and Ireland.

If this motion were accepted, Butt proposed to move in committee:

That it is expedient and just to restore to the Irish nation the right and power of managing all exclusively Irish affairs in an Irish parliament.

That provision should be made at the same time for maintaining the integrity of the empire and the connection between the countries by reserving to the imperial parliament full and exclusive control over imperial affairs. (4)

The terms of the motion were agreed at a meeting of the party which was attended by thirty-two members. (5) The only amendment placed upon the table of the house of commons was in the name of Richard Smyth; it deprecated any such change in the

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1 op. cit., 531-41.

2 Daunt Journal, 25 May 1874; MS 3041.

3 Nation, 23 May.

4 ibid., 27 June.

5 ibid.

constitution of the United Kingdom as 'prejudicial and dangerous to the peace and independence of the Irish nation'. (1)

The house and the galleries were full for this first formal introduction of the home rule demand; amongst those in the gallery was Sir Charles Gavan Duffy, temporarily returned from Australia, who was frequently surrounded by home rule members. (2)

The prime minister was present; Gladstone was judiciously absent. (3) Butt, in introducing the motion, spoke for one and a half hours in what all the political

correspondents seem to have concurred in regarding as a masterpiece of persuasive eloquence. (4) He outlined the history of the Irish parliament and its fall under the union; he went on to explain the federal proposal. He concluded:

Give us a new participation in a new compact, carried not by fraud and coercion, but founded on the free sanction of the Irish people. Backed as I am now by sixty representatives of the Irish people, in their name I offer you this compact, and I believe, if it is accepted, it will be, humanly speaking, eternal. (5)

His plea fell, of course, upon deaf ears. By what was conceded to be a piece of parliamentary bad manners, the Irish attorney-general, J. T. Ball, the latest contribution of the Dublin University constituency to the legal advisers of the conservative party, interposed himself between Butt and his seconder. The 'mischievous agitation' for home rule, he declared,

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1 Nation, 27 June 1874.  
2 ibid., 4, 11 July.  
3 ibid., 4 July.  
4 quoted ibid.  
5 Hansard, 3rd series, ccxx, 717.



should be refuted and brought to an end. By adopting federalism Butt had cut himself off from O'Connell, whose abilities and representative position the attorney-general thus it seemed posthumously conceded. He denied the inability of the imperial parliament to legislate adequately for Ireland - the poor law act had 'given independence and strength to the people of Ireland (laughter).... The notion had got abroad that it was only necessary to ask to obtain', he concluded: 'let them be firm, and it (the agitation) would die.'<sup>(1)</sup>

Richard Smyth, speaking from an Ulster viewpoint, was much more careful to ground his opposition to home rule upon Irish interests; he dissociated himself altogether from the attitude of Ball:

I feel for an Irishman the exigencies of whose office compel him to speak with official contempt of a large proportion of his countrymen.

But his opposition was as hostile if more rational. The land reform measures of Gladstone, he maintained, had given to the Irish tenant an unprecedented sense of security; there was no justification for the sweeping changes demanded by the home rulers. Pithily he concluded:

I do think my honorable and learned friend credits the united legislature with too much childlike simplicity when he asks it to constitute an Irish legislature for the avowed object of doing things which it does not think ought to be done at all. (2)

The subsequent Irish contributions added little to the debate. Richard Power (Waterford City) supplied some

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<sup>1</sup> op. cit., cxxx, 717-30.  
 ibid., 732-46.

(1) statistics. Colonel Charles White (Tipperary) quoted Gladstone's pronouncement in his Greenwich address upon the merits of local devolution, and expressed his personal agreement with it. He realised that he might 'be told that many Irish representatives went further than he did, but he was responsible only for his own opinions'. (2) Only Sullivan spoke with real fire:

It is very necessary to remember that in this debate the Irish members are not pleading before a tribunal the judgment of which can be held to be independent, or the decisions of which can be fairly accepted upon the merits of their case. To accuse a man to himself, to ask of him a verdict upon his own actions, is hardly to constitute an impartial authority.... I want it understood that I address myself not to my judges, but that I accuse my wrongers; glad, indeed, to let their reply and my accusation be weighed by public opinion - the public opinion of the world; but quite refusing to let the decision of the accused, judge the merits of the case I plead...

Ours is the ancient constitutional and indefeasible claim of a nation to their birthright - a right which they never surrendered - a right wrested from them by terrorism and intimidation the most brutal, and by corruption the most flagitious - a right the illegal overthrow of which they have never sanctioned or condoned, and with which they are today equitably and morally as fully endowed as before that crime had been done. (3)

This, however, was scarcely the language of persuasion, and the O'Connor Don, in particular, was careful to dissociate himself from it when he spoke on the second day of the debate. He did not think that home rule would restore 'a great and glorious nationality'; he was also ready to admit the drawbacks in the proposal, notably the hostility to it of

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1 c Hansard, 3rd series, ccxx, 746-52.  
 2 ibid., 757-60.  
 3 ibid., 781-7.

almost all the northern counties, an admission which drew protests from his colleagues. Far from being vague, the scheme, he thought, 'erred in being too minute'. He was prepared, however, he said, to vote for the proposal to go into committee. (1)

The other speakers for the motion were O'Clery, Henry, O'Connor Power, MacCarthy, O'Loughlan, Nolan, Downing, and O'Brien. The last three spoke at the end of the debate, to the accompaniment of impatient cries of 'divide'. (2) No English member spoke in support of the motion; Hartington for the liberals deprecated the dangerous mildness of the amendment. The house, he said, must tell Ireland that 'they could never give their assent to the proposal'; any flirtation with it would lose more support in England than it could ever gain in Ireland. (3) For the government, the prime minister wound up the debate in his most satirical style with an airy pas seul across the surface of the Irish case. (4) The house retired to the lobbies in high good humour and voted down the proposal by 458 votes to 61. (5)

Limited as Irish expectations had been, the debate scarcely seems to have fulfilled them. Defeat itself was taken lightly for the moment:

We are barely on the threshold of the home rule campaign. The first portion of our task was to demonstrate by formal and constitutional evidence, not once or thrice, but with an iteration that will bring the fact home to the mind and conscience of

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1 Hansard, 3rd series, cxxx, 918-22.  
2 ibid., 963-5.  
3 ibid., 77.  
4 ibid., 951-63.  
5 ibid., 966.

Christendom, that English rule is judged and condemned by the vote of Ireland; that England holds our country under the present system by force alone. This position made good, we shall in due time advance upon another. Courage, men of Ireland! Courage and perseverance! - we have struck the road that leads to liberty. (1)

But the lack of organisation in the debate, (2) and the limp contributions to it which had been made by some of the apparently self-appointed spokesmen of the party, drew unfavourable comment. (3) John Martin wrote to Daunt:

I might sooner have written you a word after our debate, had I been able to give you a comfortable account of it. I must with shame and sorrow confess that when it closed I felt that our side had not had the honours of it. (4)

An analysis of the division lists proved still more disheartening. The English vote confirmed the impression given by the division on the home rule amendment to the address. Only ten English members were prepared even to go so far as to support the proposal to give the home rule demand a hearing in committee; (5) eight of the twenty-nine members claimed by the nationalists at the end of the election as pledged to support such a motion of inquiry actually voted against it. The total Irish vote in favour of the proposal to go into committee was fifty-three, including the O'Connor Don, who had made quite plain the uncertainty of his support for the second part of the motion.

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1 Nation, 11 July 1874.  
2 see above, Chapter XIV, pp. 358-60.  
3 Nation, 11 July.  
4 Martin to Daunt, 7 July, Daunt MSS, 8047.  
5 They included Sir Charles Dilke, T. Burt - one of the two working-class representatives in the house, and Joseph Cowen (Newcastle) who was to be a consistent friend to Irish interests.

Brooks, Callan, White, and O'Reilly paired for the motion; Montagu and Murphy neither paired nor voted. (1)

*Obstruction* There were amongst the home rule members some to whom the policy of 'iteration' was already becoming a source of frustration, and striking evidence of their very different approach was to be given even before the end of this first session of the new parliament. The second reading of the Expiring Laws Continuance Bill, which provided, amongst other things, for the retention of the existing special powers of the Irish executive, was greeted on 25 July by stern opposition on the part of the home rulers. Sullivan at once moved the adjournment on the ground that a measure of such importance should not be sandwiched into the Saturday morning of a long and busy week; Butt supported him - 'against that system of dealing with Ireland he, for one, was determined to set his face and to offer every resistance that the forms of the house allowed'. With the full concurrence and leadership of Butt, the home rule members fought the second reading with successive motions of adjournment, being defeated on each occasion with minorities of from thirty-three to thirty-five. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Stafford Northcote, tried to placate the Irish members with the offer of a day for the committee stage of the bill; Butt, however, demanded that the consideration of the coercion code should be deferred altogether until the next session. The second reading was finally carried and the house

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1 Nation, 11, 13 July.

30 July

adjourned at 7.15 p.m., after a seven hour debate. The committee stage on Thursday promised a further struggle; Disraeli now refused to be bound by the original offer of a full day - if the premier did not concede it, replied Butt, 'although they were a small they were a strong minority, and they would resolutely obstruct his measures'.<sup>(1)</sup> A home rule party meeting was held, and a special whip was issued for the anticipated struggle.<sup>(2)</sup>

But Thursday brought confusion and disunity. Butt moved an amendment upon the motion to go into committee; amongst those who supported it was J. G. Biggar, who gave evidence of being in hostile mood by his dogged persistence in reading extracts from previous acts of parliament, until he was finally compelled to desist by the speaker.<sup>(3)</sup> The amendment was defeated by 156 votes to 83, Butt having the support of 43 English members.<sup>(4)</sup> Satisfied with this moral achievement, Butt decided to allow the committee stage of the bill to proceed, without endeavouring deliberately to block its passage, as 'he had no wish to protract the discussion unreasonably'.<sup>(5)</sup> In adopting this course he had apparently the support of the bulk of his party; the Nation wrote:

Mr Butt, seeing how matters stood, and that he had all the substance of victory with him, decided to hold fast his vantage ground, and confine himself to such protest against the principle of the bill as could be made in debate and division against it. (6)

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1 Hansard, 3rd series, ccxxi, 713-46.  
 2 Nation, 1 Aug. 1874.  
 3 Hansard, 3rd series, ccxxi, 987-1027.  
 4 ibid., 1008-10.  
 5 ibid., 1011.  
 6 Nation, 8 Aug.

A few of his followers, however, not sharing his exhilaration at moral conquest, were loath to abandon his earlier resolve of obstruction. Prominent among these members was Biggar, who, in association with an unnamed colleague, had, in Disraeli's words, 'introduced a new style into parliamentary proceedings' by putting down over his name over a week ago a vast list of amendments to the bill. Captain Nolan, for the party, moved a first token amendment; ruled out of order on a technicality he retaliated by moving the adjournment of the committee. When this motion was beaten by 204 votes to 50, O'Clery reintroduced it in his name. It was beaten this time by 199 votes to 31. At once Biggar moved it a third time.

At this Butt felt compelled to assert his leadership. He had voted with the minority until now, he said, but he hoped that Biggar would not persevere in his intention.

It would not only impede the business of the house, but would bring discredit and disgrace upon the proceedings which some Irish members thought it their duty to take. He was always prepared to resist any attempt on the part of the majority to overbear the rights of the minority, and to use the privileges of the house for that purpose; but he thought that was the only case in which a minority was justified in resisting the majority of the house. He believed that the Irish people would endorse what he said (Major O'Gorman: No, No!). They would, he believed, better consult the dignity of the house and the interests of Ireland by proceeding with the bill - a course which would give him an opportunity of moving his amendments - than by further seeking to impede the progress of the bill.

'The honorable member has spoken like one who is proud, and justly proud, of being a member of this house', exclaimed Disraeli. But Biggar, unmoved, pressed his motion, and found thirteen members prepared to enter the lobby with him despite

their leader's wishes, against a government vote of 206. (1)

A lull followed in which Butt was able to introduce a second amendment. On its defeat, however, by 169 votes to 40, O'Gorman again moved the adjournment. Beaten by 167 votes to 34, Callan at once moved it again, on the ground that the prime minister was 'in a state of somnolence'. Sullivan intervened to dissociate himself from this introduction of personalities. The motion to adjourn was defeated by 157 votes to 16, and promptly reintroduced by Biggar. The bill was finally reported at 3.45 a.m. on Friday. (2)

Butt and those who shared his distaste for these tactics appear to have left the house before this time.

Sullivan noted:

Close of coercion bill debate - last scene in house - apparent disruption of party - Butt denounced Biggar - several cross divisions - and break up of discipline. (3)

In the morning, however, he was instrumental in calling a meeting of the party to consider the disagreement:

- had everything reconstructed most happily - we went over to the house in force, delivered our final blow as a compact body, and "left the field with colours flying". (4)

When the house met again on the following, or more

1 Hansard, 3rd series, 979-1025.  
2 *ibid.*, 1026-7. The members who most consistently followed Biggar were Callan, Dunbar, Fay, Gray, Kirk, Martin, Nolan, O'Clery, Ronayne, and O'Gorman. On one of his motions to adjourn fourteen home rulers voted with the majority: Blennerhassett, Brady, Butt, Collins, Conyngham, Errington, Henry, McKenna, O'Byrne, O'Leary, Sheil, Sherlock, Staepoole, and Ward. (*Nation*, 15 Aug. 1874)  
3 Butt to Sullivan, undated (footnote appended and dated by Sullivan), Butt MSS, vol iii, MS 82.  
4 *ibid.*



correctly, the same day, an arrangement had in fact been arrived at. The Irish members met in the party offices in King Street and agreed that the government's offer to reduce the operation of the bill from one year to three months<sup>(1)</sup> made further opposition to it superfluous. It was agreed, unanimously according to the Nation, that Butt should record their formal protest against the measure, contest a final division, and then press the matter no further.<sup>(2)</sup> When the bill was reported the same night Butt accordingly rose and announced his intention. Disraeli praised his 'fair and moderate speech'; the house divided; the amendment was defeated by 137 votes to 56, and the incident was closed.<sup>(3)</sup> Butt wrote the next morning to Sullivan:

Reading the Times I feel that we have accomplished all we desired.  
 We left the field victorious and with colours flying.  
 How can we ever thank you for your thought of the meeting and the course we took.  
 It was an inspiration of genius.  
 That we made a triumph of disaster is all due to that inspiration. All I did was to control its spirit and carry it out.<sup>(4)</sup>

The following week parliament was prorogued.

So ended the session of 1874, with an ominous and hastily healed division in the ranks of the party. But contemporary observers do not as yet seem to have drawn any

1 Hansard, 3rd series, cccxi, 987.  
 2 Nation, 8 Aug. 1874; Butt to Sullivan, undated, Butt MSS, vol 111, MS 82.  
 3 Hansard, 3rd series, cccxi, 1071-80.  
 4 Butt to Sullivan, undated, Butt MSS, vol 111, MS 82.

very serious conclusions from these disagreements. The national press took Butt's side, but without heat; Biggar's tactics were gently deprecated by the Nation as unwise.<sup>(1)</sup> If the session had shown signs of disorganisation and lack of preparation, most of the supporters of the movement seem to have been prepared for the moment to make allowances for the circumstances under which the party had been brought together, and the unfamiliarity of its members with their task and with each other.

Nevertheless it had already become obvious that the number of reliable and active home rule members was smaller than had been thought, and that the number of sympathisers among the English members of the present house was negligible. In view of the size of the conservative majority, it was plain to any realistic observer not only that home rule could not be carried in the lifetime of this parliament, but that it might never be carried unless a substantial shift in English opinion could be induced either by persuasion or by extra-parliamentary pressure. Butt promised that the next session would see better organisation, more unremitting persistence, but he was quick to point out that such efforts could achieve nothing unaccompanied by outside influence. As early as April, in the meeting of the Home Rule League which followed the rejection of his first parliamentary effort, the amendment to the address, Butt warned

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1 Nation, 8 Aug. 1874.

the country of its responsibility:

They should not exaggerate the importance of parliamentary votes. Again and again he said that the parliamentary representation was only a part, and he believed a subordinate part, of the means by which Irish self-government would be achieved. Home rule was to be won first of all by the Irish people showing that they were in earnest in seeking for it, it was also to be won by appealing to the public opinion of England and of the whole world, and to every one of these things their representatives in parliament could very slightly contribute. What they could do was this: they could, by their presence, proclaim the solemn protest of Ireland against the system under which it is governed; they could place their views fairly and distinctly before the British house of commons, and leave to them the responsibility of rejecting the demands of the Irish people; they could destroy misrepresentation by making a statement of what Ireland really seeks; and, above all - and he was sure they would do her a most important service - they could expose the system of coercive oppression, and unconstitutional tyranny, by which England alone maintained her present system of government. By that means the Irish members could exert an important influence on public opinion. Beyond that they could do nothing - beyond that everything rested with the people..... When, however, Ireland returned eighty members to the British parliament, the day of a parliament in College Green was near at hand.

The present parliament, he added, was not in his opinion likely  
(1)  
to endure longer than three years.

It is obvious from this speech that Butt had already realistically abandoned any hope of immediate victory, at least upon the issue of home rule, within the lifetime of the existing parliament, and looked instead to a determined effort to educate the public opinion of both islands preparatory to the next general election. This effort could, as he said, be advanced by unremitting parliamentary activity, but in the main it called for an organisational campaign outside parliament many times more

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1 Nation, 11 Apr. 1874.

thorough than anything yet attempted by the Home Rule League. In an editorial in August entitled 'work for the winter' the Nation urged the parliamentary leaders of the movement to take full advantage of the parliamentary recess. Poor law boards and town councils as well as the parliamentary representation should all be captured for home rule, and the registration of voters should be closely watched. The young men of every town in Ireland should meet once a week, hire a room, collect a small library, and organise lectures and other functions. But in addition to this work 'a series of great public demonstrations' should be organised during the recess, to remind the English parliament of the recurring danger to them of an unsatisfied Irish feeling. (1) W. H. O'Sullivan and Richard O'Shaughnessy wrote in the same strain to Butt, urging the holding of a monster meeting in Dublin in October, to be followed by similar meetings throughout the country. (2)

It has been remarked in chapter X that the organisation of the league established by the national conference was not perhaps ideally qualified to undertake this kind of campaign. Its subscription, at one pound a year, was still, like that of the old association, relatively high; it was still a single unified organisation for the entire country, which did not formally affiliate local branches; its monthly meetings were

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1 Nation, 15 Aug. 1874.  
 2 O'Shaughnessy to Butt and O'Sullivan to Butt, both 6 Sept. 1874. Butt MSS.

held in Dublin and presumably were not easily accessible to country members; it tended to work largely through its council, which, from the deliberate election, and still more the deliberate co-optation to it of members of parliament and persons of social eminence, was not the most spirited of assemblies, and whose meetings, even more than those of the league, were naturally largely controlled by those of its members who, in virtue of their domicile in Dublin, could habitually attend them. But

Butt was not unaware of the necessity to bridge this gap between the league and the people; he enthusiastically believed that this could be achieved through his plan of a national roll. The first mention of the national roll proposal in public had been made at the conference, resolution XIII of which had declared:

That the annual subscription of each member of the Irish Home Rule League should be £1, and that steps should also be taken to enrol the great mass of the people in the league. (1)

At the first meeting of the provisional council of the new organisation in December 1873, Butt had promised to introduce a plan for a national roll at the first meeting of the league on 23 January 1874, and on 16 January he formally moved the adoption of the scheme in the council. Everyone in the country who sympathised with the home rule movement was to be enrolled, on payment of one shilling, upon a grand national roll of home rule supporters. 'I entertain the most confident expectation that

1 Conference proceedings, p. 194.

2 Nation, 20 Dec. 1873.

3 ibid., 17 Jan. 1874.

this will, if properly and vigorously managed, give us in a very short time 100,000 men and £5000'<sup>(1)</sup>.... he wrote in a confidential memorandum upon the future of the movement, and to Henry he wrote: 'I hope to make a great effect by producing the National Roll and inscribing names in the meeting'<sup>(2)</sup>....

But the number of signatures which were gained never came anywhere near these expectations. Perhaps the human resources available in the league were never sufficient to rouse the country to the degree of interest which would have been necessary to sustain a scheme of the scope envisaged by Butt. Certainly no one else in the league seems to have shared his enthusiasm for the project. In particular, Martin, as organising secretary, was sceptical as to its value. It has already been suggested that he was not, perhaps, the ideal occupant of the post which he filled. He was neither young nor strong; part of his time was necessarily occupied with his attendance at parliament, and for that part which he was able to devote to league affairs he appears to have had what he considered better uses than the prosecution of enrolment. In February 1874, on his appointment as secretary, he informed Daunt of his intention, now that the election was over, of commencing the organisation of the whole country. One plan which he had especially in mind was the publication of a home rule periodical.<sup>(3)</sup> But in March he had become less hopeful of this

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1 Dec. 1873, Butt MSS, vol 1, MS 830.

2 Butt to Henry, 29 Dec., Butt MSS, vol iii, MS 832.

3 Martin to Daunt, 23 Feb. 1874, Daunt MSS, 8047.

project's success, and <sup>was</sup> lamenting that the funds available to the league were being swallowed up by the publication of the proceedings of the conference and by the arrangements for the national roll. <sup>(1)</sup> In April, acknowledging the receipt of fifty names for enrolment and a postal order for £2-10-0, he was complaining of Butt's complete absorption in the project; additional staff and rooms had been taken for it 'quite needlessly', and in face of his protests.

Mr Butt had wildly sanguine ideas about the raising, and at once, of a huge money income by the scheme. And so, to do the work fast and well, he insisted upon a special committee.... a separate staff and separate rooms and an expensive machinery - and most provoking of all that I as prime minister should superintend and control and be responsible for all. I could only protest and warn....

The number enrolled so far was only a little over three thousand, and the income thus gained merely covered the expenditure to date.

I tell you that in confidence. In fact the league affairs ever since I came into office have been managed far more expensively than I like, and I find in myself no practical ability to make a reform. <sup>(2)</sup>

It has already been remarked in chapter X that, after the foundation of the league, funds had come in with disappointing slowness. Soon a policy of retrenchment was forced upon the league. In May it was compelled to give up the rooms in Upper Sackville Street which had been taken as headquarters for the new campaign. <sup>(3)</sup> The national roll scheme was retained, but drew increasing criticism, and Butt had to defend it against the objections of Sullivan as well as Martin. <sup>(4)</sup> Gradually hope in it

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1 Martin to Daunt, 21 Mar. 1874, Daunt MSS, 8047.  
 2 Martin to Daunt, 15 Apr. 1874, *ibid.*  
 3 Martin to Butt, 30 May 1874, Butt MSS.  
 4 Butt to Sullivan, undated, Butt MSS, vol ii, MS 81.

seems to have been abandoned, and energy transferred elsewhere.

In August an effort was begun to organise the 'autumnal campaign' projected by the Nation.<sup>(1)</sup> A series of public meetings

addressed by Butt, Martin, Galbraith, Bigger, and O'Connor Power were held in Ulster.<sup>(2)</sup> Constituency meetings were also called by

the more active home rule members of parliament. In Cork Shaw, MacCarthy, McKenna, Murphy, Downing, Galbraith, Daunt, and several priests attended a home rule assembly in the courthouse presided over by the mayor; unfortunately the lack of prior negotiation between Ronayne and the advanced party caused the latter to take up a hostile attitude, and hecklers interrupted the meeting to demand that it should be transferred to the open air and held on a Sunday, in order that workmen might be able to attend it. Ronayne received 'a tremendous ovation', but the motion of confidence in the sitting members provoked abuse of 'shoneen whigs' and a cry of 'what about Nicholas Dan Murphy?'<sup>(3)</sup>

Limerick was the scene of similar conflicts. The proposal of the Farmers' Club to call a home rule meeting aroused the ire of John Daly and his friends who, claiming the credit for having returned Butt and O'Sullivan in the first place, felt the convening of such a gathering to be their right rather than that of the farmers. Daly said:

I make no objection, as I stated before, that the home rule platform should be accepted as a compromise.... But we must be

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1 Nation, 22 Aug. 1874.

2 Martin to Daunt, 16 Dec. 1874, Daunt MSS, 8047; Nation, 28 Nov.

19 Dec. 1874, 9 Jan. 1875.

3 Nation, 17 Oct. 1874; Daunt Journal, 12 Oct. 1874, MS 3041; Captain Dume to Butt, 15 Oct. 1874, Butt MSS.



told when it is going to be finished, for I don't want, and I will not be a party to seeing, the ambition of a certain class of people satisfied while hunger exists in the land and the emigrant ships take our best men away to be slaves of other nations....

Daly and his supporters invaded a meeting of the Farmers' Club and threatened them with a reenactment of the celebrated (1) 'First of November' if they went ahead with their plans.

The Nation attributed this dispute to the rumour that the farmers were anxious to 'shunt' the home rule issue in favour of tenant right. (2) The dilemma was resolved by the holding of

two meetings. One in Limerick, organised by 'the democracy', was attended by Butt and O'Shaughnessy; the mayor presided, but only six priests, four of them regulars, were on the platform.

O'Sullivan was with Butt earlier in the day but stayed away from the meeting. Daly, in proposing a vote of thanks to the chairman issued a warning to the home rule leader:

He never would appear on a public platform were it not the fact that Mr Butt offered compromise between the Irish people and the English government, and he accepted that compromise on behalf of the democracy so long as consistent. But the moment representatives degenerated to whiggery or toryism, that moment they would unfurl the banner they struck under before. (3)

A few days later another home rule meeting was held at Kilmallock, O'Sullivan's home town, attended by Butt, O'Shaughnessy, O'Sullivan, Synan, Martin, and large numbers of priests, under the auspices of the Farmers' Club. (4)

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1 Nation, 24 Oct. 1874.  
2 ibid.  
3 ibid., 31 Oct.  
4 ibid., 7 Nov.

Meetings were also held in other constituencies.

A large convention in Maryboro was attended by Sullivan, Meldon, and O'Shaughnessy as delegates from the league, but not by the sitting members for the county, Digby and Dease. (1) The O'Connor

Don and Charles French attended a Roscommon meeting at which the former at least elucidated his attitude to the home rule party. He had been unable to attend the party conference in March, he explained; afterwards, he found that he was unable to accept the resolutions which it had passed in his absence.

Pledges to united action were useless as the members did not know to what they were pledging themselves. He, for example, had assumed that the pledge bound members to avoid all English party associations, and to consider themselves 'neither liberals nor conservatives, but simply members of the Irish party'; however:

Subsequent events very soon proved that this was not a correct interpretation, for shortly after one of the most prominent and able members who took part in the meeting, and who subscribed to those resolutions, was to be found organising and starting in conjunction with an English party a new entirely political and party club, and on the list of the provisional committee formed for the purpose of establishing this club his name can be found.

For his part, the member for Roscommon had no criticism for such a course:

I have not, then, gentlemen, accepted these pledges, but at the same time I have ever been ready, since you first returned me as your representative, to meet my Irish colleagues and to discuss with them all matters of public interest whenever so doing seemed to me to be likely to be of any service.

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1 Nation, 10 Oct. 1874.

French, on the other hand, unhesitatingly aligned himself with the party. The meeting expressed satisfaction with the conduct of both members.<sup>(1)</sup>

Constituency meetings of the same kind were also held in Cavan,<sup>(2)</sup> Galway,<sup>(3)</sup> Mayo,<sup>(4)</sup> Wexford,<sup>(5)</sup> and Carlow.<sup>(6)</sup> The series was concluded by a packed gathering in the Rotunda at which William Shaw presided and seven home rule members of parliament attended.<sup>(7)</sup>

With the exception of the Ulster series referred to at the outset, these were not, however, essentially recruiting meetings. The league never went to the people with the kind of popular appeal which had been suggested by the Nation and by O'Sullivan; its main effort to gain popular support, the national roll scheme, evoked a disappointing response. Efforts had been made to set up local home rule associations in different parts of the country through the agency of the travelling secretary of the league, Hugh Heinrich.<sup>(8)</sup> In December, however, the poverty of the league and the need for retrenchment in its organisation compelled it to discharge Heinrich, whom it had engaged only

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1 Nation, 21 Nov. 1874.  
2 ibid., 5 Sept.  
3 ibid., 12 Sept.  
4 ibid., 17, 31 Oct.  
5 ibid., 24 Oct.  
6 ibid., 12 Dec.  
7 ibid., 7 Nov.

8 There are a considerable number of letters from Heinrich in the Butt MSS reporting upon his work (7, 13, 18, 25 June, 2, 9, 11, 16 Sep 10 Oct., 1873, and 4 undated.). They convey an impression rather of a somewhat self-important counsellor than of a successful organiser. Heinrich's appointment aroused considerable criticism from some of the advanced party. (J. Nolan to Butt, R. Pigott to Butt, 5 Mar. 1873, Butt MSS.)

in March of the previous year, and to rely solely upon the assistant secretary, J. P. McAlister; at the same time Martin announced his determination to give up the paid secretaryship if the financial position of the league did not improve. <sup>(1)</sup> In February 1875 Martin did in fact resign and was elected an honorary secretary; <sup>(2)</sup> no successor was appointed to the paid position. Thus at the end of little over a year of existence the league had one paid official in place of the three which it had initially engaged.

The year 1874, then, saw a sudden and in some respects disastrous election, and unimpressive parliamentary session, and a relative failure on the part of the league to broaden its influence throughout the country. It saw, in addition, some threatening divisions within the ranks of the movement. The election was followed almost immediately by the defection from the party of P. J. Smyth, who at once initiated a bitter controversy with the home rule leaders as to the relative merits of O'Connellite repeal and the federal programme. In his campaign Smyth possessed the valuable support of the eccentric Marchioness of Queensberry, support valuable not so much from her powers as a controversialist, which were in some doubt, as for her financial assistance, which enabled him to make an arrangement with Richard Pigott under which the latter, in return for a cash

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1 Martin to Daunt, 12 Dec. 1874, Daunt MSS, 3047.

2 Martin to Daunt, 25 Feb. 1875, *ibid.*

payment of two hundred pounds, agreed to place three columns of the Irishman every week at the disposal of Smyth's '82 clubs. (1) These bodies never won much public support, but the goodwill of the Irishman gave Smyth additional publicity for his anti-home rule campaign, which, reaching its apogee in the debate on the home rule motion of 1876, seriously compromised the representative character of the home rule party in the eyes of English critics. Already in 1874 enthusiastically hostile papers were spreading rumours of the impending disintegration of the party. It cannot have been difficult to believe such reports of an organisation so notoriously unwilling to accept discipline even upon the conduct of the one issue which was its *raison d'être*. Besides the open disagreements at Westminster, another dispute inside the party was permitted to become public. It will be recalled that in the by-election which followed the invalidation of the Mayo result, O'Connor Power, who had been compelled by clerical disapproval to withdraw from nomination in the general election, now contested the issue with the two previously elected members, George Browne and Thomas Tighe. The majority in the party favoured their erstwhile colleagues, but John Blunden, one of the honorary secretaries of the league, and a close friend of Butt, went down to Mayo to work for the candidate of the advanced wing. An irate meeting of the party, called upon

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1 Pigott to Smyth, 18 July 1874; Pigott to M. of Queensberry, 28 Sept. 1875, 27 Jan., 10 Feb. 1876; Smyth MSS, 8216.

the requisition of Bryan, O'Callaghan, Digby, Sheil, O'Loughlen, Bowyer, and Blemmerhasset, all of the right wing of the party, was only prevented from censuring Blunde<sup>n</sup> by the promise of Butt that the league council would publicly disclaim all responsibility for his action. <sup>(1)</sup> 'In liberal political circles' all opinions, wrote the Nation, were unanimously in favour of Browne and Tighe. <sup>(2)</sup> It was Power, however, who returned with Browne to Westminster.

As the year drew to a close, the issue of the land was moving once again into the forefront of Irish politics. So long as home rule seemed an immediately practicable objective, there was a possibility that the agitation for it might consume popular interest to the exclusion of other issues. But now, with hope apparently deferred until another general election might increase the power of the home rule representation, minds were turning once again to older grievances. In October the chairman of the Limerick and Clare Farmers' Club found it necessary to arrange a county meeting with the parliamentary representatives in order to

remove from their constituents, the farming class, the impression which he should say was gaining ground, that tenant right had been left in the background in consequence of the great question of home rule. <sup>(3)</sup>

Home rule meetings, during the recess, continued, as always, to

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1 Nation, 16 May 1874.  
 2 ibid.  
 3 ibid., 3 Oct.

pass resolutions calling for land reform amongst other remedies for Irish grievances; <sup>(1)</sup> but the issue of the relative importance of the two demands was raised in the correspondence columns of the Nation in October, <sup>(2)</sup> and two editorials in October and November were devoted to the effort to allay the evidently growing concern of the farmers at the alleged neglect of the land issue. <sup>(3)</sup> It was to resolve these differences and to make up for the dissatisfaction of the farmers at Butt's failure to press their claims in the last session of parliament, and to plan more positive action on this issue in the 1875 session, that it was decided to summon a land conference.

Butt's Tenant League had lapsed upon the passage of Gladstone's land act, and the tenant farmers had been left for a time without any national organisation, although the local farmers' clubs had, of course, remained in existence. As the shortcomings of the act became, however, increasingly apparent, the need for such organisation returned. Landlords granted or redrafted leases so as to compel their tenants in many cases to opt out of the act; <sup>(4)</sup> the employment of this device by the Duke of Leinster in the 'Leinster lease' led to the establishment of

1 A notable exception was John Daly's Limerick City meeting referred to above.  
 2 Nation, 10 Oct. 1874.  
 3 ibid., 24 Oct., 21 Nov.  
 4 One of the main aims of Butt's abortive land bill of 1874 had been the repeal of those clauses of the 1870 which had made this contracting-out from the act possible. (Hansard, 3rd series, ccxviii, 1699-1705.)

(1)  
the first 'tenants defence association'. Other parts of the country were quick to follow suit.

It was upon the county Dublin association that the organisation of the impending conference mainly devolved. Its secretary, A. J. Kettle, was an enthusiastic home ruler and a loyal follower of Butt. To Butt he explained his intention to establish the conference upon a firm basis by the cultivation from the outset of those close relations with the parliamentary spokesmen of the country which had not always existed in the last session. He proposed in the first instance to persuade the delegates of the different clubs to invite the co-operation of selected members of parliament, notably Butt, Gray, Sullivan, and Meldon, and in their joint names to assemble the conference; he planned to hold, on the day previous to the conference, a private meeting of these members and of the 'more thoughtful' club spokesmen to draft a bill for submission to the conference; over the conference Butt would, of course, himself preside. Kettle warned Butt, however, of two difficulties. The leaders of the Ulster farmers had prepared a bill of their own which they had not shown to their southern counterparts, and they appeared to be going to ask the government to settle their problems on a party basis. The farmers of the south, on the other hand, were, he believed, only lukewarm on the home rule issue, because they

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1 A. J. Kettle, Material for victory, Dublin, 1958, p.14.



suspected a similar indifference towards their problems on the part of the home rule members. The conference would have to resolve these differences. (1)

*Land conference*  
*Feb. 75* Butt approved of all these plans. But Kettle's worst fears were borne out. The Ulster members of parliament refused altogether to attend the conference or to co-operate in drafting a joint bill. A section of the farmers, incensed by what they considered Butt's neglect of their interests in the last session, insisted upon confining the preparatory meeting of 19 February to their own delegates, and upon drafting their own bill without any consultation with the parliamentary representatives prior to the actual conference on the following day. Kettle strongly disapproved of this attitude, and to circumvent it proposed to hold a private meeting with the leading members of parliament, including Butt, together with such veteran tenant-right agitators outside parliament as Fathers O'Shea and O'Keefee, Richard Lalor, Mulhallen Marum, William Bolster, and E. McElroy of Ballymoney. To Butt he expressed his deep concern at these dissensions:

I am delighted to hear that you will be able to gain a good deal of attention to this question, before the conference. I trust that nothing will prevent you from adopting such a course, as I feel certain that your work will be made the basis of all the deliberations, so a great deal may depend upon your preparation.

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1 Kettle to Butt, 19 Dec. 1874, Butt MSS.

Your bill of last session did not meet the views of the southern clubs by any means, nay I heard it stated that part of it was contradictory of your own resolutions. (1)

The conference assembled on 20 February 1875 in the Rotunda. Sixteen members of parliament, all home rulers, were present, including Butt, (2) but the chair was taken by one of the handful of Ulster delegates, W. D. Henderson of Belfast. Thirty organisations were represented, mostly farmers' clubs or tenant defence associations; only four were located in Ulster. (3) Resolutions were passed protesting against arbitrary evictions and increases of rent, and calling for security of tenure, 'the acknowledgment of the tenant's property in the value created by his improvements, and the free and unrestricted right of sale of his interest in his holding.' The Ulster tenant right, <sup>still</sup> where observed in its integrity', satisfied these demands, and its extension to the south would be welcomed. The conference called for the introduction of a bill to meet its resolutions in the coming session; it also agreed upon the inclusion of a clause making some provision for the housing of agricultural labourers. A parliamentary committee was appointed to draft the bill and to help to promote the cause in the next session. (4) It was

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1 Kettle to Butt, 5 Jan. 1875, Butt MSS. Most of the preceding paragraph is based upon this letter.  
2 They were Meldon, Collins, MacCarthy, Browne, Sullivan, Fay, Martin, O'Shaughnessy, Nolan, O'Sullivan, O'Brien, and Ronayne, all of whom spoke, and Butt, Shaw, O'Clery, and O'Byrne, who also attended. Also present was Charles Stuart Parnell.  
3 Nation, 30 Jan. 1875.  
4 ibid., 23 Jan.

subsequently agreed that in order to take full advantage of the Ulster custom, the northern representatives on this committee should be asked to draft a bill based upon the usage of their province, to which Marum undertook to add southern clauses; both were then to be laid before a legal committee consisting of Meldon, Martin, Marum, and some northerners, for final approval. Kettle had fully concurred in the appointment of this committee, he told Butt;

Why your name was omitted can only be explained by your own expressed wish that no members of parliament should have anything to do with drafting the bill - but now that other M.P.'s have been appointed to act I think it right to let you know the circumstances hoping that you may be able to give them some assistance.

The enclosed is the northern draft which only came to hand on the 19th inst. I expect that Mr Marum's work will be done in a few days, so that by the end of next week we should have the matter in shape. (1)

But in their lack of deference to the experience and authority of Butt, the farmers had erected a barrier between themselves and the political movement which was to deny them parliamentary expression in the session which now opened.

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Kettle to Butt, 21 Feb. 1875, Butt MSS.

## Chapter XV : Three sessions of argument

(contd.)

### (b) The session of 1875

At the opening of the parliamentary session of 1875, the land question was not the only difficulty which faced the home rule leaders. In January Captain White, the home rule member for Tipperary, retired from the representation. The name of John Mitchel was at once put forward by the advanced element. On his last visit to Ireland in the previous summer, Mitchel had kept clear of politics, though making little secret of his dislike for the home rule movement and his determination to avoid contact with its leaders other than Martin. <sup>(1)</sup> But he had let Martin know that he would be willing to stand if a by-election should occur in a constituency which was prepared to elect him on his own terms, <sup>(2)</sup> and expressly that he would accept nomination in Tipperary, where, it will be recalled, he had been put forward in the general election, should one of its seats fall vacant. <sup>(3)</sup> Invited to stand, he replied at once by issuing his <sup>(4)</sup> address and setting sail from New York to prosecute his campaign.

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1 To Smyth he wrote in September 1874 that he had declined an invitation to stay with Sullivan. 'I will be the guest of no "home-ruler" in Dublin, not even with John Martin. In fact I am savage against that helpless driftless concern called "home rule" - and nearly as vicious against your simple repeal. But if I were under any obligation (which I am not) to put in my oar at all into the puddle of Irish politics I wd rather - as I have told John Martin - pull in your boat than in Butt's.' (Mitchel to Smyth, 3 Sept. 1874, Smyth MSS, 8215, also Mitchel to Smyth, August 1874, Young Ireland MSS, 3226.)

2 Martin to Daunt, 20 Aug. 1874, Daunt MSS, 8047.

3 Martin to John O'Leary, 19 Aug. 1874, O'Leary MSS, 5926.

4 Nation. 30 Jan. . 6 Feb. 1875.

John Mitchel's candidature  
Jan. - Feb.  
1875

The nomination of Mitchel placed the home rule leaders in a dilemma. Only a few weeks earlier he had delivered a lecture upon home rule in New York in which, while praising Martin, Galbraith, Ronayne, Smyth and others for their efforts to keep alive the national cause, he had roundly condemned the federal proposal. (1) To support him was to support an open critic of the party; to oppose him would be to offer a direct affront to the advanced nationalists. It was obviously impossible for the league officially to endorse Mitchel's candidature, and it chose to ignore the contest. (2) But John Martin probably expressed the attitude of most nationalists when he wrote to Kickham deprecating Mitchel's attitude to home rule as 'neither impartial nor friendly', but urging the voters to elect him as a reward for his services to Ireland and to 'trust him to do what he may deem right for the cause of Ireland.' (3) O'Connor Power, and several branches of the English Home Rule Confederation followed Martin's lead in openly supporting Mitchel. (4)

The new session opened in February. The zeal of the home rule members would not flag, promised the Nation: the party

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2 But Dr McCarthy, bishop of Cloyne, one of the few bishops who openly supported the home rule movement, urged Butt to dissociate the league publicly from Mitchel's candidature. (McCarthy to Butt, 12 Feb. 1875, ButtMSS.)

1 Nation, 2 Jan. 1875.

3 Nation, 6 Feb. 1875.

4 *ibid.*, 13 Feb., and editorial in 6 Feb.

must keep up its work upon all its different fronts, and in the meanwhile the Irish people must trust and support it. (1) A

circular signed by Butt, Martin, and O'Shaughnessy was issued to the home rule members requesting their presence in the house for the opening of the session. (2)

At the first meeting of the party O'Shaughnessy resigned as whip on the grounds of ill-health and was appointed honorary secretary to the party, his former post being filled by Lord Francis Conyngham. A new parliamentary committee of eleven was elected, consisting of Butt, Shaw, Henry, Gray, Downing, Redmond, O'Connor Power, Blennerhassett, Sullivan, O'Shaughnessy, and John Martin as secretary of the league. The education question was entrusted to Butt's care, that of the political prisoners to O'Connor Power, and that of tenant right to Sullivan. (3)

But if it was hoped that the session of 1875 would see all that resolution and organisation which had been lacking in the party in 1874, any such hope was soon disappointed. Owing to ill-health and the pressure of his legal practice, Butt found attendance at Westminster even more difficult than before, and he was unable constantly to direct the tactics of the party. (4)

Another absentee from amongst the most useful members of the party

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1 Nation, 30 Jan. 1875.  
2 ibid., 6 Feb.  
3 ibid., 13 Feb.  
4 Martin to Daunt, 10 Mar. 1875, Daunt MSS, 8047. This letter, reporting upon the conduct of affairs at Westminster, was the last which Daunt received from his old friend, who died on the 29th of that month.

was Mitchell Henry, grief-stricken after the death of his young wife while on holiday with him in Egypt. <sup>(1)</sup> The home rule interest was further weakened by the sudden death of John Martin at the end of March and of Sir John Gray at the beginning of April. <sup>(2)</sup>

*Mitchel elected, Feb 75*

The address in reply to the queen's speech was permitted by the home rulers to pass upon this occasion without any attempt at amendment, although O'Connor Power, Ronayne, and Martin spoke in the debate. Irish interest was centred at once upon the victory of Mitchel in Tipperary. On Mitchel's election, Hart Dyke on behalf of the government immediately moved for the placing before the house of the papers relating to his trial, conviction, and escape, with a view to his disqualification as an undischarged felon. Nolan, as the only home rule member present, protested, and in the time gained other members of the party were assembled. The motion was carried, however, by 174 votes to

<sup>(3)</sup> 13. Disraeli at once gave notice of his intention to move the issue of a fresh writ. When this motion came before the house on the Thursday following, O'Shaughnessy, for the home rule party, opposed it on two grounds. The first was the failure of the

1 Martin to Daunt, op. cit.

2 The home rulers retained Martin's seat in Meath but lost those of Gray (Kilkenny City) and White (Tipperary). White, on the other hand, never seems to have been officially a member of the party, though supporting the federal proposal. This brought the membership of the party down to 54, including Murphy, who resigned from it in January of the following year.

3 Hansard, 3rd series, cccxii, 416-22. Joseph Cowen (Newcastle) was the only English member to vote in the minority. (Nation, 20 Feb. 1875.)

government to give the electors any previous warning of Mitchel incapacity to sit; secondly, he argued that Mitchel, condemned, unlike Rossa, to transportation, had in fact discharged his sentence by remaining outside the United Kingdom for its term. The attorney-general conceded that Mitchell was not liable to re-arrest, but contended that as an undischarged felon he was nevertheless incapable of taking his seat. Hartington, for the opposition, dissented from the action of the ministry to the extent of demanding a committee on the question. The government motion was carried by 269 votes to 102. A considerable number of English members voted with O'Shaughnessy; Butt himself, however, was absent from both the debate and the division, while Montagu and O'Callaghan, both technically home rulers, voted with the government. <sup>(1)</sup>

*Mitchel rebuffed, Nov. 75*

The Mitchel affair brought little credit upon the influence of the party either in Ireland or at Westminster; its aftermath was no more fortunate. Disqualified once, Mitchel stood again as a challenge to the decision of the government. Upon this basis Butt now felt able to endorse his candidature, <sup>(2)</sup> and after an energetic campaign organised by young John Dillon, a recent auditor of the Literary and Historical Society of the Catholic University, <sup>(3)</sup> Mitchel was again returned. At once the seat was awarded to the other candidate, the conservative Stephen Moore,

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1 Hansard, 3rd series, cccxii, 490-539. These two votes were regarded with especial indignation by the nationalists, and a Tipperary meeting demanded O'Callaghan's resignation from the representation of the county. (Nation, 27 Feb. 1875.)

2 Nation, 6 Mar.

3 Ibid., 13 March.



whom Mitchel had defeated by 3,114 votes to 746. The exertions of the campaign proved too great a strain upon the ailing Mitchel; less than a fortnight later he was dead, to be followed in as little time by John Martin, who caught a chill while attending the funeral of his old friend and brother-in-law. 'Poor Mitchel's last legacy to Ireland is a tory misrepresentation of Tipperary', wrote O'Neill Daunt in his diary. <sup>(1)</sup>

The Mitchel affair was followed at Westminster by a short spell of normal party activity. McKenna and Butt moved for an inquiry into the imperial taxation of Ireland; after a short debate their motion was withdrawn. <sup>(2)</sup> O'Connor Power similarly moved and withdrew a resolution urging the release of the remaining political prisoners. <sup>(3)</sup> P. J. Smyth's perennial bill for the repeal of the convention act was defeated by 110 votes to 38. <sup>(4)</sup>

*Constitution Bill* But on 22 March the motion by the government for the second reading of the Peace Preservation (Ireland) Bill introduced yet another keenly anticipated struggle upon the issue of coercion. The rejection of the bill was moved by Montagu, who was followed by several other Irish members. O'Leary at one stage <sup>(5)</sup> sought to move the adjournment, but was restrained by Sullivan. The debate spread into a second day, in which Butt, attending

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1 Daunt Journal, 28 May 1875, MS 304h.  
 2 Hansard, 3rd series, cccxii, 1703-27.  
 3 ibid., 1752-69.  
 4 ibid., 1957-61.  
 5 ibid., cccxiii, 148-219.

consistently for the first time in this session, was one of the speakers. The second reading was carried by 264 votes to 69. (1)

The bill, wrote the Nation grimly, should not be allowed to become law 'until it has been made very much more of a scandal and a trouble to the English parliament', (2) and Butt wrote:

We believe we can promise that the Irish party will in this matter, at least, exhaust all the forms of the house to attain their just and righteous object. (3)

The committee stage was taken exactly a month later.

The only Irish business of note taken in the interval was the introduction by Butt of the second reading of his Municipal Corporations (Ireland) Bill, which duplicated the provisions of his municipal privileges bill, rejected by the lords in the previous session. The government, having been previously forced to accept this measure, could scarcely defeat it now; they achieved instead the same result by forcing its adjournment.

Nolan and Meldon retaliated immediately by moving the adjournment of the next English business; they were dissuaded by

Butt. (4) With a section of their number in this hostile mood, a special urgent whip from Butt assembled the party for the committee stage of the coercion bill. (5) It was agreed to

1 Hansard, 3rd series, ccxxiii, 232-92.

2 Nation, 27 Mar. 1875.

3 Home rule party circular, *ibid.*, 10 April.

4 Hebbard, 3rd series, ccxxiii, 295-6. Shortly afterwards Butt withdrew both this and his municipal franchise bill, apparently despairing of their progress in this session. (Nation, 24 Apr. 1875)

5 Butt to Callan, 29 Mar., Butt MSS, vol 1, MS 830.

press a large number of amendments. 'No one who has disregarded that summons', warned the Nation, 'can hereafter excuse himself'....<sup>(1)</sup>

*Biggar's obstruction Apr. 75*

But when the debate opened, Joseph Biggar at once showed that Butt's rebuke in the previous session had effected no alteration in his tactics on coercion, and that he for one was prepared to carry out the letter of Butt's warnings to the government. On the motion to go into committee he proposed an amendment calling for the rejection of the bill. For four hours he continued to speak, reading extracts from newspapers 'in a manner which made it impossible to follow the application', and illustrating his argument with a mass of statistics which were 'almost inaudible'. The house emptied. A count was taken, and Biggar resumed, reading extracts from the evidence before the Westmeath commission 'in a manner which rendered him totally unintelligible'. Reproved for his inaudibility by the speaker, Biggar took his papers and a supply of water, and moving into the front opposition benches, which had been vacant throughout, resumed his speech. Finally inspiration failed him, and being 'unwilling to detain the house any longer', he sat down.<sup>(2)</sup>

Biggar was followed by McKenna, O'Clery, O'Conor, MacCarthy, Downing, Fay, and Nolan, who, with the ministerial

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1 Nation, 24 Apr. 1875.  
2 Hansard, 3rd series, cccxiii, 1451-8, from which the quotations in this paragraph are taken, and Nation, 1 May.

speakers, in the words of the Nation, 'protracted the debate for two or three days longer'.<sup>(1)</sup> But although none of the other Irish members chose to follow Biggar's tactics, neither did they condemn him openly. O'Connor Power and O'Gorman defended him against the sarcasm of Disraeli; Sullivan, on the other hand, assured the house that the honorable member for Cavan had spoken as he did, not from any pre-arrangement with the other Irish members, but totally on his own responsibility, and without having given them any previous intimation that he intended to address the house at any such length.

The adjournment was moved by O'Leary, supported by Butt. Defeated by 245 votes to 63, it was at once moved again by O'Gorman, declaring, with passionate intensity: 'if the liberties of my country are to be destroyed by a despotic and insolent majority, these liberties shall die hard.' The house was moved to 'great laughter'; Disraeli gave way to this 'tragic address', and the members departed in something like their normal humour after the long sitting.<sup>(2)</sup>

The debate on Biggar's amendment was resumed on 26 April. The second night was the occasion for the maiden speech of the new member for Meath, Charles Stuart Parnell, elected in the room of John Martin. It was an effort notable mainly for its forthright conclusion:

Why should Ireland be treated as a geographical fragment of England, as he had heard an ex-chancellor of the exchequer call it some time ago. Ireland was not a geographical fragment, but a nation.

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1 Nation, 1 May.  
 2 Hansard, 3rd series, cccxiii, 1451-90.

After several Irish members and one ministerialist had spoken, the amendment was defeated by 155 votes to 68, and the house went into committee on the bill. In committee Butt and the O'Connor Don moved the first of the fifty-nine amendments of which the Irish members had given notice. Biggar moved the adjournment, with characteristic effrontery withdrew it in order to allow Ronayne to speak, and then reintroduced it. Progress was reported. (1)

On 29 April the struggle was resumed. Amendments were introduced by Nolan, Fay, Butt, and O'Sullivan. The first three having been defeated, the chief secretary Hicks Beach promised on behalf of the government to give consideration to the fourth. Butt accordingly asked O'Sullivan to withdraw it; the latter, however, was determined to hold out for a positive promise to accept it, until Downing intervened to remind him of 'the necessity of deferring to the expressed wish of the honorable and learned member for the city of Limerick in the interests of the house.' (2)

The amendments, which dealt with individual provisions of the bill such as that for the licensing of firearms, succeeded one another monotonously until Biggar, feeling that satiety had been reached, moved the adjournment.

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1 Hansard, 3rd series, ccxxiii, 1641-3.  
 2 ibid., 1349. O'Shaughnessy also intervened to ask O'Sullivan to bow to Butt's wishes.

His speech being interrupted by 'unseemly noises', Callan rose to protest, and Sullivan also appealed to the house to hear the member for Cavan. Biggar was irked by these appeals; 'he intended to be heard. If honorable members did not like it they had their remedy, and he had his.' The motion was defeated, but the adjournment was shortly afterwards conceded. (1)

The fourth day, 30 April, passed without incident. On the fifth, 3 May, Biggar and Downing disagreed as to the pressing of one amendment, and Callan forced a division against Butt's wishes. (2) The sixth day, 4 May, was uneventful. (3) On 6 May Disraeli complained in the house of the hindrance caused to government business by the prolonged committee stage of the bill. He made, however, no charges of obstruction, admitting that consistent with their avowed intention to offer 'unflinching opposition' to the bill the Irish members had not exceeded their parliamentary rights; he recalled that in 1845 a coercion bill for Ireland had been held up for nine days in committee by an even smaller minority. (4)

The committee stage of the bill ended at last on 6 May. With the last amendment disposed of, Butt rose to make what were probably meant to be a few concluding remarks:

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1 Hansard, 3rd series, cccxiii, 1828-63.  
 2 ibid., 1963-2001. It was defeated by 311 votes to 3.  
 3 Ibid., cccxiv, mm 24-42.  
 4 ibid., 165-70.

He thought at the end of the committee he ought to remark that the Irish members had nothing whatever to complain of in the manner in which the chief secretary had conducted it.... They had nothing to complain of in the manner in which they had been received by the house, and the manner in which their objections had been met would have some effect in mitigating the effect these coercive measures would have upon the minds of the Irish people. He hoped the house would not take objection to the manner in which the opposition had been conducted. The bill was unconstitutional, it vitally affected the liberties of the people, and its provisions were multifarious, and had it been applied to England it would not have passed with even so little discussion. He, however, believed it had been discussed fairly, and much as they regretted the re-enactment of these laws it could not be said an ample opportunity had not been given for the consideration of the question.

Disraeli replied: 'I think this is the best message of peace which we have had for a long period.'

So, no doubt, Butt intended the struggle to end.

But this exchange of parliamentary compliments was incomprehensible to many of the men who had borne the brunt of the battle.

Mr Ronayne: I, for one, will not be a party to accepting from the English government chains, however gilded, or however accompanied by courtesy, politeness, or good manners.

Mr Biggar: This is not, in my judgment, an occasion on which we ought to bandy compliments. I am not going to blame the house for the want of courtesy shown towards myself; but I must protest against a bill being forced on us unsupported by reason, argument, or common sense.

Mr Mitchel Henry said, he did not think that was a proper occasion for bandying compliments. He thought the question was really too serious. He intimated that the bill would be strongly opposed on the third reading. (1)

On this discordant note the long debate concluded. The bill passed its report stage on 10 May, to the accompaniment of some sharp exchanges between Biggar and O'Gorman on the one hand and Downing on the other. (2)

1 Hansard, 3rd series, cccxiv, 195.

2 ibid., 410-34.

land question  
 Before considering the wider implications of this struggle in relation to the movement as a whole, the remainder of the Irish business taken in this session can be quickly disposed of. It will be recalled that this was to have been above all the session in which the demands of the tenant farmers were to have been put before the house, and that the land conference had set up a parliamentary committee which had expected to conclude the drafting of a bill by the end of February. But instead all liaison between the committee and the home rule members seems to have broken down. The committee insisted upon compulsory arbitration as the only legal solution of landlord-tenant disputes, and at the same time opposed any provision for the revaluation of rents. <sup>(1)</sup> This attitude was quite unacceptable to Butt, whose own preference was for perpetuity of tenure at periodic revaluation, and who did not believe that anything more radical than fixity of tenure could be usefully put forward in an English parliament. The committee submitted their bill to Meldon on 13 April with the request that he should alter its fourth clause so as to make arbitration the only means of settling disputes and to repeal the relevant provisions of the 1870 act. <sup>(2)</sup> Meldon failed to do this, <sup>(3)</sup> and the session was allowed to pass without any bill being introduced.

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1 Kettle to Butt, 13 Apr. 1875, Butt MSS.

2 *ibid.*, and J. Byrne to Butt, 3 May, Butt MSS.

3 *ibid.* to Butt, 25 Sept. 1875, Butt MSS.



In June the tenant representatives were still asking Butt to confer with them:

If you could manage to draw up your bill in a short time and submit it to the Farmers' Clubs and even give notice to the house that you would bring it forward at an early day next session you would be doing good work. (1)

Butt, however, was obviously angry that a remotely-situated tenant committee should endeavour to dictate parliamentary tactics to him. He was also anxious not to anticipate any action on the part of the Ulster representatives in parliament. (2) His

colleagues were no more enthusiastic. In September Henry congratulated him on regaining the 'whip hand' on the land question; revision of rents and the power of removing an undesirable tenant must certainly be conceded in any reform, added Henry; free sale, furthermore, was only a phrase, and as understood by the committee redounded only to the advantage of the tenant. (3)

In parliamentary terms all these exchanges found expression only in a compromise resolution, moved by Butt on 11 June, calling for the appointment of a royal commission to enquire into the working of the land act. Butt was seconded by Kirk, and supported by O'Sullivan, Downing, O'Reilly, and Meldon. Henry Bruen, conservative member for Carlow county, and the chief secretary Hicks Beach were the only ministerial speakers; the

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1 Byrne to Butt, undated fragment, 1875, Butt MSS.  
2 Butt to Sullivan, undated, Butt MSS, vol ii, MS 81.  
3 Henry to Butt, 29 Sept. 1875, Butt MSS.

latter dwelt with considerable effect upon the differences between Butt's demands and those of the tenant committee. The motion was defeated by 108 votes to 41. No liberals bothered to speak, nor did any of the Ulster members. <sup>(1)</sup> The tenant committee remained wholly unsatisfied.

The other Irish measures were disposed of as expeditiously. Butt's County Boards (Ireland) Bill which proposed the democratisation of the grand jury system was defeated by 182 votes to 125 at the end of June in what was the most successful of the Irish debates; <sup>(2)</sup> Henry's motion for the release of the political prisoners was withdrawn after a short debate in which Parnell distinguished himself by accusing the authorities of the torture of the prisoner Daniel Reddin; <sup>(3)</sup> MacCarthy's Waste Lands (Ireland) Bill was adjourned into limbo <sup>(4)</sup> and Downing's Poor Removal Bill was defeated by 231 votes to 65. <sup>(5)</sup> Biggar alone retired in fighting order, joining with the workmen's representatives Burt and MacDonald in opposition to the voting of a special grant to the Prince of Wales for his projected tour of India. <sup>(6)</sup>

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1 Hansard, 3rd series, cccxiv, 1716-40.  
 2 ibid., 746-67.  
 3 ibid., 1198-1201.  
 4 ibid., cccxiv, 1459.  
 5 ibid., 1768-96.  
 6 ibid., cccxiv, 1153-8.

So ended a session even more sterile than that which had proceeded it. Butt's minor bills had been defeated or withdrawn in despair; there had been no amendment to the address, no land bill, and, above all, not even a formal proposition of the home rule demand. There had been resolution alone on the question of coercion, and it had been marked by a growing internal division as to the tactics, and more fundamentally the attitude, to be adopted by the party. Already public opinion was beginning to weary of parliamentary defeat, and frustration was growing in two important sections of the people, the farmers and the advanced nationalists. The land bill fiasco was ventilated in a sharp newspaper controversy between Butt and the tenant committee; in a unanimously approved statement the committee blamed the vacillation of the members of parliament for the failure to bring in a bill in the 1875 session, and accused Butt of retreating from his own resolutions of previous land conferences. <sup>(1)</sup> Butt, for his part, expressed the opinion that the Ulster tenant right should be used as the basis of all parliamentary action, and made quite clear his refusal to accept responsibility in parliament for any bill which he had not personally drafted. But in any case, he rested his hopes upon the election which he believed to be near; until then, and even

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1 Nation, 12 June 1875.

possibly until the achievement of home rule, a British parliament, he obviously felt, was unlikely to concede the uncompromising demands of the committee. His counsel, however, offered little in the immediate future but the endless reiteration of hopeless bills and motions.

But I am equally persuaded that it is our duty to press upon the British parliament the legislation which we believe the pressing wants of our country need. In some instances we may - I believe we will - succeed in obtaining, it may be, partial redress for the grievances of which we complain. Every time we do so we gain some strength and vigour for the national life. But I know of no means by which we can better advance the cause of home rule than by making honest and intelligent Englishmen realise to themselves the deficiencies of their Irish government and Irish legislation. There is no subject which we ought to press more urgently than that of the necessity of giving to the Irish tenant the protection which legislation has not as yet adequately afforded him. (1)

There was nothing inherently defeatist or futile in this policy, if it had been pressed home with any vigour. But the waning energy of the home rule party scarcely justified any confidence that this would be the case. Public opinion noted, with growing resentment, the steady absenteeism of the Irish members. The Nation drew attention to the absence of eleven home rule members from virtually all the divisions in the

(2)  
coercion bill committee, some of which the government had won by majorities as low as two. Less than half the party voted on Butt's land motion. (3)

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1 Nation, 29 May 1875.  
2 ibid., 15, 22 May.  
3 ibid., 19 June.

Butt's absences from the house

Some of this lack of application was attributable to Butt's own frequent absences. Little as the party respected his authority, it seems to have been quite unable to evolve any discipline apart from his leadership. O'Shaughnessy reported from London during one of Butt's absences:

Not a word was said at our meeting of the land act or legislation, or of any other measure except education, and all that was said about that was that nothing ought to be done in your absence.... We have arranged to hold bi-monthly meetings, but not one word was said, and not an idea was implied, about superseding the committee in the discharge of its duties of originating or regulating action. It was agreed that individuals should explain their intended action in reference to motions appearing in their names to the meeting, in order to enlist support or have suggestions from the others, but this appears to have been aimed against guerrilla performances. (1)

O'Connor Power's proposal that a deputation of home rule members including, in O'Shaughnessy's phrase, 'the eunuchs of the party', should apply for leave to visit the political prisoners, was likewise deferred until Butt should be free to decide upon its utility. (2)

In 1875, in order to mitigate the harmful effects of Butt's frequent absences, a final effort was made to free the home rule leader from the necessity to practise his profession. In February a testimonial fund was launched with the establishment of a provisional committee in Butt's own constituency of Limerick; it was decided to vest the monies collected in the hands of a board of trustees with absolute discretion as to their application. (3)

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1 O'Shaughnessy to Butt, 13 Feb. 1875, Butt MSS.  
2 O'Shaughnessy to Butt, 15 Feb., Butt MSS.  
3 Copy of the resolutions of the committee, 19 Feb., Butt MSS.

The movement represented the fruition of a scheme long planned by Butt, and entrusted by him to some of his closest supporters in the movement such as Sir Joseph McKenna, Charles Dawson, and John Ellard.<sup>(1)</sup> The gloomy prophesies of Shaw a year previously as to the probable public response<sup>(2)</sup> proved, however, only too accurate. Despite the deliberate efforts of its organisers to gain official clerical support at the outset,<sup>(3)</sup> the catholic bishops for the most part held aloof, and without their approval the chapel door collection, the only really effective means of tapping mass subscription, was denied to the testimonial; in any case, the failure of the league to raise sufficient funds to pay its own way scarcely argued the readiness of the public to subscribe to a second home rule levy.

Henry wrote to Butt:

I still do not believe that the Irish bishops wish catholic money to go into a protestant pocket and unless we can frighten them we shall get no effectual help on home rule. They fear it. (4)

Money came in quite quickly at first. But as soon as the contributions of the loyal supporters of home rule had been exhausted, the supply began to fall increasingly short of the demand. The chief trustees, Henry and Conyngham, had paid Butt nearly £3000 from the fund by January 1876,<sup>(5)</sup> but already the

1 O'Shaughnessy to Butt, Ellard to Butt, 31 Jan. 1875; McKenna to Butt, O'Shaughnessy to Butt, 8 Feb., and other letters in Butt MSS.

2 See above, Chapter XIV, p.372.

3 Ellard to Butt, 16 Feb., Henry to Butt, 19 May, Butt MSS; and McAlister to Daunt, 10 May, Daunt MSS, 8047.

4 Henry to Butt, 5 Sept. 1875, Butt MSS.

5 Henry to Butt, 5, 9, and 19 Sept., 9 and 17 Oct. 1875; 20 Jan. 1876, Butt MSS.

importunings of Butt were outstripping their resources, and the future receipts from the testimonial were mortgaged against Henry's personal cheques. <sup>(1)</sup> By December 1875 there was hardly £100 in the four banks used by the trustees. <sup>(2)</sup> Internal divisions and jealousies in the organising committee reduced its efficiency; the paid organiser, Captain Dunne, was discharged in September, <sup>(3)</sup> and in 1876 the conduct of the movement was placed in the hands of George Delany, an active Dublin home ruler. <sup>(4)</sup> But by that time no exertions could arouse enthusiasm in the public, and by October 1876 Butt had admitted defeat. To Delany he wrote urging him not to take the desperate <sup>(5)</sup> expedient of publishing the names of subscribers.

The more I think of it the more averse I am to any publicity above all to any allusion to future action. Even if anything were ever to be done it could only be done by a new departure and not as a continuation of that which has been done.

My earnest wish is that nothing more should be publicly done - I am led to believe that some monies will yet come in - if so so much the better but it is not the time to draw attention to the failure.

He asked Delany to lodge something as soon as possible; he had left a cheque with the bank to be drawn as soon as there was anything to meet it. <sup>(6)</sup> By 1877 Delany had succeeded to J. A. Blake's thankless task of begging on Butt's behalf from his

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- 1 Henry to Butt, 19 Sept., 17 Oct. 1875, Butt MSS.
  - 2 Henry to Butt, 20 Dec., Butt MSS.
  - 3 McKenna to Butt, 3 Sept., Butt MSS.
  - 4 Delany to Butt, 24 Mar. 1876, Butt MSS.
  - 5 Butt to Delany, 30 July 1876, Hickey MSS.
  - 6 Butt to Delany, 6 Oct. 1876, Hickey MSS.

leading colleagues in the party, his efforts seconded as Blake's had been in 1873 by the wearisome repetition of Butt's determination to retire from the leadership. <sup>(1)</sup> Butt proposed the establishment of a national committee, on the lines privately suggested by the bishop of Clonfert, Dr Duggan, to manage the testimonial fund permanently and to guarantee him an income of £2000 a year. <sup>(2)</sup> 'If men were so impressed with the necessity of my sacrificing myself - they ought to guarantee me for the year £2000 - £1000 to meet liabilities I might be called on to meet and £100 a month for ten months', he said to Edmund Dwyer Gray. <sup>(3)</sup> It was a justifiable plea, but it fell on deaf ears. Soon Delany, like his predecessors, was added to the list of Butt's private creditors. <sup>(4)</sup> The problem of Butt's periodic absences from parliament remained unsolved.

The apathy of the nation was unkind, but it was easily explicable. After the optimism of the 1873 conference, the movement was slow to reconcile itself to the frustrations of a minority position. The people might have accepted Butt's policy of argument and reiteration if it had been energetically pressed, if the voice of the Irish mendicant had never been mute at Westminster, if government business had been brought to a

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1 Butt to Delany, 10, 13 Mar. 1877, Hickey MSS.

2 Butt to Delany, 15 Mar., Hickey MSS.

3 Butt to Delany, 13 Mar., Hickey MSS.

4 Butt to Delany, undated, Hickey MSS.



standstill by the bills of the Irish members, and if Butt's call for a national agitation had been reflected in the organisation of a campaign of mass meetings. They knew, indeed, of no alternative policy. But it was the consistent absenteeism of the leader and the cynical apathy of so many of his followers, the diminishing energy of the party and the apparently declining volume of Irish business which caused them increasingly to lose confidence in the leadership. The alienation of the tenants has already been noted. It remains to consider the other sectors of Irish opinion.

The conservatives, it will be recalled, had in the great majority of cases ceased to have any sympathy for the movement by the time of the national conference of 1873. In their place had come an influx of liberal members of parliament. But although home rule had undermined the theoretical basis of Irish liberal unionism, it had not yet captured for itself the unreserved support of the bourgeois and above all of the clergy, who retained their distrust of Butt and their fear of the advanced nationalist feeling from which the movement had derived such a substantial part of its initial dynamism. The survival of this distrust among the clergy and their political associates was demonstrated all too clearly in the episode of the O'Connell centenary.

The impending anniversary of the birth of the liberator aroused much enthusiasm in Dublin, and great

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preparations were made to celebrate it.<sup>(1)</sup> It was unfortunate for the home rule interest that the occasion coincided with the lord mayoralty of Peter Paul McSwiney. Frustrated in all his previous efforts to gain political prominence,<sup>(2)</sup> he determined to use his position as presiding magistrate and chairman of the centenary committee to turn the celebrations into a demonstration for his own catholic liberal party. The Nation warned that the occasion was not to be turned into a whig-liberal triumph; O'Connell's work for repeal must be commemorated.<sup>(3)</sup> But McSwiney, with the support of Lord Emlly and the liberals on the one hand, and the P. J. Smyth party on the other, chose to treat the life of the liberator as if it had ceased in 1829.<sup>(4)</sup> Cardinal Cullen, wrote Daunt in his diary, set the tone of the commemoration: with what he calls a "Pastoral", eulogising the deceased patriot as a tremendous catholic and champion of catholic liberties, but saying not one word of his merits as a nationalist or as an earnest agitator for the emancipation of the dissenters.<sup>(5)</sup> Authorised to select the orator to deliver the memorial address at the culminating ceremony, McSwiney passed over all the nationalist leaders, and picked Lord O'Hagan, catholic lord chancellor under the Gladstone administration.<sup>(6)</sup>

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1 Daunt Journal, 9 July 1875, MS 3041.  
 2 see above, pp. 50 & 310.  
 3 Nation, 31 July.  
 4 ibid., and Daunt Journal, 27 July, 11 Aug, MS 3041; Daunt to the centenary committee, 27 July, Daunt MSS 8045.  
 5 Daunt Journal, 11 Aug., MS 3041.

The result of this manoeuvre was what the Nation, with a certain disingenuousness, described as a 'wonderful uprising in Sackville Street'.<sup>(1)</sup> The amnesty men having made no secret of their determination to thwart MacSwiney's intentions,<sup>(2)</sup> O'Hagan decided to stay away and the oration was committed appropriately enough to MacSwiney himself. At King's Bridge a hand to hand fight for precedence took place between the amnesty men led by Nolan and Daly and the coalporters, traditionally O'Connell's bodyguard, led by P. J. Smyth. The coalporters won the race by cutting the traces of their opponents' drey, but the amnesty men dragged their vehicle to Carlisle bridge, where they fortified themselves on the platform which had been erected upon the site of the present O'Connell statue.<sup>(3)</sup> The poet, Denis Florence MacCarthy, had been commissioned to write an ode for the centenary, and his son has left in his diary a graphic description of the scene:

The amnesty men with their black banners had one side of the platform all to themselves and the coalporters and carmen surrounded the others. With great difficulty I crossed Carlisle Bridge and got within hearing distance of the platform. The whole of Sackville Street, Carlisle Bridge, and all approaches to them were occupied by a dense mass of men with bands and

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1 Nation, 14 Aug. 1875.  
 2 F. MacCarthy's Diary, 30 July, MS 7251.  
 3 Nation, 14 Aug. Smyth was accused on affidavit by F. H. O'Donnell, John Daly, John Barry, and others of having himself given the order to cut the traces of the amnesty car: he denied this. The controversy dragged on for several weeks without reaching any conclusion, but Smyth was expelled from the Amnesty Association on the motion of Daly, with Parnell in the chair. (ibid., 21 Aug.)

between the two bodies...  
 I Sunday we shall have pretty heavy work tomorrow and on Monday.  
 (Booklock Diary, 6 Aug., MS 4475-131.)

banners. All however were in great good humour; there was no drunkenness whatever and confusion was occasioned only by some of the mounted men endeavouring to force their horses through the crowd. The Lord Mayor's state coach could be seen moving slowly down through the black sea from Nelson's Pillar. At length he reached the platform, the opposite side from where I stood and therefore invisible to me. When he attempted to read Lord O'Hagan's speech, his voice was drowned in a storm of cries of all kinds, among which "Down with whiggery", "No whig placemen", and "Butt, Butt" predominated. After several ineffectual attempts to gain a hearing the Lord Mayor with difficulty regained his carriage the black flags and chains of the Amnesty Association being flaunted and rattled in his face. When his carriage was gone the cries for Butt were renewed, and A. M. Sullivan whom I observed sitting on a house top with his legs hanging over the parapet, kept shouting out Butt's name at the top of his voice. At length Butt did appear, and standing beside the white, laurel-crowned bust of O'Connell, his old opponent, made a vigorous little speech pointing down to the colonnades of the "old house in College Green", and reminding the people of the grand centenary which was approaching in seven years time, the centenary of Dungannon and the Volunteers. O'Connor Power, M.P. for Mayo, then spoke, vehemently protesting against the selection of Lord O'Hagan as spokesman for such a national celebration. Sullivan who had descended from his perch next spoke, remarking on the attempt that had been made "to cut O'Connell in twain", by trying to ignore his long struggle for the legislative independence of Ireland, to the honouring of him solely as the emancipator of catholics. The crowd then gradually dispersed. I got some dinner and then ran out to Kingstown and walked on the pier till 10 o'clock. There were some illuminations in Dublin, the word "O'Connell" in large double letters on the metal-bridge coming out beautifully and being reflected back from the black waters beneath. Bands playing national airs marched through the streets almost all night, and thus the 100th anniversary of Daniel O'Connell's birth passed away into history, to be ranked among the memories of the past. (1

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1 MacCarthy Diary, 6 Aug. 1875, MS 7251. MacCarthy was not yet twenty; a more sedate observer, William Woodlock, a catholic police magistrate in Dublin, by contrast selected other points as worthy for preservation in his diary:

'A very striking feature of the procession were the confraternities of the Sacred Heart, - one of them entirely composed of respectable young shop assistants.... There was, I heard, a slight row (or rather there was near being one) at the King's Bridge between the amnesty men and the coal-porters, and at the close of the proceedings there was another slight dispute in Sackville Street between the two bodies....

I dare say we shall have pretty heavy work tomorrow and on Monday.'

(Woodlock Diary, 6 Aug., MSS 4498-5011.)

The outdoor celebrations were followed by a banquet in the evening at the exhibition palace. At this banquet the toast of the legislative independence of Ireland was proposed by Sir Charles Gavan Duffy, who had been chosen for this honour by MacSwiney, no doubt because of his avowed disapproval of the home rule movement. <sup>(1)</sup> Yells of 'Butt, Butt' drowned the speaker; Callan stopped the lord mayor from intervening by persistently calling for Butt; Butt rose, apparently intending to appeal for order; MacSwiney walked out; the gas lights were extinguished, and the banquet broke up in confusion. <sup>(2)</sup> A 'disgraceful scene', noted William Woodlock in his diary. <sup>(3)</sup> Recriminations dragged on for weeks, being given an added spice by a dispute inside the committee as to the disposal of its surplus funds. MacSwiney and Smyth endeavoured to project these divisions into the future by the launching of a new repeal movement, called the National O'Connell Committee, with the motto of 'faith and fatherland', but public support was lacking, and the association dwindled into memory with its founder at the end of the mayoral year. The lord mayor himself, however, was not left emptyhanded; awarded the Knighthood of Saint Gregory in return, said hostile opinion, for his services to the whig cause, <sup>(4)</sup> the brilliance of his red ribbon and star won for him at social gatherings the notice which had so consistently eluded

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1 MacCarthy Diary, 19 May 1875, MS 7251.  
 2 Nation, 14 Aug.  
 3 Woodlock Diary, 7 Aug., MSS 4498-5011.  
 4 Daunt Journal, 2 Dec., MS 3041.

(1)

him in public life.

Ridiculous as this whole episode was, yet its Dickensian furies are in their way as truly evocative of the conflicts of the time as are the statistics of parliamentary defeat. They force upon later observers a realisation of the existence of a bourgeoisie which in many cases had reconciled itself increasingly to the practical comforts of the union, and, seeking to escape the insecurity of nationalist politics, was often more conscious of its religious than of its political evolution. But in contrast to this element there appears the energy of an instinctive if as yet largely negative nationalism, working warmly upon the emotions of the men with no property and no stake in the maintenance of the existing order in society. These were men whose political reactions were by nature violent in feeling and not infrequently violent in execution; to disrupt an anti-national meeting they turned instinctively to the use of the fist and the club. Their dynamism found an uneasy and sporadic expression in the constitutional home rule movement.

In the centre of these two forces stood Butt.

Largely rejected by the one as alien in spirit and outlook, he himself rejected the other. To one his ideas were too radical, to the other they were too conservative. Both saw in him no more than a compromise of doubtful validity; neither could see that his was an idea as organic and as homogeneous as theirs. Had he

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1 Woodlock Diary, 3 Dec. 1878, MSS 4498-5011.

been more completely a realistic politician, he might have harnessed the energy of the nationalists to his movement by adopting their demeanour and their language. John Ferguson of Glasgow wrote to him words of sincere advice around this time:

If I were Isaac Butt I'd gather the loyal bold and honest men of Ireland around me so firmly that no room wd be found in Ireland for such opinions as O'Leary sends from Paris or any of the Luby and co party from New York.... Young Ireland today wants to follow and confide in Isaac Butt. But he must be a holder leader or he will not be followed. (1)

But already, by the end of 1875, the advanced nationalists were wearying of conciliation, and there is, finally, a special significance and a special poignancy in their participation in the centenary celebrations; this was the last occasion upon which they were to use the name of Isaac Butt as a nationalist symbol. John Daly and C. G. Doran were on Carlisle Bridge with the amnesty men in August 1875, but at the end of September Daly, who, it will be recalled, had worked for Butt ever since the 1874 election, rose before Butt at a home rule meeting in Limerick to demand that the home rule party should make the next session the scene of its final effort. (2)

The nationalists were looking for a new way. Butt wrote openly to Biggar in April 1875 asking him to desist from 'a system of obstruction', (3) but the advanced men in the home rule movement took the member for Cavan to their hearts. Branches of the

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1 Ferguson to Butt, 21 Dec. 1875, Butt MSS.  
2 Nation, 25 Sept.  
3 ibid., 22 May.

English Home Rule Confederation passed resolutions urging the home rule members to adopt a policy 'more obstructive and factious',<sup>(1)</sup> and at a great amnesty demonstration in Hyde Park in August 1875 Biggar's reception as 'the hero of the hour' overshadowed those of all the other speakers, who included O'Connor Power, Meldon, Ward, O'Donnell, and Parnell.<sup>(2)</sup> In Mayo O'Connor Power, addressing his constituents upon the events of the late session, deplored its lack of activity and questioned the wisdom of Butt's decision not to press a home rule motion:

In my humble opinion, nothing is more essential to the success of a good cause than that its advocates should show themselves to be in earnest.... my individual opinion was entirely in favour of the course pursued by the honorable member for Cavan, and nothing but my desire to act in accordance with the general sense of the party prevented me from adopting to the fullest extent the tactics adopted by him during the coercion debate.<sup>(3)</sup>

Writing in support of the Butt testimonial John Ferguson at the same time made quite clear the desire of himself and his associates for the adoption of a bolder course in parliament.<sup>(4)</sup>

In Kerry Blennerhassett, on the other hand, openly condemned Biggar's policy of 'factious opposition'.<sup>(5)</sup> The controversy was

1 Nation, 3 July 1875.

2 Quoted from Irish Times in Nation, 7 Aug.

3 ibid., 21 Aug. At the end of October Power sailed for New York 'to lay before the Irish-American people the present condition of Ireland', and 'to express the objects and principles of the new nationalist movement which has agitated that country for the last five years'. (Nation, 30 Oct..)

4 ibid., 1 May.

5 ibid., 11 Sept.





## Chapter XV : Three sessions of argument

(contd.)

## (c) The session of 1876

The session of 1876 was a crucial one for the policy of Butt. According to Daly and Doran, it was the third of three years granted to Butt by the fenians in 1873<sup>(1)</sup>; in any case, it was obvious from the growing criticisms of the advanced wing that the present stalemate was becoming to them, at least, intolerable. The year opened hopefully enough with the issue of a special party circular calling a conference of home rule members in Morrison's Hotel, Dublin, on 4 January.<sup>(2)</sup> The Standard prophesied that this gathering would formally adopt the 'obstructive' policy as the tactics of the party.<sup>(3)</sup> Perhaps it was the fear of such a development which caused some of the less enthusiastic members to stay away; the total attendance was only thirty-one. Twelve members were abroad; nine absented themselves without explanation;<sup>(4)</sup> M. W. O'Reilly sent a letter of apology. N. D. Murphy sent his good wishes, assuring the party: 'it will afford me great pleasure if I can give my support to such parliamentary course of procedure as you may determine upon'

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1 See above, Chapter X, pp. 258-9.

2 Nation, 11 Dec. 1875.

3 Quoted, *ibid.*, 25 Dec.

4 Blennerhassett, Errington, Lewis, O'Brien, O'Connor (D.M.), O'Leary, Sherlock, Staepoole, and Synan.

but declining to attend, as 'I am desirous of preserving my personal freedom of action.'<sup>(1)</sup> With the defection of Murphy the official strength of the party was now fifty-three; it was to be further reduced in May by the death of Joseph Ronayne, whose seat in Cork City was lost to a conservative.

The meeting did not, in the event, adopt a policy of obstruction. It resolved, however, to bring in a home rule resolution on an early day in the session after the Easter recess. Butt announced his intention to frame bills on the land and university questions; the party agreed also to concentrate upon the issues of the Irish franchise, taxation, amnesty, coercion, and grand jury reform. On Butt's suggestion a central tenant right committee was set up to advise the party upon the defects of the land act.<sup>(2)</sup> The meeting concluded, according to the Nation, after five hours of 'perfect unanimity'.<sup>(3)</sup> But a fortnight later Parnell reminded a meeting of the league that not only the people but also the members of parliament must show themselves to be in earnest on home rule.<sup>(4)</sup>

The session opened on 8 February in just such an atmosphere of resolution. On the address in reply to the queen's speech Henry, Ronayne, Ward and Parnell rose to protest against

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1 Nation, 8 Jan. 1876.  
2 ibid.  
3 ibid.  
4 ibid., 27 Jan.

(1)

the omission of any reference to Irish legislation.

Immediately afterwards the Irish members retired to their King Street office for consultation, returning to their places in a body to give notice, one after the other, of thirteen bills, covering the topics of land, franchise, municipal, grand jury, and judicial reform, fisheries, the reclamation of waste lands, and the care of mental defectives. (2)

Two days later a bill to regulate union rating was added, (3) and Butt and O'Shaughnessy finally gave notice of bills upon the subjects of university and intermediate education, and of a resolution, to be moved soon after Easter, calling for:

a select committee to inquire into and report upon the nature and grounds of the demand made by a large proportion of the Irish people for the restoration to Ireland of an Irish parliament, with power to control the internal affairs of that country. (4)

The Irish members were lucky in the ballot and were able to appropriate most of the Wednesdays in the session, the

1 Hansard, 3rd series, cccxvii, 109-14. Parnell dwelt mainly upon the question of amnesty, a topic to which he was devoting most of his attention at this time.

2 ibid., 117-24.

3 ibid., 201. There was also a Landlord and Tenant (Ireland) Act Amendment Bill, in the names of the Ulster tenant-right representatives, which aimed at amending the 1870 act.

4 The significance of the wording of this motion is discussed below, pp. 450-5. It was obviously aimed at attracting the support of sympathetic English liberals, whose number had been lately increased by the return of Jason Bright in Manchester and Rylands in Burnley, both pledged to support Butt's motion.

days traditionally reserved for the business of private members.<sup>(1)</sup>  
 In March the terms of Butt's land bill were published. An elaborate effort at compromise, it consisted of three sections. The first sought to extend the provisions of the 1870 act to farms held under the Ulster custom; the second proposed to amend the act so as to remove the loophole which enabled a landlord, by the imposition of a new lease, either to compel the tenant to contract out of the protection of the act or, more simply, by breaking the continuity of his tenancy, reduce his claim for compensation under the act in the event of his eviction. The third and most radical section broke new ground: it proposed to allow a tenant, eligible for protection under the 1870 act, to demand instead a 'declaration of tenancy' which would provide for the valuation of his holding by arbitration and which would give him security of tenure at the agreed rent. No appeal from arbitration was provided for except in cases where fraud was established, but concessions were made to landlord opinion in the provision for revaluation of rent and for the ejection of a tenant, through legal action, upon the ground of waste.<sup>(2)</sup>

The bill aroused little enthusiasm. Daunt thought that it gave the tenants 'far too much';<sup>(3)</sup> the tenants thought

1 Nation, 19 Feb. 1876.

2 ibid., 4 Mar.

3 Daunt Journal, - Mar., MS 3041; Daunt to Henry, 23 Feb., Butt MSS, vol iii, MS 82.

it gave them too little. <sup>(1)</sup> Every one appears to have thought it too complicated; Dr Magee, P.P. Stradbally, called it 'an Apocalypse in 86 clauses', <sup>(2)</sup> and E. G. Dease M.P. admitted that a more simple bill would have been better. <sup>(3)</sup> But Henry dismissed Daunt's fears by reminding him that there was not 'the least possibility of its passing in any form', <sup>(4)</sup> and the tenant representatives, for their part, endorsed the bill with some misgivings at their privately-held land conference in March. <sup>(5)</sup>

At Westminster the long process of argument recommenced. Nolan's bill for grand jury reform was introduced on 23 February, debated, and voted down by 181 votes to 153. These were not disgraceful figures, but of the minority only 24 were home rule members; the remainder were liberals. A full home rule party vote would have brought the figures almost level. The O'Connor Don spoke and voted against the bill; French, Morris, D. M. O'Connor, Sheil, and Staepole were in the house but did not vote. <sup>(6)</sup> On 1 March O'Gorman's bill to reform the Irish municipal franchise succumbed by 176 votes to 148. <sup>(7)</sup> Thirty-three of the minority were home rulers. <sup>(8)</sup>

By this time the attendance figures of the home rule

1 Nation, 18 Mar. 1876; '82 Club resolutions, 18 June 1876, in J. F. X. O'Brien MSS.  
 2 M. Cahill to R. Lalor, 21 Jan. 1878, Lalor MSS, 8566.  
 3 ibid.  
 4 Henry to Daunt, 1 May 1876, Butt MSS, vol iii, MS 832.  
 5 Nation, 18 Mar. 1876.  
 6 Hansard, 3rd series, cccxxvii, 765-88; Nation, 4 Mar.  
 7 Hansard, 3rd series, cccxxvii, 1164-86.  
 8 Nation, 4 Mar.

members were being published each week in the Nation, and their laxity aroused so much adverse comment that Butt had to issue a special circular to the party urging a greater devotion to duty. (1)

At the same time the first number of the Parliamentary green book, compiled by the secretary of the league, J. P. McAlister, was published, showing the attendance figures of each of the home rule members in the divisions of the previous session. On 28 March Meldon's resolution for the equalisation of the borough franchise of the two islands was defeated by 179 votes to 166, a government majority of 13; 45 home rule members voted. (2)

On 29 March Butt moved his land bill, for which he had secured the support of the Ulster presbyterian Smyth. After the first speakers on each side had been heard, the debate was adjourned, (3) to be resumed three months later. On

22 March Ward's Coast and Deep Sea Fisheries (Ireland) Bill was disposed of by 215 votes to 131; the minority included 46 home rule members. (4)

The Easter recess caused a temporary cessation in this activity. The Nation was full of praise for the energy of the party: 'never before was Ireland so well served by her representatives in the British parliament'. (5) Certainly the

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1 Nation, 11 Mar. 1876.  
2 Hansard, 3rd series, cccxviii, 703-66.  
3 ibid., 771-819.  
4 ibid., 423-65.  
5 Nation, 15 April.

argumentative policy of Butt was at last being energetically put into practice. But trouble was never far away. At best, these tactics offered no hope of immediate success. It was questionable if popular interest could survive the monotonous repetition of discussion and defeat. Furthermore, the notorious absenteeism of the right-wing members of the party was throwing into sharp relief the determination of their advanced counterparts. The first part of the session had not passed without its customary incidents. On 6 March the omission of any home rule representative from the committee of referees on private bills had aroused sharp resentment in the Irish members, and Sullivan, Nolan, and other members divided the house as a reprisal upon each name in the committee. After the tenth division Sullivan gave up and asked Nolan to do the same, but the latter with Parnell, O'Gorman and a handful of supporters (1) divided the house a further seven times.

In Dublin the average popular reaction was expressed by Professor Galbraith, by instinct an amiable and conservative person, in the Home Rule League. Relating his remarks to last year's coercion struggles he said:

for his part, he was ashamed of any Irishman who would sit in the house and allow such measures to pass without giving every opposition even amounting to obstruction. To a policy of obstruction for the mere purpose of annoyance or delay he would be no party, but was he to be told that the Irish members, whose business it was to defend the rights of their country, were not to use all the constitutional forms of the house - were not to

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1 Hansard, 3rd series, cccxvii, 1495; Nation, 11 Mar. 1876.



divide again and again to defeat or mitigate coercion for the people?

At the same time he sharply criticised the absentees and warned them that there would be a day of reckoning at the next general election. (1)

For John Daly and his incorruptibles, however, the new-found energy had come too late. A grand Easter demonstration for home rule in Limerick was attacked by forty or fifty young men armed with bludgeons. This time, however, the historic triumph of 1869 was not to be repeated; the weight of numbers prevailed, and Daly and his brother found themselves in gaol the next morning. (2) But immediately afterwards the delicate relationship between the home rule movement and the fenians suffered a serious blow with the sudden death after a railway accident of Joseph Ronayne, member for Cork City since 1872. In many respects an unobtrusive member, his personal influence with the advanced men had nevertheless been of great assistance to the party; in this respect Sullivan had rated him, just before he died, as of even more importance to the cause than Butt himself. (3)

At the same time Butt was experiencing his customary

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1 Nation, 18 Mar. 1876.  
2 Ibid., 22 Apr. Daly explained that he had no objection to the holding of a demonstration in honour of Butt himself, whom he admired; he could not tolerate one in honour of the party. So the curious ambivalence of 1869 still persisted, and even as they drew away from his movement the advanced men for the moment retained their personal affection for its leader.  
3 Sullivan to Daunt, 10 Feb. 1876, Hickey MSS.

difficulty in allaying the distrust of the catholic clergy. In March Butt's bill to resolve the vexed question of catholic university education was published. It proposed amongst other things to establish the existing catholic university as a constituent college of Dublin University under the name of St Patrick's College. The catholic hierarchy, as a 'committee of founders', were to have final control over issues of faith and morals and were to have the power of appointing the rector, vice-rector, and professors of divinity; all the other professors and officials were to be appointed by a college council, subject to the approval of the bishops. <sup>(1)</sup> Whatever the merits of this scheme, the clergy were unenthusiastic; Dr Conroy, bishop of Ardsagh, objected to it as having too liberal a constitution with too much lay and not enough episcopal power, and in this view <sup>(2)</sup> Cardinal Cullen appears to have concurred.

In May the parliamentary struggle was resumed. On 3 May Henry's Registration of Voters (Ireland) Bill was beaten <sup>(3)</sup> by 235 votes to 168, of whom 35 were home rulers. On 16 May Butt was given leave to introduce his university bill, but the absence of the entire Liberal party above the gangway augured badly for its chances of success. <sup>(4)</sup> The same month gave further evidence of the disunity within the ranks of the home rule party.

1 Nation, 25 Mar. 1876.

2 Butt to Henry, 16 Nov. 1876, Butt MSS, vol iii, MS 82.

4 Hansard, 3rd series, cccxix, 305-29; Nation, 20 May.

3 Hansard, 3rd series, cccxix, 32; Nation, 13 May.

The Irish members had got up a petition, signed by over a hundred members of parliament, including a large number of Liberals, asking the queen, in celebration of the creation for her by Disraeli of the title of Empress of India, to grant clemency to the political prisoners. Disraeli's rejection of this plea on 22 May produced another scene. O'Connor Power at once moved the adjournment, supported by Biggar and Parnell. Parnell, Butt, and Callan spoke in defence of Michael Davitt and of the men imprisoned in connection with the Manchester shooting. But Biggar caused uproar by describing Disraeli as 'alien in race and religion to the people of England'. Brooks disowned Biggar, and two English Liberals, Briggs and Waddy, withdrew their signatures from the petition because of its inclusion of the Manchester men, and because of the language of its supporters. (1)

If the left wing had shown its impetuosity, the right wing had shown a few days further its equal capacity for taking independent action when it felt so inclined. The proposal to confer the imperial title upon the queen had aroused in Butt an instinctive repugnance much out of character with that picture of him as a natural tory which was perpetuated by his contemporaries and so often accepted by later commentators. He set his face against any home rule support for the bill, even as a bargain for the concession of amnesty; such a course, he held

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1 Hansard, 3rd series, cccxix, 1040-52.

would alienate English democratic opinion, and in particular antagonise the radicals such as Cowen whose support had been so valuable in this session. For his part, he would have preferred openly to oppose the bill as a party, but he was prepared to compromise on abstention. <sup>(1)</sup> But if the wishes of the home rule leader carried little weight on Irish questions, they carried none whatever upon aspects of English or imperial legislation. In the debate on the bill Butt announced his intention to abstain, and at the division walked out of the house with nineteen followers, including, to their credit, those like Biggar and Parnell who were most frequently accused of indiscipline and who had most to gain in this instance from a bargain with the government on amnesty. <sup>(2)</sup> But twenty-three members of Liberal sympathies remained and voted with the opposition, <sup>(3)</sup> and three voted with the government.

1 Butt to Sullivan, undated, Butt MSS, vol II, MS 831. The division figures quoted in this chapter show how correct Butt was in relying upon the support of these radicals. So large, indeed, did Liberal votes bulk in the minority upon Irish measures that Butt had repeatedly to deny accusations that he had adopted a formal alliance with the Liberals. (Nation, 18 Mar.) But the opposition of his radical friends to his most important measures - those on the land, education, and home rule itself - makes it quite clear that in supporting his other proposals they were in fact merely implementing their own democratic principles.

2 Biggar, O'Sullivan, Sullivan, O'Shaughnessy, O'C. Power, Ward, Lewis, O'Clery, McKenna, Brooks, R. Power, Parnell, Fay, Collins, Kirk, Ennis, Callan, and Brady.

3 Dease, O'Callaghan, O'Byrne, O'Keefe, Nolan, O'Loghlen, Downing, Conyngham, Meldon, Martin, Redmond, Dunbar, Staepoole, Moore, Sherlock, Blennerhassett, Murphy, O'Reilly, Errington, Montagu, O'Conor Don, O'Conor, and O'Brien against the bill, and Morris, O'Gorman, and Bowyer for it. O'Conor Don, Morris, and Murphy, though not technically members of the home rule party, were usually listed among its camp-followers.

There were further disagreements upon the ministerial judicature bill on 23 June. An Irish amendment having been defeated, O'Connor Power in retaliation moved the adjournment. Hicks Beach for the government appealed to him not to persist, as the morning had already been spent in discussing the amendment. Butt joined his voice to Beach's 'not unreasonable' appeal, but Power refused to withdraw, and found seven members to go into the lobby with him in defiance of their leader's wishes. (1)

At the end of June Butt's campaign culminated in a last effort upon the two most vital issues of the land and home rule itself. The party whips, Nolan and Richard Power, issued a special whip calling the members to their places for the two debates. (2) On 29 June the discussion upon the second reading of Butt's land bill was resumed after an adjournment of three months duration. The bill was attacked as subversive of property by two Irish conservatives, Kavanagh and Plunket, one Irish liberal, Law, two camp-followers of the home rule party, Morris and the O'Connor Don, and one of its members, M. W. O'Reilly. It was supported by Butt, Downing, and Professor Smyth, and, in a speech of exceptional violence, by O'Connor Power. Hartington for the opposition declined to have anything to do with it, and none of Butt's radical allies were to be this time with him in the lobbies. The bill was overwhelmed by

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1 Hansard, 3rd series, ccxxx, 364-5.  
 2 Nation, 17 Jun. 1876.

290 votes to 56. 48 of the minority were Irish members, 45 of them home rulers. <sup>(1)</sup> Seven home rulers were absent; one member of the party, French, and three camp-followers, Morris, O'Connor Don, and Esmonde, voted with the government.

The following day the long-awaited debate on Butt's home rule motion was opened before a house which was already sated with Irish grievance. It was the first time in two years that the demand for legislative independence had been brought before the house, but in that time an important change had taken place in Butt's parliamentary tactics. Realising the hopelessness of carrying home rule in the lifetime of the existing parliament, and hoping to profit from the English radical support which had proved so useful in this session, he framed his motion to read:

*cf. p. 379*

That a select committee be appointed to inquire into and report upon the nature, the extent, and the grounds of the demand made by a large proportion of the Irish people for the restoration to Ireland of an Irish parliament, with power to control the internal affairs of that country.

Butt made no secret of the fact that he had so framed his motion in order that it might obtain 'the support of honorable members who were not prepared to give any assent to the principle of home rule for Ireland'. He demanded an enquiry because a majority of the Irish representation had been returned in favour of home rule:

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<sup>1</sup> Hansard, 3rd series, ccxxx, 624-714.

It was not his intention to go into the general question of the parliamentary relations between England and Ireland.... He had been in several parliaments, and he said consistently and sincerely that he never sat in a house in which Irish affairs were received with so much fairness and attention as they had in that. But that did not alter his opinion of the absolute necessity of changing the union arrangement.... Give them the committee, however. That was all they asked. Let them bring the plan he proposed to the test of reason, to the test of cross-examination, that was all he asked, and then the people of England and the members of that house would probably see that their proposals were not of so formidable a character as they had supposed. But let them not shut the door in their faces, and content themselves with saying that they meant to rule Ireland by force as heretofore - that their principle was to be sic volo, sic jubeo, stet pro ratione voluntas. They might fail in their attempt now, but it would be resumed next year. Let them grant the committee, however, and let them select a man of character like the right honorable gentleman the member for Oxfordshire, who had vigour enough of intellect to preside over it, and who would inspire confidence in all parties by his presence. Let them unfold their case before him, let them show if their "veiled rebellion" was what it had been called. But they would bring their rebellion without its veil; and, believing in the thorough justice of their cause, he also believed that Ireland would come out triumphant.

Butt's speech was generally accepted to have been a masterpiece at its level of quiet persuasion, and, in its ruthless orientation towards the stated aim of the motion, greatly superior to his effort in 1874. Unfortunately, the tactics of Butt sat uncomfortably upon the shoulders of his more fiery colleagues, who questioned the wisdom of this dilution of the party demand. The motion's chances of even a relative success depended upon the strict adherence to its terms of all the subsequent speakers; an irate word could destroy the delicate balance of Butt's pleading. The home rule leader must have realised this, yet, according to the Nation, upon the conclusion of his own speech he left the chamber and the house and made no

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effort to control the subsequent course of the debate. In his absence, any hope that his followers might retain a self-control whose very utility they doubted was quickly dissipated by the provocative intervention of P. J. Smyth. Two years ago Smyth had given a silent vote in favour of the proposal to go into committee of the whole house to consider the home rule plan, but upon this occasion he rose immediately after Butt to propose an amendment to the effect that in the opinion of the house home rule was understood by a large proportion of the Irish people to mean the restoration of the 1782 parliament. He went on to deliver, to the delight of the ministerialists, a superbly vicious attack upon the federal plan. Why was Butt afraid to bring in a home rule bill, he asked? What, indeed, did home rule mean? It appeared to necessitate the creation of four parliaments:

At certain fixed periods Ireland will pour 105 imperial representatives into the English local parliament, and forthwith, as if by magic, the domestic institution becomes transformed into the imperial, internal gives way to external, and all is turned inside out.

But how would this scheme provide for the local interests of Wales? Of protestant Ulster? What were internal affairs - would coercion, for example, be left in the power of the imperial parliament?

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1 Nation, 8 July 1876; Hansard, 3rd series, ccxxx, 738-51.



Tried by any test that either imperial statesmanship or Irish patriotism can apply - imperial unity or national independence, constitutional principle or Irish right - precedent, authority, expediency, or feasibility - Irish home rule stands condemned. It is not restoration, it is innovation; it is not unity, it is dismemberment; it is not national independence, it is national annihilation; it surrenders the constitution of one country, and subverts that of another, in order to erect with the fragments a model lodging-house, in which the family would merge in the household, and the personal freedom of every occupant would be at the mercy of a composite majority. It can never be realised till England renounces her mission to be great, and Ireland relinquishes her title to be free. (1)

After Smyth's intervention moderation went by the board.

O'Connor Power, Nolan, and Kirk all spoke upon the merits of  
(2)  
the home rule plan. Hicks Beach made much of the differences in interpretation inside the party:

Some time ago last autumn the hon. member for Meath made a speech in which he said that home rule and repeal meant the same thing.

Mr Parnell: What I said was that home rule would necessarily entail repeal of the union.

Sir Michael Hicks Beach: I think I quoted the hon. member pretty correctly; but the hon. and learned member for Limerick (Mr Butt) repudiates any wish to repeal the union and return to the old state of things. (Mr Butt: Hear, hear.)

The success of Butt's efforts, said Beach, would be the immediate signal for 'the revolt from his control of a party, who even now give him some trouble - the nationalist party'. As for O'Connor Power's reference to amnesty:

of all the extraordinary delusions which are connected with the subject the most strange to me appears the idea, that home rule can have the effect of liberating the fenian prisoners, the Manchester murderers (No! No!) - I regret to hear that there is any hon. member in this house who will apologise for murder.

1 Hansard, 3rd series, cccxxx, 751-67.

2 ibid., 767-805.

Mr Parnell: The right hon. gentleman looked at me so directly when he said that he regretted that any member of this house should apologise for murder, that I wish to say as publicly and as directly as I can that I do not believe, and never shall believe, that any murder was committed at Manchester.

Beach concluded his speech to almost continual interruptions from Parnell, O'Connor Power, and O'Gorman. (1)

The debate was wound up for the Irish by Sullivan. Speaking, apparently, against his will, he made no effort to revive the tactics of Butt which had been buried so quickly in acrimony:

They declined once and for all to discuss this question from the low level of a mere bill before the house. This was no murmur from discontented Essex or Northumberland. This was no dissatisfaction in a county; this was the voice, the complaint, of a nation. That was the protest of a kingdom foully robbed of all the attributes of nationhood - of a kingdom which had never condoned that crime, and which now in blood and in turbulence, now in civil commotion, now by one means or another, legitimate or illegitimate, had protested and would, while there was manhood in its people, protest to the bitter end. (2)

The house divided, and the motion was defeated by 291 votes to 61. Despite the careful wording of the motion, only eleven of its supporters were English; all of a left-wing Liberal order, they included such old allies of the Irish as Cowen, C. F. Hammond, Jacob Bright, and Burt. Of the 52 Irish members who supported the motion four, Esmonde, Morris, Murphy, and the O'Connor Don, were not officially members of the party. As the

1 Hansard, 3rd series, ccxxx, 803-8.  
2 ibid., 815-6.

party strength was now 52 there were thus only four absentees,  
Bryan, Synan, Redmond, and Montagu. <sup>(1)</sup> The party could also  
boast that the hostile vote had fallen from 458 in 1874 to 291.

The debate, however, was on the whole a failure.

As in the past it was uncoordinated and undisciplined, and the  
best speakers in the party were in many cases silent. The  
division figures proved again that without the pressure of  
some extra-parliamentary cataclysm, the English member of  
parliament was not as yet willing to support even the most  
diluted expression of sympathy with the home rule proposal.  
The extremists in the home rule party were irked by the  
mildness of the motion, and by its undignified introduction as  
an amendment on going into supply: <sup>(2)</sup> the purpose of Butt's  
conciliatory policy had, on the other hand, been lost by his  
followers in the debate.

Before considering the manner in which these  
criticisms became at last openly articulated, the remainder of  
the session's Irish business can be quickly disposed of. As  
parliamentary interest became centred increasingly upon the  
developing war situation in the east, the attention given to

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1 After the debate Bryan wrote to Butt:

'Since the last home rule debate, the conclusion has  
forced itself upon me, that the "federal scheme" is utterly  
unworkable, and I must say, that in my mind, the speech of P. J.  
Smyth is both unanswered and unanswerable - Holding these views,  
you will see, that there can be but one honourable course open to  
me, and that is, to lay my views before my constituents with as  
little delay as possible.' (Bryan to Butt, 27 July 1876, Butt MSS).

There is no record of Bryan's having publicly done so, possibly  
because his weak health at this time kept him largely out of  
politics. He may, I think, however, be regarded from this letter  
as in practice lost to the party.

2 Nation, 8 July 1876.

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Irish business dwindled. In August O'Connor Power's amnesty motion was voted down by 117 votes to 51.<sup>(1)</sup> On 7 August Disraeli announced that in view of the pressure of business he proposed to move that government measures should take precedence on all the remaining Tuesdays and Wednesdays of the session. The protests of Butt against this step, which effectively disposed of the remaining Irish bills, including the university bill, were overruled by 99 votes to 45.<sup>(2)</sup> One crumb remained to the Irish members. On 7 August the Municipal Privileges (Ireland) Bill, which proposed mainly to allow Irish corporations to elect their own sheriffs, and to confer the freedom of their boroughs upon distinguished citizens,<sup>(3)</sup> was given its third reading. On 15 August, after the tribulations of three sessions, it received the royal assent and became law. The same day parliament was prorogued. For a whole session Butt and his followers had, for the first time, applied the policy of argument upon a broad front and with unprecedented energy and persistence. This was the one prize that they could carry back with them to Dublin as a justification of their labours.

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1 Hansard, 3rd series, cccxxi, 285-318. It produced, however, the admission from John Bright that the hanging of the three Manchester men had been a mistake occasioned by political feeling.

2 ibid., 704-11.

3 ibid. 774.

CHAPTER XVI

The obstruction controversy, 1877-8.

(a) The debate in the recess, 1876-7.

The recess of 1876-7 is in every way a watershed in the history of the parliamentary home rule movement. The futility of the policy of Butt, even when energetically pressed, seemed obvious now to a wide and representative section of the national movement. Even before the session ended the Nation, which had so firmly defended Butt's tactics against the violence of Biggar in 1874, made clear, in a succession of editorials, its conviction of the necessity for a new approach:

To us it appears that the rejection of the series of measures brought forward in the house by the home rule party affords full justification for a much stronger line of action than any which they have hitherto adopted.

It was all very well, and quite right, up to the present time, to try the effect of conciliatory conduct and fair argument for the working out of Irish reforms, and we fully believe that the endeavours made in that way have not been altogether wasted . . . . . But, granting all that, we would put it as a matter for consideration to the home rule members whether the time has not come when it is advisable to do something more than merely travel slowly again over the ground that has been so lately trodden. (1)

These criticisms were developed in an editorial on 15 July, and in a series of letters which commenced in the same

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1 Nation, 8 July 1876.

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paper on that date. <sup>(1)</sup> The Kerry Vindicator, the Kilkenny Journal, and the Clare Advertiser by the beginning of August had added their voices to the critics. <sup>(2)</sup> The advanced party were outspokenly of the same view; a Glasgow demonstration presided over by Ferguson passed resolutions urging the need for bolder action and especially commending 'those Irish members who were so regular in attendance when Irish questions were discussed in the House, and who stood so boldly for the Irish people - particularly J. G. Biggar and Charles Parnell'. <sup>(3)</sup> In Castlebar in September O'Connor Power went one better in outspokenness. He expressed his personal loyalty and gratitude to the home rule leader, but as to his tactics; 'Twelve months ago he said he had faith in Mr Butt's political sagacity; but he condemned then and now the timid policy he had pursued in the presence of the enemies of Ireland.' <sup>(4)</sup> In October the publication of the second Parliamentary Green Book of

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1 Nation, 22 July 1876. The change in the attitude of the Nation was probably caused by the increasing assumption of the control of the paper by T. D. Sullivan, by whom all these articles were apparently written (Nation, 21 April 1877). A. M. Sullivan finally qualified for the English bar in November, and moved to London, formally handing over the editorship and proprietorship to his brother. T.D.'s nationalism seems to have been considerably more advanced than that of his brother; to Daunt he expressed his preference for the separatist ideal, and his belief that federalism would ultimately lead to it. (T. D. Sullivan to Daunt, 25 July (no year), Hickey MSS.)

2 quoted in Nation, 22 July, 5 Aug. 1876.

3 Nation, 19 Aug.

4 ibid., 23 Sept.

the league redoubled the dissatisfaction of the critics of the party; party attendance in the divisions was shown to have dropped appreciably, and fifteen home rule members were recorded as having voted in less than ten of the twenty-five party divisions. <sup>(1)</sup> Meanwhile the tenant-farmers were no more satisfied with their spokesmen; the national land conference at the Rotunda in October was only restrained by Butt's personal intervention from passing a vote of censure upon those of the home rule members who had opposed Butt's land bill in the late <sup>(2)</sup> session.

These criticisms were received with considerable vexation by the leaders of the party. Ill-feeling was unfortunately heightened by an unhappy conjunction of the editorials in the Nation with the appearance in Dublin of a series of articles on 'The Irish home rule movement' written by A. M. Sullivan for the New York Catholic World. In the first of these articles reference was made to Butt's <sup>(3)</sup> early fall into 'debt, difficulty, and dissipation', and further expressions of criticism followed. Sullivan was <sup>(4)</sup> accused of conspiring to replace Butt in the leadership, and a special meeting of the party, attended by twenty-one

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1 Nation, 7 Oct. 1876.  
 2 ibid., 28 Oct.  
 3 reprinted in Nation, 22 July.  
 4 The O'Donoghue to P. J. Smyth, 11 July 1876, Smyth MSS, 8215.

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members, passed two resolutions confirming the concurrence of the members in the form adopted by Butt for the introduction of the home rule motion, and expressing their 'unalterable confidence' in his leadership. (1) The

Freeman's Journal joined in the criticisms of Sullivan and the expressions of loyalty to Butt, and at the same time Sullivan wrote to the Times denying any disloyal intent. (2)

In Bristol in August Butt:

appealed to Irishmen to be united. He found no fault with anyone who dissented from him. He blamed no one, but he did say that the man who created disunion in the ranks of the Irish nation without the strongest reasons incurred a very serious responsibility. He believed the chances of getting home rule were now better than ever. They had a larger number of Irish members in parliament supporting home rule than ever voted for repeal in the days of O'Connell, in spite of the surprise by which Mr Gladstone took them at the last election. The energy and deep feeling of the Irish people sent up fifty-nine members pledged to support a change in the arrangement of Irish government; and in the modified form in which he proposed to bring forward his motion he believed that he would have the support of a much larger number of English members. There was one thing that his countrymen, as a rule, lacked, in spite of their excellent qualities, and that was the habit of steady and persistent perseverance. No great question was ever settled in a year, and what they needed was to come back in vigour from every fresh defeat. He believed that if he lived, and if the Irish people would be patient and give him their confidence in the struggle, that before many years were passed he should enter College-green as a member of the Irish parliament. He believed a great many English members of parliament were beginning to see that unless they made friends with the home rulers they would not be members of parliament..... (3)

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1 Nation, 15 July 1876.  
2 quoted ibid., 22 July.  
3 Nation, 26 Aug.

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And in the league he added:

He would like to say just a few words about the last session. It was true they were defeated in their home rule motion. Well, he never expected anything else, and the man who sent them into parliament expecting that they would carry, even in a modified form, a motion for home rule in the face of the influence by which they were met in the present parliament, and within two sessions, must have had a very strange notion of the influences that guide political events.

A voice: Hurrah for Rossa.

Mr Butt: If his countrymen were not possessed of that first of all qualities - the quality of not knowing when they were beaten -- they would never achieve self-government in Ireland. They must have patience, they must rise against defeat. Defeat after defeat, if it were necessary, must make them only the more determined that they would persevere to the last..... (1)

Expressions of loyalty to Butt's leadership were made by Ward, O'Byrne, O'Reilly, and Lewis, (2) and in October the corporations of Dublin and Cork with much éclat exercised for the first time the privileges won for them in the late session by conferring the freedom of their cities upon the home rule leader. (3)

Such expressions of loyalty no longer, however, resolved the underlying differences in the movement. Criticisms of party inactivity had been made in previous recesses. A new development, however, had taken place. For the first time the critics were united in offering an alternative policy to the persuasive tactics of Butt. As

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1 Nation, 26 Aug. 1876.  
2 ibid., 22 July, 23 Sept., 2 Dec.  
3 ibid., 9 Sept., 7, 21 Oct.

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early as 8 July the Nation had written:-

The time appears to us to be favourable for a more resolute course of action. The business of English legislation is now very much at the mercy of the Irish members; they can block it, stop it, and turn it into a mass of inextricable confusion if they choose. Again, England is at this moment involved in a maze of delicate diplomatic negotiations with foreign powers; the Irish members can, if they choose, avail of the situation to render the discontent of their country formidable to the minister. Such a course of action would, no doubt, be denounced in the English parliament and the English press as "unpatriotic" - unpatriotic forsooth! - and some of the more tender-hearted of our members might decline to adopt it; but we feel convinced that without having recourse occasionally to strong measures, and facing some rough work, the Irish cause cannot be pushed to a successful issue in the house of commons. (1)

The following week the same paper unequivocally adopted the prevailing name for the tactics which it proposed:

We therefore recommend to the consideration of the Irish members of parliament and of the Irish people this "policy of obstruction". What is the English parliament to us but a huge machinery of obstruction? It is obstructing our national life, obstructing the prosperity of our country, obstructing our liberties; and, in short, obstructing us off the face of the earth. The substance of such objections as we have seen urged against the plan of action we have indicated is simply this - that it would make English members very angry. But we think there will have to be some anger in this business before it is settled. We would say let the policy we have supported be tried, not blindly, but skilfully and wisely; and if, indeed, laws be made to deprive Irish members of the ordinary rights and privileges of the British parliament, then let a conference of the Irish nation be called to decide what is the next step to be taken in the furtherance of the National Cause. (2)

O'Neill Daunt wrote to the Ulster Examiner in full sympathy with this suggestion; 'as the foe has deprived us of our

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1 Nation, 8 July 1876.  
2 ibid., 15 July.

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native parliament, it is indeed a small reprisal to block up English legislation to whatever extent may be necessary for our own rightful purposes.<sup>(1)</sup> It would be intolerable, wrote the Kerry Vindicator, to have 'even one other session of mild and gentle appeals to that rather shadowy entity called the British conscience.'<sup>(2)</sup>

The element which was above all outspokenly identified with the proposed policy was that which might be loosely termed fenian. There were those, like John Daly, who had now, at the end of the 1876 session, totally and irrevocably dissociated themselves from constitutionalism. A league meeting in August was interrupted by C. G. Doran with a resolution, which was heavily voted down, calling for the abandonment of parliamentarianism,<sup>(3)</sup> and a lecture by O'Connor Power in Manchester was broken up by extremists in a riotous scene in the course of which the chairman,<sup>(4)</sup> Biggar, sustained a head wound which bled profusely. At the same time Denis Dowling Mulcahy, another irreconcilable, coalesced with P. J. Smyth in a series of anti-home rule lectures in Ireland and England.<sup>(5)</sup>

Bitterness against O'Connor Power was perhaps

1 quoted in Nation, 22 July. 1876.  
 2 quoted, ibid.  
 3 Nation, 26 Aug.  
 4 ibid., 16 Sept. The subject of the proposed lecture was 'Irish wit and humour'.  
 5 ibid., 30 Sept., 21 Oct., 4 Nov. Mulcahy to Smyth, 4 Aug. 1876, Smyth MSS, 8215.

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the most consistent feature of these conflicts. (1) Fenianism as a whole does not seem to have taken sides in the home rule issue. John O'Leary wrote to the Sunday Citizen of New York sympathising with the attitude of those who felt moved to break up home rule meetings, but deprecating their tactics, (2) and in private Kickham expressed the same view to Devoy. (3) The attitude of the advanced men inside the constitutional movement was expressed by the annual convention of the English Home Rule Confederation, which, meeting in Dublin for the first time in August 1876, unmistakably identified itself with the policy of obstruction.

The English Home Rule Confederation was set up in 1873. It was the outcome in the first instance of a conference, called in Manchester by the home rule association of that area, (4) with its purpose 'to take steps towards properly organising the electoral power of the Irish in England'. (4) Butt presided, and the secretary was the fenian

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1 The efforts of O'Connor Power to anticipate the new departure seem only to have aroused the most violent antipathy amongst his old colleagues of the I.R.B., who regarded him for some reason with the deepest suspicion as early as 1874. (O'Brien and Ryan, Devoy's Post Bag, vol 1, F.P. O'Shea to Devoy, 17 Aug. 1874, pp. 71-4; O'Leary to Devoy, 13 Oct. 1875, pp. 121-2.) Bigger and Power were, of course, members of the Supreme Council of the I.R.B. until they left it in 1877 rather than obey an order to withdraw from parliamentary life.

2 quoted in Nation, 11 Nov. 1876.

3 Kickham to O'Leary, 29 April 1876, Devoy's Post Bag, vol 1, pp. 163-5.

4 - to Butt, 27 Dec. 1872, Butt MSS; Nation, 11 Jan. 1873.

John Denvir. It was agreed to form a union, which Butt recommended should be on the lines of the Anti-Corn Law League. (1) The conference adjourned, and meeting again in Manchester at the end of February, established the English Home Rule Confederation, to consist of five district councils for England, Manchester, Birmingham, Newcastle, Bristol, and London, together with Glasgow as the Scottish centre, subdivided into town branches, whose members were entitled to send delegates to the annual convention at which policy decisions were taken and the governing executive chosen. (2) A third conference in August, the first annual convention of the confederation, confirmed this arrangement and elected an executive committee. Two hundred delegates attended, and Butt presided over their deliberations. (3) By the time of the second annual convention in June 1874 the confederation numbered 64 branches. 37 belonged to the Manchester district, which remained continually the strongest, 13 to Birmingham, and 14 to Glasgow. (4) The other districts languished; London in particular was paralysed for several years by the disputes between the more moderate section and the working-class home rulers, who were strongly tainted by socialist and

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1 Nation, 18 Jan. 1873.  
 2 ibid., 1 Mar. 1873.  
 3 ibid., 30 Aug. 1873; Daunt Journal, 21 Aug.  
 4 Nation, 20 June 1874.

internationalist principles. (1) The emergence of these groupings within the confederation in turn threw up key-figures in the English movement; most prominent amongst these were Dr Commins and John Barry, chairman and secretary of the Manchester council, and John Ferguson, president of the Glasgow council. Commins was elected president of the confederation in 1874 and 1875, and Ferguson and Barry vice-president and honorary secretary respectively. (2) By January 1876 the confederation could number 95 functioning branches. (3)

By this time, however, the English home rulers had begun to chafe bitterly against the frustrations of Butt's parliamentary policy. As early as July 1875 the official organ of the confederation, the United Irishman, was pressing the adoption of an obstructive policy at Westminster, (4) and in the same month the Larkhall branch passed a resolution to the same effect. (5) 'The fact is, your policy of parliamentary agitation is dying out', wrote Ferguson to Butt in January 1876, (6) and in June he expressed

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1 Nation, 5 Apr., 8 Nov. 1873; E. O'Cavanagh to Butt 16 Oct., T. Mooney to Butt, 8 Nov. 1873; J. Barry to Butt, 1 Jan. 1874; Dr Commins to Butt, 30 Nov., J. Goulding to Butt 3 Dec., M. Henry to Butt, 16 Dec. 1875, and other letters, in Butt MSS.  
 2 Nation, 3 July 1875.  
 3 *ibid.*, 29 Jan. 1876.  
 4 *ibid.*, 3 July 1875. At the same time its manager, Denvir, and its sponsors were appealing to the Irish home rule members for funds to enable it to continue in existence. (Ferguson to Butt, 14 Jan., Barry to Butt, 18 June 1876, Butt MSS.)  
 5 Nation, 3 July 1875.  
 6 Ferguson to Butt, 14 Jan. 1876, Butt MSS.

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the opinion that the Irish people had lost faith in the league.

In 1876 the confederation resolved to make an especial effort to force the Irish wing of the movement to take more resolute action. Captain Kirwan, the paid secretary of the confederation, wrote to McAlister, his counterpart in the league, expressing the desire of his executive for a joint conference of the two bodies in Dublin to consider the state of the agitation. (2) This proposal, however, was not enthusiastically received. The leaders of the party had always feared the proletarian extravagances of the English movement. 'I don't value much the English agitation and don't expect much permanent result from it', wrote Shaw to Daunt in 1873, (3) and Martin made it clear to Daunt that it was the deliberate policy of Butt which had kept the confederation altogether distinct from the Irish movement. (4) Mitchell Henry in 1875 sent Kirwan a cheque for fifty pounds for the confederation funds, (5) but he refused to agree to Butt's suggestion that he should act as league representative on the council of the English organisation - 'I have some mistrust of them and their

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1 Ferguson to Butt, 20 June 1876, Butt MSS.  
2 McAlister to Butt, 27 Apr., 5 May 1876, Butt MSS.  
3 Shaw to Daunt, 2 Sept. 1873, Daunt MSS, 8047.  
4 Martin to Daunt, 2 Apr. 1874, Daunt MSS, 8047.  
5 Nation, 18 Sept. 1875.

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(1)  
 republican allies'. Accused of republicanism, Ferguson and his friends made no effort to deny the charge, but retorted by organising as a republican demonstration the 4 July meeting in Harold's Cross which dispatched O'Connor Power and Parnell to the United States with a congratulatory address on the centenary of the American republic. (2)

This persistent adoption of an independent and extremist line by the confederation, at the same time as it constantly sought financial aid from the Irish organisation, antagonised and frightened the leaders of the party. (3)

A resolution was passed by the council of the league, and conveyed to the executive of the confederation, recognising the good intentions behind the proposal for a joint conference, but expressing the opinion that 'the holding of such a conference would be contrary to the constitution of the league and a violation of the principles on which it was founded at the national conference of November 1873.' (4)

'T. D. Sullivan jumped at the idea of a conference', wrote McAlister to Butt, 'and was trying to push an instant acceptance of the proposal.' (5)

Thwarted in their original intention, the English home rulers decided to proceed with their plans for a Dublin

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1 Henry to Butt, 14 Dec. 1875, also 10 Dec., Butt MSS.  
 2 Ferguson to Butt, 12 July 1876, Butt MSS.  
 3 Capt. Kirwan to Butt, 5 July, 12 July 1876, Butt MSS.  
 4 McAlister to Butt, 2 May 1876, Butt MSS.  
 5 *ibid.*

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(1)  
convention. The proposal aroused almost equal jealousy and suspicion in the Irish leaders, and Butt at first refused even to attend the public meeting arranged for the evening of the first day of the convention, but gave way

(2)  
under pressure. Ferguson wrote to him:

I am horrified to hear that you do not intend being at the meeting in Dublin on 3 July! Before I agreed at all to the affair I had your statement to tell everyone you were for it. More than once had you not acted as Barry and I wanted you you would have regretted it ..... take our advice this time. You will see far more serious evils arise if you are not at the meeting ..... than you imagine.

The confederation will I do think dissolve and give reasons that will be popular with the Irish people - I'll send you a long letter from Barry when I have replied to it that is more serious than Daly or Mulcahy! .....

I have been in Ireland two weeks. My opinion is the people have given up all faith in the league. You are still popular. We are now about to divide at last whig home rulers one way real home rulers the other way. The people made Isaac Butt. I hope he will not desert them for "respectability" and "shopboyism". (3)

The convention of the confederation met in the Rotunda, after several postponements, on 21 and 22 August 1876, under the chairmanship of its president, Dr Commins. A large part of its work was devoted to an overhaul of the English organisation. It was agreed that the executive council was to number in future fifteen persons, ten elected by the general council, three by these ten, and two appointed by the league. The council in future was to be elected on

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1 It was, of course, able to do this because unlike the league it was immune from the provisions of the convention act.  
2 Ferguson to Butt, 30 June 1876, Butt MSS.  
3 Ferguson to Butt, ibid.

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the basis of one representative for each association of less than 100 members, two for those of 100-200 members, and three for those of over 200 members, and its headquarters was transferred to London as being more centrally situated. <sup>(1)</sup>

As a mark of respect to the home rule leader, he was nominated to the presidency of the association to fill the vacancy caused by the retirement of Dr Commins, who had held the office for the preceding two years. But at the same time the number of vice-presidents was increased to five, and Parnell, Biggar, and O'Donnell were brought on with Bernard McAnulty of Newcastle to accompany Ferguson. Another notable appointment was that of O'Donnell to the honorary secretaryship, in place of Barry, who signified his desire to withdraw owing to pressure of work. The appointment of O'Donnell as both honorary secretary and a vice-president gave him a key position in the confederation, which he signalled a few weeks later by the publication over his name and that of Kirwan as paid secretary of a fierce broadside upon the inactivity of the party. <sup>(2)</sup> In this context a significant provision was that which established the quorum for the executive as low as three. The delegates passed a resolution assuring Butt of their confidence in his 'genius and determination' and of their

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1 Donal Sullivan to Daunt, 28 Aug. 1876, Daunt MSS, 8048.  
 2 Nation, 7 Oct. 1877.

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continued allegiance to his authority. But the crucial resolution was number eleven:

That in the opinion of this meeting, before adopting a course of action that may become necessary - namely, withdrawal - it will be expedient for the Irish members to adopt a much more determined attitude in the house of commons upon all questions in which Ireland is concerned, so that the British people may be induced to adopt the principle of division of labour in government. (1)

The convention, and the attitude for which it stood, seems to have left a marked impression upon the more realistic of the home rule members. By the end of August Henry was writing:

For my part I think the confederation are doing excellent work, perhaps the only good work now in progress relative to home rule - The league is in a state of suspended animation ..... (2)

The parliamentary policy which they proposed might still be distasteful to the moderates in the party, but even Shaw could see at the end of the last fruitless session:-

if there is not great wisdom, coherence and decision it will be impossible to convince the country that we are not playing with the home rule question. We must remember that there is a considerable number of ourselves and a very large party in the country who are watching for an opportunity of dropping back again into whiggery..... I feel strongly that we are at a critical turning-point and that we must take especial care in every step not only to keep the party together, but to keep it at all. No knowing when a general election may take place, and very little would so disgust the constituencies that they would let the majority of us go to the right about ..... (3)

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1 Report in Nation, 26 Aug. 1876.  
2 Henry to Butt, 30 Aug., Butt MSS.  
3 Shaw to Butt, 12 July 1876, Butt MSS.

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Perhaps resolution in the next session could avert disaster, and check the growing dissension in the party. But the debate on parliamentary tactics was revealing a deep divergence in attitude between the two wings of the party, across which the active moderates like Henry maintained a precarious balance. The Spectator commented that three policies had been raised at the convention: the 'parliamentary tactics' of Butt, the 'obstruction' of Sullivan and those who agreed with him, and the complete withdrawal suggested by the fenians. Of these three, it concluded, the convention, while endorsing Butt's leadership, had accepted obstruction and merely postponed withdrawal. (1) It was against the background of these now open divisions that Butt on 6 January 1877 issued his circular for the fourth annual pre-sessional conference of the Irish home rule party.

(b) The parliamentary session of 1877

The Nation, now under the editorship and full control of T. D. Sullivan, devoted an outspoken editorial to the impending conference. The country, it said, demanded more aggression from its representatives:

They were not sent to utter occasional protests against the misgovernment of Ireland, or to claim in two or three debates

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1 quoted in Nation, 2 Sept. 1876.

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a restoration of her rights and then to accept with a good grace the refusal of their demands. They were not sent to make a struggle for Irish bills, or to let pass unused the opportunities which offer for punishing those by whom such bills are unjustly and contemptuously rejected. Our reading of the matter is that they were sent to strive for Ireland and to strike for her; to be a hostile element in the house, a bar to business, and a danger to the empire, until Ireland's claim to a restoration of her plundered rights is conceded by the English government . . . . This parliamentary struggle for Ireland can no more be won without anger and unpleasantness than a battle in the field can be won without bloodshed. (1)

Thirty-two members obeyed Butt's summons, (2)

fifteen gave adequate reasons for their absence. (3) The remainder were absent without explanation. (4)

O'Shaughnessy resigned the secretaryship of the party, and Meldon and Ward were elected as honorary secretaries for the coming session. Nolan and Richard Power were elected whips. A new committee was chosen, consisting of Butt, Henry,

1 Nation, 6 Jan. 1877.

2 Biggar, Brooks, Butt, Callan, Collins, Dease, Delahunty, Downing, Eanis, Fay, French, Henry, Kirk, MacCarthy, Martin, Meldon, Moore, Nolan, O'Beirne, O'Brien, O'Clery, O'Gorman, O'Leary, O'Loughlen, O'Reilly, O'Shaughnessy, O'Sullivan, Parnell, R. Power, Redmond, Sullivan, Ward. These included two new members, Delahunty and O'Beirne, who replaced Sir J. Esmonde (liberal, Waterford Co) and W. Ormsby Gore (Cons., Leitrim) respectively. A third seat was won for the party at the beginning of 1877 by E.R. King Harman, who won the Sligo seat left vacant by the death of the conservative R.G. Booth. Harman was never a very loyal party member, but technically these three victories brought the party strength to 55.

3 Bowyer, Conyngham, Dunbar, Harman, McKenna, Montagu, O'Byrne, O'Connor, Stacpoole, and Shaw sent apologies; O'Gonnor Power had not yet returned from America, where Errington also found himself. Synan, Bryan, and Brady were ill.

4 Blennerhassett, Browne, Digby, Lewis, O'Callaghan, O'Keefe, Sherlock, and Shell.

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O'Shaughnessy, Downing, Brooks, Callan, Shaw, McKenna, and Parnell. The proceedings opened with a review by Butt of the work of the party. A formal vote of confidence and allegiance to Butt was next moved by Sullivan and O'Loughlen and adopted with acclamation. The possibility of a crisis over the situation in the east was discussed. The Nation professed itself satisfied with the independent nationalist tone adopted by most of the members with regard to the imperial question, but no firm decision as to party policy was taken;

As to their action in emergencies that may at any moment arise, they deemed it inexpedient to determine beforehand what course they would adopt, and resolved to maintain an attitude of reserve and observation.

This avoidance of controversy typified the decision of the conference, which virtually paralleled those of the three preceding sessions. It was decided to bring in another home rule motion, if possible early in the session. Responsibility was taken by different members for the introduction of bills upon the familiar issues of the land, university education, intermediate education, the franchise, registration, county boards, sea fisheries, and other topics, together with another amnesty motion. Upon the crucial issue of parliamentary tactics, no formal decision was taken, and the way was left open as in previous years for individual apathy or individual action.

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1 This report is based on Nation, 3 Feb. 1877, supplemented by the leading dailies.

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A few days later the league gave a banquet to Butt, at which he developed his view of the proper Irish policy at Westminster in a fervent and moving address;

What we ought to do, and what I advised is - let us make an assault upon the whole system of English misgovernment in this country. Let us ask of the English liberals to join us in demolishing every part of the system opposed to their own principles. If we carry any measure in this way, we have achieved a great triumph and can enjoy its fruits. If we fail, we have supplied another, and an unanswerable argument to Europe, to the Irish and English nations, to show that nothing but self-legislation can ever reconcile us or realise our aspirations.

This policy had been followed in the last session; it would be pursued again in the next. The franchise would be the first test - the Irish could have won on this issue last time if all the members of the party had been present. Hartington, said Butt, had refused to put out a whip for the division, but he himself upon his own initiative had circularised a large number of the Liberals, and many came down and voted with the party. (1) English opinion was moving increasingly towards the provision of local boards for Ireland, and these would represent an important step towards the principle of home rule; however, Butt added;

Never in the English parliament in pressing these measures did I utter, or will I utter, a word that would imply that we were waiving, or abandoning, or modifying the great demand of the Irish people for self-government.

Calling for the constant attendance of the members, he

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1 over one hundred, in fact, did so.

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admitted that in the conference they had criticised each other violently in the absence of the press; yet he believed that a real community of purpose existed. He appealed for a united national effort to sustain them; if Ireland rose with one gigantic effort at the next election, and sent them a majority - an almost unanimous national declaration - of ninety members, home rule would be attained before the centenary of 1782.<sup>(1)</sup>

Moving this appeal was, but reduced to essentials it seemed to the more energetic spirits to imply only the same endless round of defeat and frustration. Their critical reaction was almost as much emotional as rational; the same day O'Gorman said in the league:

he begged to state, with all due deference to Mr Butt, and with very great love for their illustrious leader, that he thought him a little too soft . . . . He was far too civil with these English fellows . . . . he was constantly crying "Hear, hear!" when he should say "No, no!", and he encouraged them to go on with that which was not distasteful to them - the management of this country. There was only one way of getting hold of John Bull, and that was by stopping his percentages - that is, by stopping the estimates. Now in committee every member was entitled, he thought, to four votes - he would look into Sir Erskine May's book on the matter - on an item of estimates. If eight or nine of them were to combine they could wage war on them.

O'Gorman was known as an extremist. But now significantly the moderate Mitchell Henry rose to concur in his general

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1 Nation, 10 Feb. 1877.

1 Nation, 10 Feb. 1877.  
 2 Irish, 21 July.

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attitude;

He confessed he agreed with Major O'Gorman that in the next session of parliament it would be their duty to follow a very bold course. He was not in favour of shaking hands all round, of thankfulness for small mercies. What they wanted was their national rights, and they would be friends with those men who would assist them to gain those rights; they would not be friends with those who resisted them. (1)

Others had come to this attitude before Henry.

In previous sessions their efforts had been restrained by the opinion of their colleagues, and by the tactical authority of Butt. Indifference and absenteeism in so many of its members had weakened the moral influence of party censure, and recurring defeat had brought open criticism of Butt's leadership. The party conference had resolved, in effect, to ignore as a party the demand for new tactics, but the historic indiscipline of the party which permitted wilful absenteeism could permit equally a fierce energy. Lastly, in the recess a large and important section of home rule opinion had given an unmistakable mandate for a more active policy. Upon this mandate Parnell and Biggar had resolved

(2)

to act. The policy which had been suggested, and which they now proposed to adopt, had been loosely defined as obstructive. It was a word which, in popular usage, possessed a connotation more emotionally than rationally expressed. Its precise meaning was indefinable, perhaps, except in practical

1 Nation, 10 Feb. 1877.  
2 Ibid., 21 July.

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illustration. This illustration the session of 1877 was strikingly to provide, and as obstruction and the response to it in Ireland were to be the most decisive features of the last years of Butt's party, it is appropriate that in the context of this session we should examine in more detail the nature of the parliamentary tactics which were generally grouped under its heading.

Subsequent commentators have tended to think of obstruction as the attempt, by the minority of Irish representatives, to delay the passage of legislation which possessed the approval of the great majority, by the deliberate and coldblooded exploitation of parliamentary liberties. These liberties were conceded in order to preserve that freedom of speech which was enshrined in the struggle for constitutional government; they were so prized that rather than qualify them by written restrictions, the members were prepared to unite in a gentleman's agreement not to exploit them; Parnell, Biggar, and their followers alone refused to honour this compact, and in so doing cut themselves off from the leadership of Isaac Butt and from the traditions of parliamentary government. Hence, we are told, arose the obstruction crisis.

This picture is true in many of its essentials; Parnell and Biggar did differ from Butt in their attitude to

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parliament; they did destroy some of the liberties of parliament by exploiting them. But like most oversimplifications it has its inherent dangers; it does not explain precisely what Parnell and Biggar did, and it implies that whatever it was, it was born directly from their unprecedented hostility towards the British parliament.

This theory can be qualified at once in a number of very obvious ways. Defining obstruction in its broadest sense, that is, the attempt of a minority to delay legislation which it cannot hope to defeat, it was an accepted part of parliamentary tactics long before the emergence of Biggar and Parnell, the use of which especially in committee even commanded the respect of those against whose measures it was practised, provided, of course, it was used within the unwritten limits prescribed by the parliamentary game. It would, however, be ridiculous to suggest that there was no novelty in the tactics of Biggar and Parnell.

In analysing these tactics it is necessary to remember, in the first place, the impact of the first home rule party at Westminster. In a sense, all parliamentary opposition is obstruction; the existence of any government implies its possession of a parliamentary majority, and consequently, at least in the case of most modern governments, establishes the fate of its measures long before any division

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is taken upon them. This basic truth, which tends to reduce the whole technique of parliamentary debate to an empty ritual, has become increasingly true with the development of party discipline. It was not so true in the parliament of the 1870's, when the distinction between the members of different parties was less clear and party discipline less precise, with the result that it was still more than theoretically possible for the course of a debate to alter the fate of a measure or even of a ministry. The sudden emergence in 1874 of a parliamentary third force, with neither the authority of her majesty's government nor the complementary mandate of her majesty's opposition, had produced a major change in the parliamentary balance of forces. The Irish party not merely criticised and opposed ministerial measures from an independent and alien point of view; it also, as has been continually stressed above, unlike the opposition, deliberately set about initiating legislation and policy motions of its own, mostly in the time and through the machinery hitherto allocated to the individual and relatively infrequent activities of the private member.

The effect of this new development can quickly be appreciated when it is recalled that by the time of its emergence the inability of parliament to cope with all its

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responsibilities was already being forced upon the minds of its members. Parliament was at this period in session for only six months of the year. Business of a local or sectional nature was frequently taken late at night, often after midnight, and the passage of such routine legislation depended upon the tacit co-operation of the opposition. This was perhaps relatively easy to obtain when there was little Irish or imperial legislation, and before the social conscience of Victorian England had forced its way into the parliamentary sphere. But with the irrevocable recognition by Gladstone of the existence of an Irish problem, the increasing preoccupation of parliament with the extension of the franchise, and the reluctant acceptance by successive governments of wider and wider social responsibilities, the time and the machinery which had sufficed to run the empire in the age of Palmerston were no longer equal to the demands placed upon them.

The intensification of this problem through the emergence of an Irish party was not, of course, merely accidental; it was, as has been observed above, a matter of deliberate policy to the Irish leaders. If the party could demonstrate that the united parliament was unequal to the task of legislating for the united kingdom it would obviously have scored a tremendous triumph in the battle for home rule. It started its work in 1874 with the initial advantage that

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the incapacity of parliament to deal with all its business had already been conceded by many parliamentary leaders, notably Gladstone himself, whose guarded acceptance of the necessity for some kind of imperial devolution and its accompanying crop of schemes from the Irish liberals for parliamentary committees and local boards have already been quoted. (1) It was the aim of Butt, in his policy of fighting upon the broad front of Irish grievances, 'to press upon the British parliament the legislation which we believe the pressing wants of our country need.'

In some instances we may - I believe we will - succeed in obtaining, it may be, partial redress for the grievances of which we complain. Every time we do so we gain some strength and vigour for the national life. But I know of no means by which we can better advance the cause of home rule than by making honest and intelligent Englishmen realise to themselves the deficiencies of their Irish government and Irish legislation. (2)

This parliamentary policy had, however, the second indirect but important effect of overloading the parliamentary order-book with Irish business. The presence of an active Irish party at Westminster, combining to bring in its own bills, was in itself an obstruction to government business. Home rule members, it will be recalled, gave notice of sixteen bills in 1876; in 1877 they gave notice of fifteen, and in both sessions they were able to appropriate the majority of

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1 Address to the electors of Greenwich, 24 Jan. 1874, and above, Chapter XI, pp. 291-2, 294.  
 2 Nation, 29 May 1875.

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the time allowed for the bills of private members. Butt had no scruples about the legitimacy of arguing each of these bills home to its inevitable defeat. The Irish policy contributed very largely to the production of a situation that in 1875 Butt could say 'I never remember a session when the order book of the house of commons was so early and so hopelessly blocked', <sup>(1)</sup> and at the end of the 1876 session <sup>(2)</sup> Disraeli could make very much the same complaint.

In addition to this policy, Butt was prepared to offer a determined resistance to legislation hostile to Irish interests. On the second reading of the Expiring Laws Continuance Bill in 1874 Butt had led an opposition of seven hours duration, including three divisions; he had concluded with a warning to the government of his intention, unless certain concessions were granted, most resolutely to 'obstruct' their measures. On the committee stage of the same bill the home rule members had continued the struggle until 3.45 a.m., dividing the house eight times upon amendments and motions to adjourn, and a third night had been necessary to carry the <sup>(3)</sup> bill. The same kind of opposition, it will be remembered, had been offered to the equivalent measure in the following session, when two days were needed for the second reading,

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1 Nation, 29 May 1875.  
 2 Hansard, 3rd series, ccxxxi, 704.  
 3 see above, chapter XV, pp.

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six for the committee stage, and one for the report stage.<sup>(1)</sup>  
 This activity brought down accusations of obstruction upon  
 the Irish, a charge which they warmly denied.<sup>(2)</sup> But their  
 behaviour in these instances, as we have seen, won the  
 approval of the nationalists in Ireland a great deal more  
 than their most painstaking efforts in pursuit of the  
 principal aims of the party.

There were, however, limits beyond which Butt  
 was not prepared to go. The Irish members were accused of  
 obstruction for their deliberate persistence in amendments  
 which had no hope of success. They could however argue that  
 these efforts were genuinely bent towards the improvement of  
 legislation. Butt's policy thus had this consistent theme.  
 It involved, in theory, on the positive side, the energetic  
 reiteration of demands for reform through bills and motions  
 initiated and supported at length by the Irish members and  
 on the negative side, a determined opposition to ministerial  
 Irish measures by voice and vote in the debates in the house  
 and by repeated efforts at amendment in committee. Backed by  
 a strong and energetic party, this policy might have produced  
 some effect; but its main drawback was that it was only in  
 fact energetically practised by a minority of the Irish

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1 see above, Chapter XV, pp. 414-9.  
 2 Nation, 18 Mar. 1876; Harvard, Irel series, ccxxi, 1022.

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members - the remainder seldom emerging from somnolence. This defect was not the fault of Butt's leadership, although he could be partially blamed for it; it arose directly from the failure of the home rule movement to secure the control of the constituencies in the 1874 election.

The policy of what might loosely be called obstruction by argument had, however, other additional weaknesses. Not merely was the government unmoved by argument; it began also to develop a technique for mitigating the delays consequent upon the unwelcome presence of this Irish party. Ministerial speakers ceased to bother to reply to Irish arguments; successive Irish members would be listened to with a formal indifference by a house of minimum size, and their bills or motions voted down by overwhelming majorities brought in from lounges and smoking rooms by the division bell. A speaker in the North London branch of the Home Rule Confederation reported to his fellow members upon his visit to the house of commons for the debate on the fisheries bill of the Irish party in March 1876. He left the house, he said,

more convinced than ever of the carelessness evinced by the British house of commons in the affairs of Ireland. The members seemed to have so little interest in the fishery bill, that they did not even attend while the discussion was proceeding, and it was not until the chief secretary was half-way through his speech that they began to come in. But when the division bell rang, there was a rush from the lobbies....

(1)

1 Nation, 1 Apr. 1876.

NEW YORK POLICE LIBRARY USE

More important still, the so-called half past twelve rule, first introduced as a sessional order in 1871 and dropped in 1874, was reintroduced as a regular means of killing Irish bills. This rule laid down that:

except for a money bill, no order of the day or notice of motion be taken after half-past twelve of the clock at night, with respect to which order or notice of motion a notice of opposition or amendment shall have been printed on the notice paper, or if such notice of motion shall only have been given the next previous day of sitting, and objection shall be taken when such notice is called. (1)

The time for private members' bills being extremely limited, and much of it in fact being taken in the small hours of the morning, the effect of this rule was drastically to curtail the opportunities available to Irish members to bring on their own legislation. Captain Nolan, the party whip, complained that the effect of the rule in 1875 was 'practically to put a stop to the bills of private members at that hour, without similarly affecting the government bills', and Butt complained that in the same year a bill of his was obstructed by a member who put a notice of opposition on the order paper and then went to Ireland for a month's holiday. (2) So

although the Irish, as we have seen, entered an impressive list of bills on the order paper in each session, by 1876 they were experiencing the frustration of seeing the majority of them disappear without even being discussed under the

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1 Hansard, 3rd series, ccxxxii, 332.  
2 ibid., 333-4.

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pressure of government business. And the determination to fight all ministerial Irish measures was useless in dealing with a ministry which had none.

The futility of these tactics had, as we have seen, impressed itself early in the life of the parliament upon a section of the Irish members, notably Joseph Biggar, and caused them to consider the possibility of adopting other means to force the distinctiveness of the Irish party upon the English mind. There were precedents for two very obvious kinds of obstruction. The first of these was the making of interminable speeches, or as we know it, filibustering. Gladstone himself had adopted these tactics to resist the divorce bill in 1857. Morley records that on one day in the committee stage of this bill, Parliament sat for 10 hours in consideration of a single clause. During this time 'including questions, explanations, and interlocutory suggestions, Mr Gladstone made nine-and-twenty speeches, some of them of considerable length. <sup>(1)</sup> This was a technique which could be used on any stage of a bill. The second more properly belonged to the committee stage, that is to say, the stage following upon the passage of the second reading of a measure, at which the entire house constituted itself a committee to consider the measure in detail, clause

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1 Life of W. E. Gladstone, (1903), vol 1, p. 571.

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(1)  
 by clause. In this stage each member could speak as often as he wished - in debate he could of course speak only once; he could moreover repeatedly move the adjournment of the committee, in the form of a motion that the chairman should leave the chair or should report progress to the speaker of the house. There had been many precedents for this kind of obstruction as well; in 1870, notably in the debates on the coercion bill, in the words of a conservative member, 'alternative motions of the adjournment of the house and of the debate kept them marching around the lobbies half the night on more than one occasion.'<sup>(1)</sup> In 1831 in the reform bill debates Sir Charles Wetherall had kept the house dividing on the adjournment until 5 a.m.; obstruction on the bill had been methodically organised by a committee led by Peel, and on the committee stage between 12 and 27 July 1831, Sugden spoke 18 times, Praed 22 times, Pelham 28 times, Peel 48 times, Croker 57 times, and Wetherall 58 times.<sup>(2)</sup>

The technique was used as late as 1876 by the English radicals led by Forster, Dilke, Fawcett, and Harcourt on the committee stage of the Elementary Education Bill; in order to thwart an amendment which tended to denominationalism, introduced by Lord Robert Montagu and accepted by the government, they divided the committee on the adjournment from 10.30 p.m. until

<sup>1</sup> Hansard, 3rd series, ccxxxii, 476-96.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, ccxxxii, 1045.

1 Sir Frederick Heygate in Hansard, 3rd series, ccxxxii, 335.

2 Quoted in Nation, 7 Apr. 1877.

(1)  
4.30 a.m.

Biggar's first deviation from his party was not, then, in the invention of these tactics but in their deliberate application to the uses of the Irish cause. As early as 30 July 1874, the first session of the home rule party, he repeatedly moved the adjournment in the committee on the coercion bill, and was finally prevailed upon to desist only by the appeals of Butt.<sup>(2)</sup> In the same debate in the following year he spoke for nearly four hours in a celebrated piece of filibustering,<sup>(3)</sup> in addition to introducing motions to adjourn whenever he felt that the discussion had gone on long enough. Sometimes he was joined by other Irish members in this policy; on 6 March 1876 Parnell was another of a handful of members who divided the house seventeen times in protest against the exclusion of any home rule representative from the committee of referees on private bills.<sup>(4)</sup> Generally, however, Biggar followed a lone course without consulting his colleagues, and although Butt himself made no secret of his distaste for a policy of deliberate delay divorced from rational argument, there was no crisis of party discipline so long as the deviations of Biggar and his occasional allies seemed only individual acts of irresponsibility.

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1 Hansard, 3rd series, ccxxxi, 476-96.  
 2 ibid., ccxxi, 1025.  
 3 ibid., ccxxlii, 1451-8.  
 4 ibid., ccxxvii, 1495.

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The session of 1877, however, saw this crisis develop. Ample precedents existed for the kind of obstruction which had been practised by Biggar; the novelty of his and Parnell's tactics in 1877 lay above all in their attitude to parliament. Their methods had been used in the past, but always by a minority to resist the passage of legislation to which it objected on some strongly held principle. By Parnell and Biggar obstruction was used to thwart legislation in which they had no strong class or denominational interest, but simply in retaliation for the defeat of their own measures. In other words, what had in the past been the last refuge of opposition to a particularly loathed measure, in the hands of Parnell and Biggar became a calculated attempt at reprisal. This change of attitude expressed itself in what was the most striking innovation of Parnell and Biggar - their decision to intervene in the discussion of legislation of purely English import traditionally left alone by Irish members. This step had been heralded by the frequent, although not obstructive, intervention of Biggar in English debates like the Agricultural Holdings (Scotland) Bill in the session of 1876.<sup>(1)</sup>

The aggressive and retaliatory nature of the new policy was quickly demonstrated in the 1877 session. On 13 February the government secured the re-enactment of the

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1 Hansard, 3rd series, ccxxx, 1127.

12.30 rule; Biggar's cheerful attempt to delay the passage of the motion by the introduction of an amendment to extend its provisions to money bills was thwarted by the intervention of Butt. <sup>(1)</sup> A few days later, however, the commons found to its fury that by an operation without precedent, wrote the Daily News, in the history of British legislation, notice of opposition had been entered in the names of Parnell and Biggar to every important English and Scottish bill then on the table. <sup>(2)</sup> This historic step initiated what has been called the policy of obstruction, but what might better be known as the policy of retaliation. On 28 February Biggar talked out Chaplin's Threshing Machines Bill, a measure in which he had no interest whatsoever, until 12.30 was reached and it could not be continued with; <sup>(3)</sup> on 26 February Parnell <sup>(4)</sup> had done the same with several government bills. On 5 March Parnell moved the adjournment on the committee stage of the army estimates on the ground that his criticisms were not being listened to with proper attention; <sup>(5)</sup> on 8 March he moved the adjournment of the valuation bill on the ground that the government was forcing too many bills upon the house; <sup>(6)</sup> on 12 March he and Biggar moved the adjournment of

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1 Hansard, 3rd series, ccxxxii, 336-7.  
 2 Quoted in Nation, 24 Feb. 1877.  
 3 Hansard, 3rd series, ccxxxii, 1195-6.  
 4 ibid., 1070-1.  
 5 ibid., 1439-42.  
 6 ibid., 1634-7.

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the marine mutiny bill because it had not been printed. (1)  
 These were efforts of a directly obstructive kind; his amendments in the committee of the prisons bill, on the other hand, between 21 March and 5 April, were legitimately argumentative by the standards of Butt.

The struggle which took place on the committee stage of the mutiny bill showed this distinction very clearly. Both methods tended to delay the passage of government legislation, but one did so indirectly, while the other was open assault. In the mutiny bill committee on 12 April Parnell and Nolan moved four amendments to mitigate the penal power of courts martial. All were withdrawn or defeated. The intervention of Irish members in the discussion of this kind of measure was an innovation, but real obstruction only began when Biggar, pleading the lateness of the hour, moved to report progress after the passage of clause 55, at 1.15 a.m. He was supported by Parnell, who wanted time to consider his own amendments, of which, he explained, circumstances beyond his control had prevented him giving notice. This was too much for Butt, who returned to the house to make a violent protest:

If, at this hour of the night, any member really wished to propose a serious amendment, he (Mr Butt) would support the motion to report progress - and so, also, he thought, would the secretary for war. But when there was no amendment to



a number of clauses, he must express his disapproval of the course taken by the honorable member for Meath. It was a course of obstruction - and one against which he must enter his protest. He was not responsible for the honorable member for Meath, and could not control him. He, however, had a duty to discharge to the great nation of Ireland, and he thought he should discharge it best when he said he disapproved entirely of the conduct of the honorable member for Meath. If the honorable gentleman really had amendments to propose, he would support him; but he would not support him when he threw out vague suggestions that it was possible on some future day he might have amendments to propose. (1)

Thus publicly reproved by their leader, Parnell and Biggar for the moment gave way. On the committee stage of this and the marine mutiny bill, however, Parnell continued his course of moving amendments, but the device of the adjournment was not used again until 1 May, and this time on an Irish issue. (2)

On 4 June Parnell opposed the second reading of the Bishopric Bill and the Companies Acts Amendments Bill on principle because of the lateness of the hour, but gave way without a

division. (3) On the prisons bill committee Parnell also moved repeated amendments, but this was a bill of strong Irish interest, and several other Irish members, including Butt himself, took part in the discussions. (4)

On 19 June Biggar with Parnell and Ward talked out the Irish judicature bill as a reprisal for the omission of the speaker to allow Biggar's amendments, (5) but there were no all-night battles,

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1 Hansard, 3rd series, ccxxxiii, 1042-50.  
2 ibid., ccxxxiv, 183-204.  
3 ibid., 1292.  
4 ibid., 1309, etc.  
5 ibid., ccxxxv, 32.

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because business was not as a rule pressed on against Parnell's wishes. In May the house sat only twenty hours after midnight in a fourteen day session and in June only twenty-one hours in a twenty-one day session. <sup>(1)</sup>

Systematic obstruction by means of repeated motions to adjourn was not applied to an English measure until 2 July, in the committee stage of the army estimates. Biggar was not involved in this debate, but a new recruit for the advanced wing had been gained with the election of O'Donnell for Dungarvan. Shortly after midnight O'Connor Power moved the adjournment on the ground that 'he objected to voting away public money at that hour'. Parnell, O'Connor Power, Richard Power, Nolan, O'Donnell and O'Gorman, with the support of the English member Whalley, kept the house in continuous and unproductive session until 7.15 a.m., in the course of which seventeen divisions were taken, nine on the motion to report progress, and eight that the chairman should leave the chair, before the Irish gave way. <sup>(2)</sup> Later in July the same tactics were repeated, this time on the solicitors' examinations bill. <sup>(3)</sup> In the same month Parnell gave notice of opposition to five more English bills.

Throughout all this time Parnell repeatedly denied

1 Return of the number of days and hours on which the house sat, H.C. 1877, LXVIII, o.149.

2 Hansard, 3rd series, ccxxxv, 623-662.

3 ibid., 865.

that he had any intention deliberately to obstruct the business of the house. On 6 July 1877 he said in the house: He had always publicly and privately, in Ireland as well as England, repudiated any intention of obstructing the conduct of public business. Any obstruction which he might seem to the house to have committed had happened after half past twelve, when he thought business of importance should cease.(1)

His moving of amendments on the prisons and mutiny bills, if unwelcome in an Irish member, was quite legitimate, and several English members praised him warmly for the work which he had done in drawing attention to the barbaric nature of penal legislation. For these amendments, incidentally, he had taken the step, unprecedented in a private home rule member, of issuing a whip on his own account. (2) In short, the only flagrant obstruction of which he had so far been guilty lay in his notice of opposition to English bills in retaliation for the use of the 12.30 rule against Irish bills, and his use of the right to move the adjournment in order to hold up business after 12.30. The government were, therefore, loath as yet to limit his opportunities by a drastic revision of the rules of the house, and the motion of J. H. Puleston (Devonport) to apply to committee business the rule followed in debate of the house, permitting each member to move the

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1 Hansard, 3rd series, ccxxxv, 887.  
 2 Nation, 14 Apr. 1877. Butt himself wrote to Callan: 'The truth was obstruction has nothing on earth to do with the amendments on the prisons bill. They (the obstructives) conducted themselves most properly on this.' (Butt to Callan, 16 Sept. 1877, Butt MSS, vol 11, MS 831.)

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adjournment only once on any question, was not accepted by the government. (1) Parnell did not, however, discount the possibility that obstruction should be deliberately used as an Irish weapon; in Manchester he said:

at the close of the last session he and Mr Bigger had determined to show by what two men could do how much could be done by sixty if they would act independently and bravely . . . . . They had not however, done one tenth part of what they might have done during the present session if their hands had not been tied . . . . . He did not fear the charge of obstruction, and he thought the time would come, and had come, when the Irish people would have to consider whether their representatives should not next session enter upon a deliberate persistent course of obstruction of English measures so long as English statesmen and English measures continued to obstruct and nullify all their efforts on behalf of Ireland . . . . . (2)

In July 1877 the necessity of the government to push through some important pieces of legislation provoked the inevitable conflict. The introduction of the controversial South Africa Bill was preceded by the appropriation on the part of the government of most of private business time for the remainder of the session. Parnell and his allies retaliated by delaying the passage of the bill through committee with repeated amendments and motions to adjourn. The storm broke on 25 July while Parnell was speaking on a motion of O'Donnell's to report progress:

The hon. member, who spoke amid much confusion, and who was twice called to order by the chairman, was understood to say - As it was with Ireland, so it was with the South African

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1 Hansard, 3rd series, ccxxxv, 824.  
2 Nation, 21 July 1877.

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colonies, yet Irish members were asked to assist the government in carrying out their selfish and inconsiderate policies. Therefore, as an Irishman, coming from a country which had experienced to the fullest extent the results of English interference in its affairs and the consequences of English cruelty and tyranny, he felt a special satisfaction in preventing and thwarting the intentions of the government in respect of this bill.

To the ministerialists these last words seemed to offer the long-awaited opportunity for retribution. Northcote, the chancellor of the exchequer, leaped to his feet and moved that the words be taken down with a view to the entry of a charge of contempt. At the same time he announced that the patience of the government was finally exhausted, and that on the Friday following amendments to the standing orders of the house would be introduced to prevent a repetition of these scenes. Parnell calmly resumed, and with his allies prolonged the debate, without permitting the passage of any business, until 5.45 a.m. (1)

In the event, Northcote failed in both his objects. Parnell easily showed that to seek to thwart the intentions of the government was very different from the deliberate obstruction of public business. The new rules were equally ineffective. They were two in number:

That when a member, after being twice declared out of order, shall be pronounced by MR Speaker, or by the chairman of committees, to be disregarding the authority of the chair, the debate shall be at once suspended; and, on a motion

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1 Hansard, 3rd series, ccxxxv, 1797-1833.

1 Hansard, 3rd series, ccxxvi, 13-22.

being made, in the house, that the member be not heard during the remainder of the debate, or during the sitting of the committee, such motion, after the member complained of has been heard in explanation, shall be put without further debate.

That in committee of the whole house, no member shall have power to move more than once, during the debate on the same question, either that the chairman do report progress or that the chairman do leave the chair, nor to speak more than once to each separate motion, and that no member who has made one of these motions have power to make the other on the same question. (1)

Parnell did not vote on either of these motions, but took the opportunity of the debate to make a very clear explanation of his policy. He denied any intention to obstruct prior to the South Africa bill; the introduction of the 12.30 rule by the government, and their use of their English majority to overwhelm Irish measures, he said, had resulted in the situation that the only Irish measure passed by this parliament had been 'one of comparatively little importance, which had been described as being a bill to enable certain Irish corporations to present their freedom to the honorable and learned member for Limerick.' He and Biggar had used the 12.30 rule precisely as it had been used by the government: their aim was not obstruction, but simply to show up the tactics of the government. On the prisons and mutiny bills he had exercised his right as an Irish member to take 'that part in the debate on English measures which English members frequently took, with disastrous effects, in the debates on

Irish measures.' At once, he said, he was accused of obstruction, but the truth was that any member who took part in any debate was an obstruction, because the house was overwhelmed with work. This explanation justified his conduct on all bills except the South Africa Bill; it involved, he said, 'constitutional principles of enormous importance to the people of those colonies', and should have been introduced earlier, instead of at the tail end of the session, when to stifle opposition and to get it through quickly the government adopted 'coercive proceedings' against those who, like himself, wished to see that bill thoroughly debated, and that house had almost been carried into the commission of an act which it would lastingly have regretted and which would certainly have been a disgrace to a deliberative assembly.

Parnell thus was very careful to justify his policy in the terms in which it had always historically been employed, i.e., as the defence by a minority of constitutional liberties which were being flouted by a majority corrupted by its own power. O'Connor Power in this debate set out to justify blatant obstruction, but he was not joined in this by any of the other obstructives, least of all Parnell. The most shrewd observation was made by Edmund Dwyer Gray, proprietor of the Freeman's Journal, who was slowly coming round to the Parnellite position. The persecution of two or three members in this way, he warned, would only gain them sympathy: 'more stringent rules would have to be adopted for next session,

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for the party of two or three would then be increased to twenty or thirty, and after a dissolution would number, he believed, as many as eighty.' (1)

Gray proved right in all his prophecies. The new rules were completely ineffective, and the government were only able to carry the South Africa Bill by a historic sitting which lasted from 5.15 p.m. on Tuesday 31 July until 2.10 p.m. on Wednesday 1 August. (2) Seven Irish members, Parnell, Biggar, O'Donnell, O'Connor Power, Kirk, Nolan, and Gray were able to obstruct the business of the house during the whole of this time. The right of the Irish members to move amendments, and their ability to make interminable speeches were unaffected by the new rules, and the restriction upon the number of adjournment motions allowed to each member proved useless, since each clause constituted a separate question; the seven Irish members might move the adjournment seven times on one clause, speaking at length on each motion; divide the house seven times; divide it on an amendment; divide it on the clause itself; and then start the whole process over again on the next clause. Attempts to employ the other new rule in order to suspend the obstructives were defeated by honeyed withdrawals on the part of the Irish. Abuse and interruptions only prolonged the agony. The stamina of the

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1 Hansard, 3rd series, ccxxxvi, 54-7, 74-5.  
2 *ibid.*, 227-318.



Irish was, in short, the only limit upon their powers to obstruct the house in committee. The conservatives resigned themselves to an all-night sitting. 'Grilled bones, devilled kidneys, and spatchcocks' had been laid on in anticipation of the ordeal; the ministerial supporters were marshalled to come down in batches every hour after 2.30 a.m. and relieve their weary colleagues. <sup>(1)</sup> The correspondent of the Irish Times dispatched a graphic picture to Dublin.

As I write the speaker has gone to bed. The river terrace is crowded with members, many of whom are sleeping on benches, watched over by constables waiting to call them when their relief may be required in the chamber so as to prevent the possibility of a count out ..... <sup>(2)</sup>

By midday on 1 August the stamina of the heroic seven was finally being worn down; the sixty-three clauses were agreed to, and the bill was reported 'amid loud and continuous cheering' <sup>(3)</sup> at 2.10 p.m. It was obvious that stronger measures would be needed to deal with such persistent obstruction, but parliament was prorogued a few days later without further incident or further changes in the rules. In July the house had sat 51 hours after midnight compared <sup>(4)</sup> with 21 in the previous month.

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1 Irish Times, 1 Aug. 1877.

2 ibid.

3 Freeman's Journal, 2 Aug. 1877.

4 Return of the number of days and hours on which the house sat, p. 5, H.C. 1877, (o.149), lxviii, 197.

The historic conflicts of this session had naturally convulsed in controversy both the party and the country. The consideration of this controversy has deliberately been deferred in order that it may be considered in relation to the events of the session as a whole. Before doing so, however, it is necessary to glance back briefly at the sporadic efforts of the party leaders upon the well-worn track laid down in previous sessions. Notice had been given as before of a large number of Irish bills, fifteen in all. <sup>(1)</sup> But few of these thrived even as far as the discussion stage. Grand jury reform was voted down by 62 votes to 15 on 18 March; <sup>(2)</sup> the absence of two-thirds of the home rule members did not pass unnoticed in Ireland. <sup>(3)</sup> Butt's land bill perished by 323 votes to 84 on 21 March, the home rule leader himself being too sick to say more than a few words. <sup>(4)</sup> O'Shaughnessy brought in a strongly worded motion on education on 16 March, but in the middle of the debate his leader decided that it was unwise, and prevailed upon him to withdraw it. <sup>(5)</sup> A further example of the disunity which prevailed even in the moderate wing of the party was given in the committee on the prisons bill on 23 March; Callan attacked Henry in language which compelled the intervention of the

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1 Hansard, 3rd series, ccxxxii, 152-60.

2 ibid., ccxxxiii, 87-89.

3 Nation, 24 Mar. 1877.

4 Hansard, 3rd series, ccxxxiii, 241-306.

5 ibid., 17.

chair, and on the motion to adjourn sixteen home rulers voted for the government and five against.<sup>(1)</sup> Following upon the Easter recess the motion for a select committee on home rule was moved again by Shaw on 24 April, seconded 'with some diffidence' by Harman, and rejected by 417 votes to 67, the minority including 13 English liberals.<sup>(2)</sup> Butt's Voters (Ireland) Bill, which sought to regulate Irish practice in relation to registration at elections, was defeated by 125 votes to 99 on 9 May;<sup>(3)</sup> O'Loughlen's Poor Law Guardians (Ireland) Bill was dispatched with equal expedition by 174 votes to 109 on 16 May,<sup>(4)</sup> and Henry's resolution on Irish taxation was rejected by 152 votes to 34 on 5 June.<sup>(5)</sup> On 11 June Butt moved a resolution calling for the appointment of a responsible minister to preside over the Irish local government boards, only to find himself criticised not only by Biggar and Parnell but by Henry, who 'objected to the patching up of this anomalous and objectionable system of government in order to weaken the claim of the Irish people to manage their own affairs.'<sup>(6)</sup> The motion was withdrawn. The best Irish division was on Meldon's motion to assimilate the borough franchise of the two islands, which fell by

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- 1 Hansard, 3rd series, ccxxxiii, 395-487.
  - 2 *Ibid.*, 1742-1846.
  - 3 *Ibid.*, ccxxxiv, 611.
  - 4 *Ibid.*, 1030-8.
  - 5 *Ibid.*, 1332-58.
  - 6 *Ibid.*, 1585-97.

239 votes to 165 on 15 June. (1) O' Sullivan's Union  
 Justices (Ireland) Bill, on the other hand, could muster  
 only 36 votes on 4 July. (2) The struggles on the South  
 Africa Bill virtually consumed the remainder of the session;  
 Butt's university bill was taken on 26 July and voted down  
 by 200 votes to 55, (3) and the home rule leader emerged  
 from this session with nothing gained but the second reading  
 of the Parliamentary Registration (Ireland) Bill, allowed to  
 pass by Plunket for the government on the understanding that  
 he reserved the right 'to oppose what he considered a  
 mischievous bill in its future stages'. (4) It was, perhaps,  
 an even more sterile session than usual; its sterility was  
 on this occasion, however, to be yet another of the disasters  
 ascribed by Butt to the tactics of his recalcitrant followers  
 the 'obstructives', upon whose tactics the Irish people were  
 now called upon to pronounce.

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1 Hansard, 3rd series, ccxxxiv, 1881-1917.  
 2 *Ibid.*, ccxxxv, 752.  
 3 *Ibid.*, 1863-1934.  
 4 *Ibid.*, ccxxxiv, 1716-34.

There seems to have been at first an impression in Ireland

Chapter XVI, contd.

(c) Irish public opinion and the struggle for the league

The first efforts of Parnell and Biggar in the session of 1877 gained, on the whole, an appreciative reception from the bulk of the Irish nationalist press. The Freeman's Journal denied the charge of a correspondent in the Times that a group of Irish members were endeavouring to bring about an 'absolute stoppage' of business, and it pointed to Parnell's constructive achievements in relation to the prisons bill. But it drew the same distinction which has already been drawn in this chapter between what might be called the traditional use of delaying tactics by a minority, and a deliberate effort to bring parliamentary business as a whole to a standstill.

Neither home rule nor any other good cause can be gained by any such madcap adventures as a stoppage of parliamentary business by abusing the forms of the house.... Sooner or later the house should protect itself from assassination, and this it could do only by fettering debates within certain limits. Such a change would have the worst effects upon the house itself, but it would especially weigh upon minorities, for as minorities trust for advancing their views to argument alone, it is to them that unrestricted debate is the breath of life... Obstruction is a keen, double-edged, and most delicate weapon; it ought only to be used on very rare occasions and by the most skilled hands. Any attempt to press such a weapon into everyday use would result in scenes which for a time may amuse the thoughtless, and possibly gain for a few unwise men a passing popularity, but would in the end terminate in calamity, disaster, and defeat. (1)

There seems to have been at first an impression in Ireland

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1 Freeman's Journal, 3 Apr. 1877.

that the tactics of Biggar and Parnell might inaugurate a new attitude in the party as a whole, and, more important, that the criticisms of Butt were directed not so much at the obstructive policy as at the failure of its adherents to co-ordinate it with official party strategy. This belief made it possible for many Irish home rulers throughout 1877 to give a qualified approval to the obstructive policy and at the same time to retain their loyalty to Butt himself. It was only as the home rule leader made obvious his refusal under any circumstances to use the weapon of obstruction that he finally destroyed his own personal authority in Ireland.

The first blow in this controversy was struck with Butt's condemnation of Parnell on the committee stage of the mutiny bill early in the morning of 13 April. Butt seems to have been provoked to this action by the unexpected persistence of Biggar and Parnell in the face of his privately-expressed disapproval of their activities. At the beginning of April he had mentioned to Henry his intention to write privately to

Biggar:

I feel very confident that it will have the effect of putting an end (at least as far as Biggar is concerned) to all of which we have any right to complain.... I hope and am persuaded that no appeal to the public will ever be necessary but the publication of my letter would I think be a heavy blow and a great discouragement to Biggar and Parnell....

I hope I do not exaggerate the influence I have with the country when I believe it strong enough to put down and control all these evil influences. If I have it, it is a trust which every obligation binds me to use. (1)

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1 Butt to Henry, Easter Sunday 1877, Butt MSS, vol 111, MS 832.

(1)

He did, apparently, write privately to Biggar, but without result, and his reluctant decision publicly to denounce the obstructives, instead of, as he obviously expected, immediately putting an end to the rebellion, sparked off a controversy which mounted in the months that followed. On the same day, 13 April, Parnell wrote to him privately:

Dear Sir,

Is it true that in your concluding remarks this morning in the house, you expressed your belief or opinion that the amendments, which I had intimated my intention of moving on the mutiny Bill, had no existence. (2)

Butt replied placatingly. He had no recollection of using that phrase, although there was little evidence for the existence of amendments which had not been placed upon the order paper or even stated verbally to the house:

If however I may assume that in the question you have put to me you mean to ask, whether I said that your intention to move the amendments had no existence, I can at once assure you that I neither said this nor anything that could bear such a meaning.... it never could have entered my mind to make such a suggestion of a gentleman who I say unhesitatingly is of all the men I know exactly the one that I could say is the most incapable of resorting to anything like pretence. (3)

If Butt hoped thus to close the question, he was to be disappointed. The Freeman's Journal of 14 April carried an editorial on the incident. It recalled its praise of Parnell and Biggar, quoted above, but condemned the conduct of the former on the previous Thursday night as 'mere

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1 Freeman's Journal, 9 April.  
2 Parnell to Butt, 13 Apr. 1877, Butt MSS.  
3 Butt to Parnell, 13 Apr. (copy), *ibid.*

wantomness and folly'; unprepared to move his amendments, 'he evidently lost his temper, was called to order, and compelled to apologise to the committee'. It concluded by expressing the hope that he would prove his wisdom by 'resuming that line of honourable loyalty which bound him to his leader and his party'.<sup>(1)</sup>

This comments provoked immediate retaliation in the shape of letters from O'Connor Power and Parnell. Power neatly turned against Butt one of his own most cherished principles; by what right, he asked, did the home rule leader intervene in regard to the action of an Irish member on English or imperial questions? His conduct, wrote Power, struck at 'the very principle by which men differing widely on these questions have been united on the question of home rule'.<sup>(2)</sup> Parnell on the other hand meticulously reviewed the events of the preceding Friday night. He asserted the genuineness of his amendments and denied either that he had lost his temper or that he had been compelled to apologise; he had 'cheerfully' withdrawn a reference to the 'disorderly followers' of the government, on the suggestion of the chairman that the phrase 'was not strictly parliamentary'.

Meanwhile Mr Butt, who appears to have been absent during the evening, arrived, and sided with the government, adopting, I regret to say, the line taken by the secretary for war as to my proposed amendment - viz., that it could not be a real

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1 Freeman's Journal, 14 Apr. 1877.  
 2 ibid., 16 Apr.



one because it was not on the notice paper. In explanation for Mr Butt's strange conduct on this occasion, it is right that I should point out, that owing to his not having followed the course of the debate during the evening he does not seem to have been aware that none of my amendments were on the notice paper. When I rose to explain the position of affairs to Mr Butt I was again refused a hearing by the committee, and, many people think, was interrupted in a most unfair manner by the chairman.

The letter concluded with a pithy summary of Parnell's attitude to the English parliament.

You say that I may have "suffered disappointment" in the defeat of my proposed amendments. Now, to be disappointed at defeat in the present house of commons would be very foolish, and certainly I had no such feeling .....

With regard to what appears to you to be "the horse-laughter" of the London journals, I for one shall not allow myself to be diverted from my duty by the laughter of any Englishman, whether it proceeds from the right or wrong side of his mouth. The instinct of snobbery, which seems to compel some Irishmen to worship at the shrine of English prejudice, and to bow down before the voice and censure of the English press will never gain anything for Ireland, and will only secure for such panderers the secret contempt of Englishmen.

England respects nothing but power, and it is certain that the Irish party, comprising, as it does, so many men of talent and ability, might have that power, which attention to business, method and energy always give, if it would only exhibit these qualities.

So long as I continue to follow Mr Butt as my leader in regard to all measures upon which the Irish party are agreed to act as a party, there could be no foundation for the charge that I have deviated from that line of honourable loyalty which binds me to my leader and my party, because I, in common with every other member of the party, reserve for myself full individual liberty of action upon all matters affecting England and the empire at large. (1)

The distinction between Irish and imperial business at Westminster was to be made again repeatedly by

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1 Freeman's Journal, 17 Apr. 1877.

the supporters of Parnell in the controversy which followed. It was indeed the only expedient by which they could ignore the refusal of the party as a whole at the outset of the 1877 session to countenance an obstructive policy. For the moment the effect of Butt's public condemnation of Parnell and Parnell's public retort was to inaugurate a national debate upon the issue. A meeting in Glasgow under the chairmanship of Ferguson passed resolutions calling for a policy of 'deliberate and avowed obstruction', supporting Parnell and Biggar, and regretting Butt's condemnation of Parnell. At the same time Ferguson would allow no censure of Butt, and three cheers were 'heartily given' for 'our respected leader'.<sup>(1)</sup> The next issue of the Nation adopted a similar tone; Butt's intervention had caused 'a feeling of pain' among the mass of home rulers:

That Mr Butt did not quite approve of the conduct in question was well known before he made the somewhat impassioned protest to which we have referred; that he was not prepared to lead the Irish party in a "policy of obstruction" - just yet - was generally understood; but it was not expected that he would publicly, in the house of commons, reprove those gentlemen, for whose action he was not responsible, and one result of whose proceedings has been to show to the minister and to England how powerful a weapon of parliamentary warfare the leader of the Irish party holds in his hand ready for use whenever he may deem that a fitting occasion has arisen.

It still retained the hope that the persistent rejection of his bills would bring Butt round to the retaliatory policy.<sup>(2)</sup>

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1 Freeman's Journal, 20 Apr. 1877.  
 2 Nation, 21 Apr.

The Wexford People and the Dundalk Democrat added their support to that of the Nation,<sup>(1)</sup> and resolutions congratulatory of Parnell and Biggar were passed by the home rule associations of Belfast, Glasgow, North London, Manchester, Dundee,<sup>(2)</sup> Jarrow-on-Tyne, and Crewe.<sup>(3)</sup> Other branches of the confederation followed suit. In May and June the Kerry Vindicator, the Roscommon Messenger, and the Connaught Telegraph joined the supporters of Parnell, and the Galway Vindicator, while opposing deliberate obstruction, contrasted the 'zeal and determination' of Parnell and Biggar with the inertia of the majority of the party.<sup>(4)</sup> In June the Irishman, bedevilled by Pigott's financial commitments to every section of the national party, committed itself so far as to appeal to Butt to abandon the 'whiglinge' and adopt an active policy.<sup>(5)</sup> The Cork Examiner, on the other hand,<sup>(6)</sup> urged Parnell and Biggar to follow the counsels of Butt, and the 'London Correspondent' of the Freeman's Journal not only ascribed to the obstructives the responsibility for the defeat of the liberal Key in Salford, but also prophesied that the home rule motion of Shaw would now fail to get seventy votes instead of the hundred or ~~4~~ hundred and twenty

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1 Quoted in Nation, 21 Apr. 1877.  
 2 ibid.  
 3 Nation, 5 May.  
 4 Quoted in Nation, 9 June.  
 5 Irishman, 2 June.  
 6 Quoted Nation., 21 Apr.

which it would otherwise have obtained. (1) He did not elaborate upon the process of reasoning by which he had deduced that last year's home rule vote might have been expected to double. His forecast as to its eventual number was, of course, accurate. But the Nation interpreted the result of this division very differently;

The moral we draw from the vote on Mr Butt's motion is simply that a bolder and more vigorous line of parliamentary policy on the part of the Irish members is not only advisable but absolutely necessary for the furtherance of the cause. (2)

At the end of May Butt sent to the Freeman's Journal two letters which he had written to Biggar and Parnell on 29 March and 21 April respectively. In both letters he elaborated the same two arguments. Obstruction by the repeated moving of the adjournment was a device to which a minority ought not to resort 'unless they could fairly say that the majority were unfairly and tyrannically exercising their power'. In the second place, it destroyed the influence of the Irish party in the house of commons.

I had very great hopes of a good division on the motion for a committee on home rule. I have very little now. I was perfectly confident of carrying the extension of the borough franchise ..... I am not so now. I believe that the unpopularity which attaches to us from the belief that we have adopted a policy of general obstruction will prevent many English members from giving us their votes .....

In the same issue the editorial dismissed Biggar's denials that he was engaged in deliberate obstruction; both the

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(1) Freeman's Journal, 21 Apr 1877.

(2) Nation, 28 Apr

enemies and the supporters of his policy were under no  
(1)  
illusions as to its nature.

Butt's determination in ascribing his parliamentary failure to the work of the obstructives effectively dashed popular hopes that he would be converted by frustration to the policy of Parnell. It also made it inevitable that the personal affection in which he was still held even by his critics would in time be dissipated. But this hope and affection lingered on long after the justification for it had ceased. Parnell took up this position at Glasgow:

There was no question of leadership. He would not undertake to direct such a policy. Isaac Butt was well able to do that. But the Irish people would have to induce Mr Butt to do it, if he would not do it of his own accord. Mr Butt was of a gentle and amiable nature that shrank from inflicting injury upon anything or anyone. That was one of the great reasons why he had shaped his policy in such a way as to be utterly useless for any real Irish work ..... Was there ever a thing they had gained by soft words and soft actions? No! (2)

Bitterness only crept slowly into the controversy. Parnell's letter to Butt of 14 April was now published in the Freeman. Again he concentrated upon the distinction between questions of Irish and imperial policy; he reminded Butt of the incident of the royal titles bill in the previous session:

You will recollect that upon the only occasion when you suggested that our party should follow you on a question of

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1 Freeman's Journal, 24 May 1877. Butt seems to have sincerely held the view that Parnell's conduct was losing English support which would otherwise have been given to the party; he developed it also privately to George Delany (undated, Hickey MSS).

2 Freeman's Journal, 29 May 1877.

imperial policy it was, after long discussion, decided that each individual should act for himself, with the result that one portion of the party followed you out of the house, another portion followed the Marquis of Hartington, while a third portion did not take either of these courses. (1)

Parnell's interpretation of the party pledge was ridiculous, replied Butt;

It would enable any professing home rule member to intrigue with any English party to give his vote on any imperial or English question to serve the interests of the faction of which he might be the minion, and to fulfil his pledge to his country by voting two or three times a year on questions on which his vote could not do his masters any harm. (2)

'All these things are precisely what many home rule members are constantly doing', rejoined Parnell, 'and apparently entirely without remonstrance or even attempt at restraint by you.' As to Butt's reference to the resolutions of the English confederation in support of an obtrusive policy, 'I cannot control public meetings or dictate to them the resolutions they are to pass.' With regard to the alleged loss of English votes in parliament:

I recollect that last session you indulged in similar expectations as to the large number of English members who were going to vote for the home rule motion ..... Mr Biggar and I were not then available as scapegoats and I forget what was the precise reason assigned for the smallness of the home rule vote.

Now acid crept into the controversy as Parnell reviewed Butt's leadership in the session.

Had you exhibited any energy at the commencement of the session, and directed and availed yourself then of the

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1 Freeman's Journal, 26 May 1877.  
2 ibid.

opportunities in the ballot which organisation can secure for our party, you could without fail have secured a day for the university bill, and would not now find yourself under the necessity of applying to the government for a day for the discussion of that measure, or of throwing upon me the blame for receiving a refusal to your request.

Parnell categorically denied the adoption of any "new policy", 'unless such is to be energetic, constantly at one's post, and hostile to legislation at late hours'.

You will remember that at the convention of delegates of the Home Rule Confederation last autumn in Dublin a resolution was unanimously passed, to which you were a consenting party, urging a more energetic and a bolder policy . . . . . The resolution alluded to above, following as it did last session, when some real endeavours had been made to carry out this policy, meant, if it was intended to mean anything, and if you intended anything by assenting to it, either that your policy was insufficient, or should be supplemented.

But in fact the organisation of the party in this session had fallen off by comparison with that of 1876:

It was quite by accident that you secured a day for the land bill. The other measures were all of them thrown overboard or abandoned. The grand jury question was neglected. No attempt has been made to direct the attention of the house to the municipal franchise. The assimilation of the borough franchise, for which Mr Biggar secured a day, has not been brought forward, because, as he tells me, you refused to supply him with the draft of the bill. The university bill I have already alluded to, and the fisheries bill, for which a day was also obtained, was found not to be printed when that day arrived. Finally, the Church Lands Bill, for which I secured a day, though drawn 50th in the ballot, and which might have been easily carried had our party made any exertions, was lost, because I utterly failed to interest you in the question until too late.

Nor has the rest of the session retrieved in any sense this inauspicious beginning. The attendance of Irish members has never been so bad, seldom at late hours exceeding five or six. The prisons bill, of the utmost importance to Ireland, was left to take care of itself, though for weeks

in committee, during which time I urged you in vain until the last day to take any interest in the subject. At no time during the session have you shown that you had any policy at all, much less that you were carrying it out "boldly and actively". I should have been only too pleased to follow your lead in anything had you led in anything but in inactivity and absence from the house. But I think it is sufficiently evident that no steps have been taken by you to carry out the resolution of the convention in which you took a leading part. I, on the other hand, am denounced because I have not joined the majority in doing nothing, in inactivity, in absenteeism - because I have shown the country that they have a power which they little knew of, to use if they desire for the enforcement of their just claims. I intended to do nothing more than show that if two members can do so much, hampered and restricted as they must be in their choice of methods by the very fact of their being only two, how vast and powerful might be the influence of a powerful party of sixty, not necessarily adopting one line of action, but at least attending to their duty and disregarding the "feeling of the house" when that feeling is wrong and opposed to the interests of Ireland.

As for Butt's lecture on parliamentary procedure, it was disposed of in a pithy sentence.

I cannot sympathise with your conclusions as to my duty towards the house of commons. If Englishmen insist upon the artificial maintenance of an antiquated institution which can only perform a portion of its functions by the "connivance" of those interested with its working in the imperfect and defective performance of much of even that portion - if the continued working of this institution is attended with much wrong and hardship to my country, as frequently it has been the source of gross cruelty and tyranny - I cannot consider that it is my duty to connive in the imperfect performance of these functions, while I should certainly not think of obstructing any useful, solid, or well-performed work. (1)

Of the perfect truth of a great part of this powerful indictment no active home ruler could be unaware,

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1 Freeman's Journal, 28 May 1877. The issue of 2 June contained another letter from O'Connor Power which carried still further Parnell's personal criticisms of Butt.



and its fierce tone struck home to the emotional nationalism of the ordinary people. Butt confined his reply on 4 June to the question of the church lands and county voters bill; as to the substance of Parnell's letter he had nothing to

(1)

add. But the Freeman deplored Parnell's 'hard if not offensive language'; his clear duty was to submit the issue as Butt proposed to the decision of the party. (2) On this point Biggar had something to add in his contribution of 4 June; Butt, he said, had spoken of 'the opinions of himself and the great body of the Irish home rule members':

If Mr Butt means the members who systematically neglect their duties, I suppose he is right; but if he means the members who attend heartily to their duties, he is lamentably astray . . . . I have always been and am still anxious to follow Mr Butt, but leadership implies at least the pretence of action. I have invariably in speaking for time past said all I could in favour of the party and its members, from Mr Butt down, without saying anything of their faults; but the time is coming when I will in justice to the Irish people consider it my duty to tell the whole truth. (3)

A meeting of the party was in fact held on 5 June to discuss the question. On 31 May Butt issued a circular calling together the members of the party to consider the newspaper correspondence between himself and Parnell. (4)

Only twenty-four responded to this summons; several of the most persistent backsliders turned up to support Butt; one

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1 Freeman's Journal, 4 June 1877.  
2 ibid., 28 May.  
3 ibid., 4 June.  
4 In Butt MSS, vol 111, MS 832.

of them, E. G. Dease, was compelled, however, to leave the meeting before the issue, which he had expected would be taken first, came up for discussion. <sup>(1)</sup> Parnell attended, and also wrote formally to Butt proposing that the question should be submitted to 'those who have been your most earnest assistants in the home rule movement by calling another conference'. <sup>(2)</sup> The meeting adjourned to 16 June without reaching any decision. When it reassembled tempers had cooled slightly and the only action taken was the passing of a compromise resolution calling for the holding of more frequent meetings of the party with a view to the pursuit of a course of vigorous action under Butt's leadership. <sup>(3)</sup>

But hopes of compromise were shattered by the events of July. The South Africa bill committee, besides producing the most violent scenes of obstruction, showed a steady increase in the numbers of the Parnellite wing. Seven members took part in the all-night sitting of 31 July - 1 August; they were Parnell, Biggar, Nolan, Kirk, Power, and the newly elected Edmund Dwyer Gray and Frank Hugh O'Donnell. The most significant of these recruits was Gray. Editor and proprietor of the Freeman's Journal since his father's death in 1875, he had condemned open obstruction in

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1 Dease to Butt, 3 June 1877, Butt MSS.  
 2 Nation, 9 June.  
 3 ibid., 23 June.

his paper, and his return for Tipperary to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Colonel O'Callaghan <sup>(1)</sup> was secured with the full support of Butt and only the neutrality of Parnell. <sup>(2)</sup> Gray's participation in the South Africa bill contest did not lead to the immediate endorsement of the obstructive policies by him or by the Freeman's Journal, but there began a gradual softening towards Parnell in its columns until by the middle of 1878 it had virtually aligned itself with the Parnellite position.

Butt's response to the South Africa bill scenes was finally to demand decisive action by the party. On 27 July he appears to have told a stormy party meeting that he would resign if the obstructive tactics were not abandoned. <sup>(3)</sup> A meeting was arranged for 6 August to consider the question. <sup>(4)</sup> Twenty members were present; three,

1 Neither by-election produced a change, technically, in the number of home rule representatives; although in practice two useless members were replaced by two active members.

2 Butt to Delany, 13 May 1877, and undated, Hickey MSS; Freeman's Journal, 12 May. O'Donnell was also in the field, and as a condition for his withdrawal claimed to have exacted from Gray a promise to support a more active policy in the house. (Nation, 5 May).

3 Pall Mall Gazette, quoted in Nation, 4 Aug. The Ulster Examiner, quoted *ibid.*, refers to stormy scenes at a meeting on 30 July. In general, however, the stories concur; a meeting was called for 6 July. Through some leakage the Irish Times correspondent obtained a full report of this second meeting, from which the story of it below is largely taken. (See Henry's letter on this subject in Nation, 25 Aug.).

4 Butt, Biggar, Callan, Delahunty, Downing, Errington, Harman, Lewis, Meldon, Moore, Nolan, O'Beirne, O'Brien, O'Byrne, O'Clery, O'Shaughnessy, Parnell, O'C. Power, Redmond, and Shaw.

Gray, Kirk, and O'Donnell, absented themselves as a protest against the proposed censure of the obstructives; ten of the other absentees were in London and stayed away from the meeting without explanation. <sup>(1)</sup> By the time the meeting assembled Parnell and his allies had shown decisively in the all-night sitting of 31 July - 1 August that they were not prepared to bow to Butt's wishes. Butt therefore renewed his denunciations, and Downing and O'Byrne, two of the most consistent absentees in the party, proposed a resolution, believed to be inspired by Butt, censuring the conduct of Parnell and Biggar. An amendment deferring any decision until after the holding of a national conference, was proposed by Shaw, in a speech which was conciliatory in tone except for a violent denunciation of his old bugbear, the English confederation. Unable to secure this compromise, he left in disgust. The meeting then abandoned itself to vituperation. O'Shaughnessy said that he would vote for the resolution, but approved of the policy of Parnell and Biggar up to a certain point. Butt announced his intention of resigning unless his advice were accepted. Callan succeeded in killing another compromise motion by Nolan. Downing accused Parnell, Biggar, and O'Connor Power of obstructing the meeting; Parnell and Power on the one hand and Downing and Callan on

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1 Blennerhassett, Bowyer, Browne, Collins, Dunbar, Montagu, O'Connor, Sheil, Sullivan, and Ward.

the other almost came to blows. Power called Callan a whig placehunter; Callan accused Power of breaking his fenian oath. The meeting broke up in disorder without any vote having been taken. (1)

Unity in the party effectively ceased at that moment. The session concluded with the two factions equally determined to appeal to the people of Ireland. The obstructives resolved to pin their hopes upon the summoning of a national conference; this proposal Butt, who remained, sick, in England throughout the whole of the autumn, was determined to resist; he relied instead upon the ability of his published manifestoes to produce a long-term reaction against the policy of violence. The battle for public opinion occupied the whole of the recess which now followed.

Parnell struck the first blow with a public demonstration in the Rotunda on 22 August. From London Butt pressed Callan continuously for reports of the preparations for the meeting, but declined Callan's offer to have it broken up. 'I suspect they will break up of themselves', he wrote; 'I rather think you will find this new "revolution" break down as completely as "faith and fatherland" or Denis Dowling Mulcahy.' (2) It did nothing of the sort. A setback was

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1 Irish Times, 7 Aug. 1877; Nation, 11 Aug. A round robin to the effect of Dowling's resolution was subsequently signed by a number of the home rule members. (Nation, 25 Aug.).

2 Butt to Callan, 18, 20, 22 Aug. 1877, Butt MSS, vol 11, MS 8 32.

was experienced when Dr O'Leary, member for Drogheda, who had agreed to preside, withdrew on reflection at the last minute, but the meeting was enthusiastic and crowded, between four and five thousand persons being present. W.H. O'Sullivan took O'Leary's place, and with Parnell and Biggar, who were received with 'deafening cheers', and Kirk, four members of parliament in all attended. Letters of unqualified support were received from amongst others O'Donnell and O'Gorman, M.P.s, Richard Lalor of Tinnakill, Father Lavelle of Partry, and, most strikingly, O'Neill Daunt; Parnell and Biggar 'have a perfect right to obstruct the obstructives', he wrote, and called for a national conference to show Butt that the people wanted him to take the lead in a new onslaught. A more qualified support was also expressed in letters from Henry and A. M. Sullivan. A man who endeavoured to hiss at the mention of Butt's name was thrown out, <sup>(1)</sup> but O. J. Carraher, vice-president of the Louth Independent Club called on Butt to face his failure or retire. Cheering crowds escorted Parnell and Biggar down Sackville Street and compelled them <sup>(2)</sup> to speak from the balcony of their hotel. 'When do you think of coming home?' appealed Butt's old friend Captain Dunne; 'Parnell and Biggar mean to stomp the country during the recess.' <sup>(3)</sup>

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1 J. Dunne to Butt, 23 Aug. 1877, Butt MSS.  
 2 Nation, 25 Aug., whose report is largely taken from the Freeman.  
 3 J. Dunne to Butt, 23 Aug., Butt MSS.

The following week the English Home Rule Confederation made the next and as yet the most decisive pronouncement in favour of Parnell. The annual convention of the confederation <sup>at Liverpool</sup> occupied two days, 27 and 28 August. Butt as president took the chair on the morning of the first day, but in the afternoon left for London 'on business' after a 'friendly interchange of opinion' on the subject of the active policy. The same night there was a public meeting at which Commins presided, and Parnell, Biggar, O'Donnell, Power, Ferguson, and Barry were among those on the platform. Parnell was cheered; Butt's name was greeted with hisses which were drowned in shouts of 'order'. The following day the business of the conference concluded. On the motion of John Barry Parnell was elected to the presidency in the coming year. The outgoing president Butt had only held the office for one year; before that Commins had been president, and the principle of rotation was not wholly novel. Nevertheless it was a decision capable of only one interpretation, and it was seen by the English press as a direct rebuff to Butt. (1)

With the confederation secured, the Parnellites

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1 But the moving story of Butt's tearful reaction to the election (R. B. O'Brien, Life of C. S. Parnell, 3rd ed., 1899, vol 1, pp. 142-6), seems to have little basis in fact. The home rule leader was quite clearly in London when Parnell was elected (Freeman's Journal, 28, 29 Aug. 1877, Nation 1, 8 Sept., Irish Times 28, 29 Aug. Also Healy, Letters and leaders of my day, p. 54.) The inaccuracy of O'Brien's information on this point makes one hesitate to rely upon the rest of his version of the incident.

next turned their attention to the league, which had been leading an unobtrusive and questionably useful existence in the last two years. It was unfortunate for Butt that the council of the league included a number of convinced adherents of the obstruction policy, who from their youth, energy, and residence in Dublin were able to exert a considerable influence in that body. A preliminary affray took place on 31 August on a motion by the Rev. Father Kelly, O.D.C., censuring those members of parliament who persistently neglected their duties. It was attended by fifteen people of whom T. D. Sullivan, Patrick Egan, John Dillon, Dr Kenny and Father Kelly himself, at least, expressed opinions more or less favourable to the active policy. Callan wrote to Butt appealing to him to come back to Dublin before far worse disasters should take place in the council.

Ignatius Kennedy and Kettle ready to back you up - if you were here - if any longer absent and without your presence to support them won't fight against the others. Galbraith dead with you also but feels your absence sorely .....

Now let me be plain with you - your remaining in London after the session has injured you materially - your journey to Liverpool makes the cause of your absence inexplicable. 'Tis said if you were ill - how - why - did you go to Liverpool - and then everyone asks why when once there did you leave before the end of the first day - why didn't you attend the public meeting - was it sulk?

If you fancy that by your absence you are escaping injury - and that it is "masterly inaction" on your part you are making a grievous mistake. It reminds me of the ostrich when hunted and running from danger - hiding its head - and while leaving its body exposed - thinking itself hidden and

1878 sought to fill the Dunraven vacancy at a meeting of Butt's policy, but was quickly set aside in favour of O'Donnell. (Hull, 11 May 1878).



safe. Now the sooner you face the tempest the better - from the want of a public exposition of your policy the public is veering round rapidly against you and in quarters you little fancy. You may be displeased - angry with me for this plain speaking. Well be it so, no true friend will conceal from you what I write ..... After today's meeting Kettle almost crying asked me to write you as I have done now - I refused and said write yourself ..... (1)

Kettle wrote as he had promised to Butt a long letter similar in tone to that of Callan;

The leadership of the Irish people and of the Irish party are two very different things. The Irish party are a nondescript set of men, not suited for their mission exactly. The Irish people are in Ireland ..... (2)

But the inertia which could sometimes so strangely paralyse Butt's will combined with his failing health to make him ignore the advice of his most loyal adherents and linger on in England. More agreeable to him was the advice of English friends;

I am glad you intend to go to Buxton instead of to Ireland. To deal with these obstructives at a public meeting is for a Gentleman to enter into a personal contest with Chimney Sweeps ..... (3)

Butt had other plans to encompass the destruction of the obstructives. Would Callan send him cuttings of all Parnell's speeches, he asked? In particular, he asked Callan to find out definitely if the English atheist Bradlaugh had addressed

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1 Minutes of the Irish Home Rule League, 31 Aug. 1877 (in Callan's handwriting), and Callan to Butt, same date. Butt MSS.  
2 Kettle to Butt, 31 Aug.  
3 G. Dillon-Webb to Butt, 7 Sept., Butt MSS. Dillon-Webb in 1878 sought to fill the Dungarvan vacancy as a supporter of Butt's policy, but was quickly set aside in favour of O'Donnell. (Nation, 11 May 1878).

a home rule meeting in Glasgow organised by the advanced party. (1) He was surprised that Callan did not see how valuable it would be to establish this association:

I am not for many reasons the person to put this forward. I am quite sure that a letter addressed to any priest in Glasgow (except perhaps one or two) asking them if it were possible Bradlaugh had been brought to lecture on home rule would bring an answer that would finish the party in Ireland. (2)

He thought also that the point should be made that O'Donnell was a graduate not of the Catholic but of the Queen's University. (3)

Meanwhile at the beginning of September Parnell gave notice of his intention in the council of the league:

To move that a committee be appointed to consider what further steps should be taken for the purpose of summoning a national conference to deliberate on the present position of the home rule movement. (4)

Butt reacted with a counter-resolution referring the question of the conference to a league meeting on 11 October. (5) The two resolutions were due to come up on 14 September; Callan told McAlister to read Butt's letter first, and by this device Butt's resolution found its way on to the order paper before that of Parnell. (6) Butt's friends in Ireland renewed

1 Butt to Callan, 7, 11, 12, 21 Sept. 1877, Butt MSS.

2 Butt to Callan, 21 Sept., *ibid.* Butt was not able to get the information he wanted - or perhaps his friends had too much wisdom to find it for him.

3 *ibid.*

4 McAlister to Butt, 5 Sept., Butt MSS.

5 Nation, 22 Sept.

6 McAlister to Butt, 7 Sept., Callan to Butt, 8 Sept.,

their frantic appeals to their leader to return to Dublin for the meeting. 'Surely Lisdoonvarna would be as good as Buxton and you would there meet people from all Ireland, priests and laymen', wrote McAlister; 'are you letting people in London in any way sway your feelings and judgment? .....

For God's sake come home' ..... (1) McAlister also warned Butt that his absence was augmenting the party on the council which had lost faith in him; he advised him to deal with the council more through Galbraith and less through Callan, who was universally distrusted. (2)

Your notice was a thunderbolt to T. D. Sullivan the last thing that man wants is that the calling of the conference should be decided at a general meeting of the league ..... You will remember Power wants only the council of the league and the council and executive of the confederation. (3)

Butt promised to return in time for the meeting, but at the last moment produced his doctor's orders as an excuse for staying away. He seems to have been genuinely ill, (4) and his letters for the first time show lapses of concentration. (5)

But he was able to carry the day by long-distance manipulation. He planned to 'supersede' the council, upon which he could only obtain a sure majority through a deliberate marshalling of his forces, by the league, which could be packed with the

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1 McAlister to Butt, 5 Sept. 1877, 5 telegrams from McAlister & Callan to Butt, 12 and 13 Sept., Butt MSS. 11, MS 831.  
2 McAlister to Butt, 9 Sept., Butt MSS.  
3 McAlister to Butt, 7 Sept., Butt MSS.  
4 Butt to Callan, 10, 12, 12 Sept., Butt MSS, vol 11, MS 831.  
5 e.g. Butt to Callan, 3 Sept., Butt MSS, vol 11, MS 831.

(1)  
 members of parliament. The success of his resolution of 14 September was essential as a preliminary to this; to secure this he drafted a lithographed circular, to be sent out by McAlister, the secretary of the league, calling his followers to the meeting when 'matters will be brought forward upon the right decision of which the future of the home rule cause may depend'. He planned also to call a party conference for 9 October which he hoped would pass resolutions which 'would put an end to the whole thing'. Besides issuing the circular, he wrote personal letters to all his friends asking them to come up for the meeting. (2)  
 Some thirty-three of Butt's supporters were thus bidden by McAlister, and more by Butt himself, including many who did not habitually attend the meetings of the council. (3)  
 Parnell's supporters acknowledged defeat, and withdrew their resolution; Butt's alternative proposal was carried unanimously. In the words of the Nation, the expected conflict did not develop. (4)

At the same time Butt refused to listen to the appeals of those of his friends, such as Henry, Galbraith, and Callan who urged caution in dealing with the obstructives. (5)

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1 Butt to Callan, 3 Sept. 1877, Butt MSS, vol 11, MS 831.  
 2 Butt to Callan, 3, 3, 9 Sept., Butt MSS, vol 11, MS 831; McAlister to Butt, 9 Sept., Butt MSS.  
 3 McAlister to Butt, 11 Sept., Butt MSS.  
 4 Nation, 22 Sept.  
 5 Galbraith to Butt, 9 Sept., Butt MSS; Butt to Callan, 11 Sept., Butt MSS, vol 11, MS 831. Freeman's Journal, 11 Sept. Also Butt to Delany, 21 Sept. 1877, Hickey MSS.

'I do not think we will ever beat them by half measures', he wrote to Callan: 'I see that the time is coming when I must speak very strongly and very plainly.'<sup>(1)</sup> He did so in a manifesto, couched as a letter to Father Murphy, C.C. Ferns, and published in the Freeman's Journal on 7 September. In this letter Butt recapitulated his previous arguments: the party had achieved much in its short life; it could not work miracles overnight; it would have achieved still more in this session but for the tactics of the obstructives. Obstruction was 'the abandonment of constitutional action, and the adoption of unconstitutional action in its stead'; it could only alienate the house, the English democracy, and the Irish aristocracy, and would destroy the party.'<sup>(2)</sup> The letter did not evoke an enthusiastic response even from Butt's friends. Callan, while calling it in many respects a 'clincher', wrote:

I wish you had made it one third shorter - and not given the others any peg to hang a reply on by omitting all reference to Meldon's and Nolan's bills - Let the English parliament fight its own battles ..... for they did treat us contemptuously.<sup>(3)</sup>

'The part of it referring to the divisions is considered weak and inconclusive', wrote McAlister: 'Even the majority of your own friends do not believe the land or education

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1 Butt to Callan, 11 Sept. 1877, Butt MSS, vol 11, MS 831.  
 2 Freeman's Journal, 7 Sept.  
 3 Callan to Butt, 8 Sept., Butt MSS.

divisions would have been a dozen or half a dozen better if Parnell and Biggar had conducted themselves.' <sup>(1)</sup> The Freeman supported Butt's motion in the council, and praised his letter as a 'masterly document'. But it added:

It displays the ingenuity of the advocate quite as much as the power of the statesman. Indeed, when the letter is criticised closely, many will think that it has more of the former than the latter quality.

It too felt the argument concerning the voting figure in the house was pressed too far; it urged Butt to come home and unite the nation behind a new and active policy. <sup>(2)</sup> The

Nation accused Butt of using the failure of the university bill in an effort to turn the clergy against the obstructives. <sup>(3)</sup>

O'Donnell rushed into print with an acid letter to the Times deploring Butt's refusal to hold back his manifesto till after the conference, even at the risk that he would 'give less satisfaction in anti-Irish circles'. <sup>(4)</sup>

But Mitchell Henry probably expressed the feeling of the great mass of the home rule movement in a moderate and balanced summing-up which aroused, immediately, the unreasoning fury of Butt's faction. <sup>(5)</sup> Some of Parnell's work had been praiseworthy, some wrongheaded, he wrote, but above all he had succeeded in conveying that impression of sincerity which

1 McAlister to Butt, 9 Sept. 1877, Butt MSS.  
 2 Freeman's Journal, 7 Sept.  
 3 Nation, 15 Sept.  
 4 ibid.  
 5 Downing to Butt, 12 Sept., McKenna to Butt, 21 Sept., Butt MSS; Butt to Callan, 14, 16 Sept., Butt MSS, vol 11, MS 831.

was so lacking in the party as a whole. The party was full of absentees and buffoons, who were more ready to repudiate than to cheer each other; they were taken seriously by no one, and eighty of their type would be no more use than fifty-eight.

For all this there is in my judgment but one remedy, and that is, as I ventured to say in a former letter, a new departure in Irish politics, to be planned at a conference in Dublin, and then really to be carried out in an orderly, methodical, and business-like manner. I am not an advocate for a pigheaded course of obstruction . . . . I am in favour of vigour and reality in our proceedings, and I do not hesitate to say that what makes Mr Parnell and some others so hateful to the English press and to most of the English members is that they think them formidable, because not likely to be bought by office, or by what is quite as fatal, by personal flattery. (1)

The moderates, as this letter reveals, still clung to the hope that Butt would agree to lead a refined and selective policy of obstruction in the house. To Henry O'Neill Daunt wrote:-

The situation is just this. 1stly, Mr Butt is indispensable as a leader. No other man could take his place. 2ndly. The conciliatory policy is worthless, yet our indispensable leader seems resolved to persevere in it. At any rate he has not indicated any new departure, although he certainly said at a Westminster meeting that obstruction might become necessary. 3rdly. **Division** in our army would be worse than worthless; it would be equally damaging as the milk-and-water policy, and more discreditable to ourselves.

Perhaps Mr Butt knows some distinction between the precise form of obstruction practised by Mr Parnell and

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1 Freeman's Journal, 11 Sept. 1877. Henry had been sadly disillusioned by Butt's practice, in defiance of his own pledges at the 1873 conference, of holding private colloquies with Sir Michael Hick Beach on Irish questions. (Daunt to Henry, 11 Sept. 1877, Butt MSS, vol III, MS 832. There are also ten letters from Butt to Hicks Beach in this volume of the Butt MSS).

Mr Biggar and the obstruction which he told his Westminster visitors might become necessary. If so the public should be made aware of it, for the present condition of matters is most unsatisfactory ..... I cannot see any chance of obtaining home rule by an annual talk on the subject in parliament unaccompanied with a sting. Can you? ..... (1)

But already the home rule leader had virtually destroyed the hope of such a compromise. To George Delany, secretary of the testimonial, and Parnellite candidate in New Ross in 1878, he wrote: 'All their conciliation to me means is that if I put myself under their feet and manage their obstruction for them they would tolerate me as nominal leader'. (2)

This Butt would never do, and so inevitably his personal authority in the country dwindled to nothing. But as yet even those who were convinced of the error of his policy retained their affection and respect for his person.

'I am outraged by attacks on Isaac Butt', wrote Daunt to Henry in October after a long, bombastic, and particularly vitriolic effusion from O'Donnell: (3)

Only for his genius and his patriotism the home rule movement would not even exist. I think his recent manifesto was conceived in a mistaken spirit; but his mistakes are like those of the immortal Grattan - they result from a credulous confidence in a faithless enemy. We should argue him out of them, not insult him by impertinent vituperation. (4)

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1 Daunt to Henry, 5 Sept. 1877, Butt MSS, vol iii, MS 832. Even Galbraith, who had little but distaste for Biggar, Parnell, and O'Donnell, to Daunt urged obstruction on Irish questions, and admitted the justification of obstruction as a reaction from the apathy of the party. (Galbraith to Daunt, 18 Aug. 1877, Butt MSS, vol iii, MS 832.)  
2 Butt to Delany, 19 Sept. 1877, Hickey MSS.  
3 Published in two instalments in Nation, 22 and 29 Sept.  
4 Daunt to Henry, 8 Oct., Butt MSS, vol iii, MS 832.



The struggle for control of the Irish movement resolved itself finally in the national conference. The league meeting which was to convene it was immediately preceded at the beginning of October by a conference of the party. Only twenty-seven members attended; ten sent letters of apology. This was what was left in practice of the fifty-nine of 1874. The meeting immediately resolved itself into a discussion of the obstructive policy, but on this occasion without heat, and Butt and Parnell spoke in turn with superb power in justification of their differing attitudes. First came Butt's impassioned plea for patience;

It had been said that an obstructive policy would succeed better than one of calm debate; but had anyone expected that they would carry their measure of home rule in four years? How many measures had the great Liberal party carried in that time? They had not obtained home rule but they had been making a steady progress in the house of commons and in English public opinion in regard to all their measures. Take the franchise. They went within sixteen of carrying that, which he called a great triumph; and he called Mr Bright's support on that question another triumph. Then Mr Gladstone's speech in favour of the political prisoners was another triumph. But it was proposed that an excited popular opinion should be acted upon now - that all these things should be forgotten .....

Having said so much, he would add that he saw pretty plainly what their policy should be in the next session. He would bring forward all their measures again. He had extracted from the government a promise that the estimates would be introduced at such a period that they might be discussed, and wherever there was an estimate involving a grievance to Ireland they ought to discuss that. Then he was disposed to think that they should move an amendment on the next address, and discuss that too .....

The government had promised them intermediate education, and they would find plenty of opportunity for discussing the whole question of education upon that, and

they had also the review of the laws relating to the trial of controverted election petitions . . . . .

My policy is to try to bring Englishmen with us on such questions as the franchise. I believe we will carry the franchise; a year or two is little in the life of the nation. And I would ask my friend opposite to leave it to me next session to carry out my own policy. I will be as energetic as you like within the limits of that policy . . . . . What we ought to do is to take up every bill that relates to Ireland, and let us consider it together. The only fault I find with Mr Parnell about the prisons bill is that he did not do it under the parliamentary committee . . . . . We have abundance of work without calling each other lazy hounds; you have abundance of work to do without offering insults to me, which I scarcely think ought to have been done . . . . . Come to me next session; if my legal advice is of use to you, if my parliamentary experience is of use, it is at your disposal. It is not at your disposal if you resort to that parliamentary policy which will result in disgrace. I value political power, and the position in which I stand today, but rather than sanction you in letting the national cause go to ruin, I would fling them to the winds, and give up my seat.

After lunch the meeting reassembled; a series of meaningless compromise resolutions was proposed, appropriately, by Shaw, and passed unanimously. The members resolved upon united and energetic action under the leadership of Butt; they agreed to retain freedom of action where there was no party decision, 'remembering the deep obligation on all individual action, both in and outside the house of commons, of endeavouring to avoid any course that would injure the influence and unity of the home rule party'. Parnell supported these resolutions in a speech which effectively summed up the crucial issues in the dispute:

I believe that Mr Butt is capable of carrying out any policy better than any other man in our party. I am perfectly

1. Nation, 13 Oct 1877.  
2. Telegram, 13 Oct 1877.

convinced of that. I should like to see him throw himself in earnest into this parliamentary warfare, because we can make it a warfare worthy of the Irish people. I think the course the Irish party have adopted in the past has not been calculated to attract the attention of the Irish people, and to make them believe in our earnestness, and if we want them to support a parliamentary policy we must show them we are in earnest, and that we are determined to carry out that policy. Whether you call that a policy of obstruction or not, I am perfectly satisfied, for I do not think there is virtue in a name; but I think it should be a policy of energy, of activity, and of opposition to the bad measures of every government in detail and generally until they consent to settle the question we have at heart. (1)

The party struggle resolved itself into compromise on the basis of the continuance of the old position exactly as before. The national conference ended in a similar stalemate. The card which the obstructives sought to play was their complete control of the English confederation. If they could secure equal representation at the conference for the English as for the Irish home rulers they would have a strong chance of forcing the acceptance of their policy upon the league and the party. (2) The meeting to arrange the details of the conference was restricted by ticket to the members of the league, and in the narrow membership of that body Butt was still able to command a majority. Admission to the conference was conceded by this league meeting in the first place to all the home rule members of parliament, the two nominators of any home rule member in past elections to parliament and to all members of the home rule league.

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1 Nation, 13 Oct. 1877.

2 Telegram, McAlister to Butt, 13 Sept., Butt MSS.

Butt then proposed to grant tickets to applicants from any of the following classes: clergymen of every religious persuasion, magistrates, members of corporations, town or municipal commissioners, poor law guardians and persons who had at any time been members of the old association or the league.

A bitter struggle was produced on a series of amendments to this last section proposed by the Parnellite faction. Butt utterly refused to consider the admission of the branch officers of the home rule confederation and made some bitter references to that body of whose members he said in many instances 'we know nothing'. Parnell reminded Butt that he had held the presidency of the confederation for two years; during this time he should have found out something about his English supporters. The argument continued in this vein. Father Tom O'Shea said that the Irish in England had deposed Butt as their leader and now sought to come to Ireland and do the same there. At 5.30 p.m. the meeting finally accepted a compromise amendment of A. M. Sullivan's to admit fifty delegates, to be chosen by the most numerous branches of the confederation. The meeting adjourned and reassembled at 8 p.m. It was agreed to admit one representative from each trade society. Parnell proposed

1. Motion, 20 Dec. 1877.  
2. Ibid., 29 Dec.

the admission of three delegates from each farmers' club or home rule association of six months' standing; he was forced to compromise on one. A committee of twelve was appointed to organise the conference which included T. D. Sullivan, Parnell, and Patrick Egan and it was agreed that no restriction, beyond the giving of seven days' notice, should be placed upon the resolutions to be discussed at the conference for which a date was fixed between 16 December and the assembly of parliament. Having settled all the items of contention the meeting then endeavoured to adjourn but being unable to find an agreed candidate for the second chair, it broke up in confusion. (1)

The conference was to have been held at the end of January, but the decision to summon parliament on 17 January because of the eastern crisis compelled the committee to reconsider this date. By eight votes to four the committee decided to refer the question to the council. On the council Butt seized the opportunity to urge the abandonment of the project, but by fifteen votes to seven he was overruled, and the conference was arranged for 2 p.m. on Monday 14 January. (2) 'Those votes have virtually deposed me as far as the council of the league could do it from

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1 Nation, 20 Oct. 1877.  
 2 *ibid.*, 29 Dec.

*ibid.*, 5 Jan. 1878.

being the leader of the cause of the people', wrote Butt  
 to Delany. <sup>(1)</sup> 'As for the leader and his men - what do you  
 say to this attempt to put off the conference altogether'.....  
 wrote Henry to Daunt; this scheme 'was conceived in the brain  
 I am sure of Isaac Butt. We have far too many lawyers'..... <sup>(2)</sup>  
 Galbraith and John Blunden had both voted in the minority;  
 immediately after the meeting they resigned as secretaries  
 of the league. <sup>(3)</sup> The league was collapsing even as the  
 party had done.

Both sides submitted strong resolutions for  
 the conference. Butt was first with a series reiterating the  
 pledges of the 1874 party conference on united action, and  
 concluding with a crucial proviso:

that no Irish member ought to persevere in any course of  
 parliamentary action which shall be declared by a resolution  
 adopted at a meeting of the home rule members to be injurious  
 to the national cause. <sup>(4)</sup>

T. D. Sullivan retaliated with a resolution to the effect  
 that it was no concern of the Irish members to facilitate the  
 passage of English legislation. <sup>(5)</sup> Downing wrote to Butt  
 expressing the belief that the council had called the  
 conference for 2 p.m. on a Monday with the deliberate  
 intention of making it difficult for the clergy to attend.

1 Butt to Delany, 29 Dec. 1877, Hickey MSS.  
 2 Henry to Daunt, 27 Dec. 1877, Butt MSS, vol. 111, MS 832.  
 3 Butt to Delany, 29 Dec., Hickey MSS.  
 4 Nation, 29 Dec.  
 5 ibid., 5 Jan. 1878.

Butt replied that he had strongly remonstrated against the arrangement on those grounds, and would at once move the adjournment until the following morning. (1)

It seemed that the conference would be the occasion for an explosion of bitterness. But moderate counsels prevailed. Sullivan wrote to Daunt that he believed his party would in fact prevail at the conference; however, in this event, it was expected that Butt would resign, which he conceded would be a calamity. The Parnellites did not ask Butt to lead them in their policy, he wrote, - a notable change of attitude; they simply wanted him to stop denouncing them. (2)

A compromise was in fact arrived at on this basis by direct negotiation.

A new series of resolutions will be proposed by a neutral person, superseding Butt's resolutions and all the others. These resolutions will go for unity, for Butt as leader, for freedom of individual action on all questions on which the party shall not decide to act as a party, for more earnestness, more vigour, and better attendance of members during the next session. (3)

In other words, the status quo was restored. The only other resolutions of importance passed were one proposed by O'Connor Power, providing for annual holding of such conferences, and one by Parnell, calling for party consultation with a view to united action whenever a definite issue should arise in

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1 Nation, 12 Jan. 1878.  
2 T. D. Sullivan to Daunt, 31 Dec. 1877, Hickey MSS.  
3 T. D. Sullivan to Daunt, 6 Jan. 1878, Hickey MSS.

relation to the eastern question. The attempt of John Dillon to bind the party to leave the house in a body on any division on this question was unsuccessful. When J. G. MacCarthy raised the issue of parliamentary policy he was ruled out of order. There were no scenes, and, in effect, no decisions. The long struggle of 1877 ended in stalemate: Parnell could not force the party or the league to adopt his policy in the teeth of Butt's opposition, and Butt, unable to force the league to discipline Parnell, did not dare to do so in the party. But Parnell made clear the precise terms upon which he had come to accept this stalemate:

There is a different thing between believing that a change is necessary and forcing that decision upon the country. If we suppose, for instance, that I were to ask this conference today to pass a resolution calling upon Mr Butt to carry out a different line from that which he has carried out in the past; and if we suppose the conference were to carry that resolution, Mr Butt would then say that he was satisfied with his past policy, and that he could not conscientiously change it (and I assume that Mr Butt would say that, and I believe that he would do so); the conference would then find itself face to face with this position - they would either have to do an act that would deprive the country of the services of Mr Butt as our leader - to do an act which in all probability would eventuate in the disruption of the home rule party (loud applause) - or it would have to decide against the line and policy which I have recommended ..... if I refrain from asking the country today by the voice of this conference to adopt any particular line of action or any particular policy, or to put any definite issue in reference to it before this conference, I do so solely because I am young and I can wait.

Mr Butt, - hear, hear.

Mr Parnell, - And because I believe the country

1 Speech, 19 Jan. 1878.  
 2 Speech to Butt, collected, Butt 185 (1877).  
 3 Speech to Debut, 27 Dec. 1877, Butt 185, vol III, pp 228.



can also wait, and that a country which has waited so long can afford to be patient a little longer. (1)

So no decision was reached, and to preserve a token unity the issue was postponed until time and the general election which was bound to take place within the next two years should resolve the questions both of policy and leadership. In Butt's own constituency <sup>of</sup> Limerick his agent Henry O'Shea found his election committee at one in urging a more active parliamentary policy.

I may tell you also that the eight or ten who attended on Wednesday were unanimous in their opinion in not being averse to obstruction, only they wish to have it united in order to be strong. (2)

But the home rule leader was adamant. Mitchell Henry for one had no illusions about the coming session: 'if anything is done it will be done by the obstructives and by nobody else', he wrote to Daunt at the end of December 1877. (3)

But it would be done as in the last session, as a faction, not as a party. The struggle for power in 1877 achieved one thing only. By the beginning of 1878 the home rule party had been compelled to adopt a formula which, in order to maintain its nominal existence, effectively dissolved it as a real political entity.

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1 Nation, 19 Jan. 1878.  
2 O'Shea to Butt, undated, Butt MSS (1877).  
3 Henry to Daunt, 27 Dec. 1877, Butt MSS, vol 111, MS 832.

Chapter XVII

Stalemate, 1878-9.

As it transpired, Parnell and his followers did not have to wait for as long as they had feared.<sup>(1)</sup> While they waited, Parnell increasingly devoted himself to the building up of his position throughout the country by other means outside the movement; the power of the party in parliament and of the league in Ireland dwindled to nothing, and the stagnation of this last session of Butt's life was enlivened only by sporadic incidents which combined to rob him even of the personal popularity which had always been his.

The annual meeting of the party was held in Dublin on 12 January.<sup>(2)</sup> Thirty members attended, and ten sent letters of apology. The compromise of the conference was upheld with the adoption, after a long discussion, of two resolutions, one agreeing upon the introduction of an amendment to the address upon the subject of Irish grievances, the other calling for frequent and speedy consultation by the party on the eastern question, with a view to the possible adoption of united action in relation to any crisis which might develop.<sup>(3)</sup> When parliament assembled on 17 January, the amendment was proposed by Henry. The government put up only three speakers to reply, and on the following day

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1 T. M. Healy, Letters and leaders of my day, p.63.  
 2 Butt rejected the proposal of O'Connor Power that it should be held in London. (Butt to Power, 2 Jan. 1878, Butt MSS, vol 11 MS 831.  
 3 Nation, 19 Jan. 1878.

voted the amendment down by 301 votes to 48. Only 46 Irish members voted, and the Liberals, led from the house by Gladstone, took no part in the division.<sup>(1)</sup> Among the absentees was Butt himself, the recurrence of whose ill-health made it impossible from the outset of the session for him to attend properly to his parliamentary duties.<sup>(2)</sup>

The home rule members gave notice of twenty bills, and O'Donnell, with typical egotism, contributed twelve notices of motion on subjects ranging from Dunkeld Bridge to the administration of India.<sup>(3)</sup> Before the end of January the slaughter of these bills had begun. O'Sullivan's Union Justices (Ireland) Bill fell by 138 votes to 38 on 21 January;<sup>(4)</sup> the Land Tenure (Ireland) Bill, introduced by Downing in Butt's absence on 6 February, was opposed by one home rule member, A. Moore, and one camp-follower of the party, the O'Conor Don, and beaten by 286 votes to 86, of whom 49 were home rule members.<sup>(5)</sup> Meldon's motion on the Irish borough franchise was beaten by only eight votes; twenty-two home rulers were absent from the division.<sup>(6)</sup> Twenty-five were absent from the division on Biggar's registration bill.<sup>(7)</sup> O'Gorman's bill to

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1 Hansard, 3rd series, ccxxxvii, 120-53, 159-220; Nation, 26 Jan.  
2 Butt to Hicks Beach, 14 Mar. 1878, Butt MSS, vol iii, MS 832.  
3 Hansard, 3rd series, ccxxxvii, 223-4; Nation, 26 Jan. Henry who admired Parnell up to the time of the new departure and the Land League, thought O'Donnell was 'eaten up with vanity' (Henry to Daunt, 27 Dec. 1877, Butt MSS, vol iii, MS 832.)  
4 Hansard, 3rd series, ccxxxvii, 263-77.  
5 ibid., 1140-98; Nation, 16 Feb.  
6 Hansard, 3rd series, ccxxxvii, 1925-74; Nation, 23 Feb.  
7 Nation, 23 Feb.

assimilate the municipal franchise of the two islands was beaten by only five votes; more than twenty home rule members were absent.<sup>(1)</sup> Among these absentees was Butt himself; his ill-health did not, however, prevent his attending regularly the meetings of the council of the Home Rule League, where every vote was needed to exclude the Parnellites from representation in the newly-elected council.<sup>(2)</sup> The same tale was continued for the remainder of the session; the habitual story of defeat was remarkable only for the now callous absenteeism of a large section of the old party. Public interest inevitably waned to nothing. At the beginning of April Butt formally resigned the leadership, allegedly on the ground of ill-health;<sup>(3)</sup> he was prevailed upon to reconsider his decision, but only on the understanding that he could not attend parliament consistently, and his renewed leadership brought no more discipline or organisation to the party than before.<sup>(4)</sup> Even the more moderate of the active members began to weary of the utter futility of their parliamentary existence. The Mitchelstown evictions, for example, provided the party in March with an opportunity to exploit a popular issue, and to Gray was committed the responsibility of bringing a motion on the subject before parliament. Gray's appeals for advice and instructions met, however, with no

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1 Hansard, 3rd series, cccxviii, 796-284; Nation, 9, 16 Mar. 1878  
 2 ibid., 16 Mar. See below, pp.  
 3 ibid., 13 Apr.  
 4 ibid., 1 June.

response from his leader, until at Butt's orders the introduction of the motion was postponed until June, when it was voted down by 74 votes to 50.<sup>(1)</sup> Unable to obtain direction from their leader or support from their nominal colleagues, men like Gray grew increasingly weary of their situation. 'We were lost again yesterday', wrote Gray after the defeat of the municipal franchise bill, 'beaten by our own men - twenty-three of whom were absent.'<sup>(2)</sup> To Daunt Henry wrote desponding at the condition of the party,<sup>(3)</sup> and to Butt he lamented: 'I believe our influence as a party is gone.'<sup>(4)</sup>

The obstructives, meanwhile, were unexpectedly quiet after the violence of the previous session. The threat of Parnell and O'Donnell to keep the house in session all night won them concessions, in relation to the employment of child labour, on the committee stage of the factories bill,<sup>(5)</sup> and there was one all-night sitting in the committee on the mutiny bill in March.<sup>(6)</sup> There was also, ironically, an all night obstruction of the Sunday Closing Bill led by Downing, O'Gorman, and McKenna, in which the Parnellites had no hand whatsoever.<sup>(7)</sup> From May onwards, however, there were no

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1 Gray to Butt, 4 Mar. (2 telegrams), 5, 7 Mar., Butt MSS. Also Gray to Butt, 27 Feb, in Butt Add. MSS, 10415. Hansard, 3rd series, ccxxx, 1527-61.)  
 2 Gray to Butt, 7 Mar., Butt MSS.  
 3 Daunt Journal, 26 April, MS 3041.  
 4 Henry to Butt, 4 June, Butt MSS.  
 5 Hansard, 3rd series, ccxxvii, 877-93.  
 6 Ibid., ccxxxviii, 1976-2031.  
 7 Ibid., ccxxxix, 1812-53.

instances of blatant obstruction by the repeated moving of the adjournment, although persistent and not wholly unsuccessful efforts were made by Parnell and his allies to amend the civil service, secret service, and education estimates in committee on supply. There were several reasons for this relative calm. Parnell had made his demonstration in the previous session and asserted his individuality; in the recess he had impressed his leadership upon Irish public opinion, but he had found it impossible to persuade the party or the league to endorse his policy. In these circumstances, and in particular in view of his expressed determination to postpone the decision of the issue of parliamentary policy until the next general election, he could gain little profit from pressing on to an open breach with the party. At the end of the 1877<sup>session</sup> the suggestion had been made that the party as a whole should unite in obstructing the annual estimates for the Queen's Colleges as a reprisal for the persistent refusal of the government to consider the Irish demands for catholic education. This proposal had won a measure of approval not only from the Parnellite wing of the party but from the active moderates, who recoiled from Parnell's individual efforts to bring English legislation to a standstill but were prepared to consider the adoption of a disciplined course of obstruction to the ministerial Irish measures. On 18 and 19 March Biggar O'Donnell, Martin, Meldon, Sullivan, Nolan, O'Connor, O'Clery, Richard Power, Ward, and Conyngham supported repeated motions to reduce the different items in the education estimates, and

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took part in six divisions in which the minority ranged from eleven to eighteen. (1) At a liberal meeting in the Rotunda in May Dwyer Gray and Judge Little called for determined obstruction on the estimates. (2) When the real battle came on this issue later in the session, wrote the Nation, the Irish members would act 'with spirit and energy'. (3) On the other hand, the proposal of Parnell that the party should obstruct all the supply estimates in retaliation for the persistent rejection of its bills was defeated by sixteen votes to eight, Gray, O'Donnell, Biggar, O'Connor Power, Kirk, O'Sullivan, and O'Clery voting with Parnell. O'Connor Power openly advised Parnell not to waste his time by moving the resolution:

He was of the opinion that the only thing to do was to go on as best they could until the general election, and then let the constituencies decide the question at issue. No earthly power could induce the party at present to take any active or (4) energetic policy, and there was no use trying to make them do it

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1 Hansard, 3rd series, ccxxxvii, 1560, & ccxxxviii, 1625-33.

2 Nation, 4 May.

3 ibid., 23 Mar.

4 Freeman's Journal, 3 June. The press were not admitted to this meeting, but Gray gave a full report to the Freeman, and his attitude on this issue was regarded as finally identifying him and his paper with the obstructives. (Henry to Butt, 4 June, Butt MSS.) As to Power's point, the Nation in August began to call for the selection of candidates who were prepared to support the 'active' policy in readiness for the election. (Nation, 3 Aug.) Conyngham wrote to Butt in June: 'Would you believe it, when I tell you, that he (Parnell) and certain other talk about whom they are going to put up at the next election. This is rather too strong is it not.' (Conyngham to Butt, 22 Jun Butt MSS.) T.D. Sullivan was very active in these preparations. (T.D. Sullivan to R. Lalor, 24 May 1878, Lalor MSS, 8566.) According to Healy, in August 1878 Parnell had 'a list of men and placed that he means to fight'. (Letters and leaders of my day, p. 64.)

The arguments of the obstructives were finally overcome with the publication by the government in June of its bill on the subject of Irish intermediate education. The main provision of this bill was that which proposed to set up an Irish Intermediate Education Board, financed by an endowment, not to exceed one million pounds, taken from the Church Temporalities Fund, and empowered to make capitation grants to secondary schools in Ireland upon the basis of the results of a standard intermediate examination. The scheme did not recognise Irish demands for the endowment of denominational education, but it did propose to contribute indirectly towards the cost of catholic education, and it was consequently welcomed both by the Irish liberals and the home rulers. The bill was in the first place the fruit of long negotiations between Irish catholic educationalists like the commissioner of national education, P.J.Keenan, Lord O'Hagan, Lord Emlly, and the O'Conor Don on the one hand, and Sir Michael Hicks Beade and the cabinet on the other;<sup>(1)</sup> it was also enthusiastically endorsed by Cardinal Cullen and the rest of the Irish hierarchy.<sup>(2)</sup> These Irish supporters of the bill were anxious

1 Keenan to Lord Emlly, 5 May 1874; 8 July 1875; 2, 14 Dec. 1876; 4, 20 Mar. 1877; 15 Jan., 3 Feb., 24 Mar., 25, 30 June, 1878; all in Monsell MSS, 8317. Beach to J.T.Ball, 25 Dec. 1877, Miscellaneous MSS, 2040.  
 2 Keenan to Lord Emlly, 30 June 1878, Monsell MSS, 8317; Rev. Wm. Delany to P.J.Smyth, undated (but obviously 1878), Smyth MSS, 8215.



that its passing into law should not be jeopardised by the obstruction of government business, and Keenan wrote to the bishops asking them to use pressure on the home rulers to allow the bill to pass.<sup>(1)</sup> But in addition to this liberal support, the home rule leader himself, relying increasingly upon his personal influence with the ministers as he saw his party disintegrate beneath him, had also engaged in direct negotiations with the chief secretary on the subject of Irish education.<sup>(2)</sup> He too was anxious that this one belated concession from the conservative administration should be secured, and if possible represented as his own prize. The introduction of the bill was accordingly followed by the publication of a letter from Butt to Dr Ward, one of the secretaries of the party; in view of the importance of the measure, wrote Butt, the Irish members should co-operate not merely in aiding its passage but in generally expediting the public business of the house. In particular, he urged upon them :

1 Keenan to Emly, 25 June 1878, Monsell MSS, 8317. He writes: 'I asked Dr Dorrian yesterday to muzzle the home rulers, especially Biggar, who is a Belfast man. His Lordship's reply was characteristic. "What", he said, "have they to say to the matter? What have the laity to say to it? Of course they must not interfere."'

2 Although Butt was, in fact, much more a specialist in the university question. (Butt to Beach, 28 Jan., 6, 11 Feb. 1878, Butt MSS, vol iii, MS 832.) Butt made no effort to conceal these negotiations; he rather boasted of them in an effort to claim credit for the introduction of the bill. (Hansard, 3rd series, ccxli, 1521, and see below, p. 570 .

After the introduction of such a measure, and the very distinct assurance given by Lord Cairns that it is intended only as a step to a liberal measure of university reform, I cannot but think that anything like a protracted opposition to the Queen's College estimates would be a course very mischievous to the cause of free education in Ireland. (1)

The Nation deplored Butt's unconditional surrender of the weapon of obstruction, but the plans of the obstructives were effectively thwarted. (2) They could, however, console themselves by claiming, probably with more justice than Butt, the credit for the introduction of this belated concession. Richard O'Shaughnessy, Butt's colleague in Limerick City, a moderate but active member not previously associated with the obstructive party, and a specialist upon the education question, (3) openly ascribed the forward state of the bill to the action of the obstructives on the Queen's College estimates; if fifty adopted the skilful use of these tactics, he said, the necessity would be removed for a few to strike out on their own. (4) The Freeman's Journal also deprecated Butt's unquestioning reliance upon the sincerity of the ministry; while it advised the obstructives to bow to his wishes, it

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1 Nation, 29 June 1878. The new chief secretary, James Lowther, kept Butt informed of the ministerial intentions in relation to the introduction of the Queen's College estimates, and arranged to telegraph him in the event of their being held up, presumably in order to be able to draw on his support to put down any obstruction. (Lowther to Butt, 24, 25 June, Butt MSS.)

2 Nation, 29 June, 27 July. Also Parnell's personal explanation at Westminster on 15 July. (Hansard, ccxli, 1536-42)

3 O'Shaughnessy to Butt, 10 June 1878, Butt MSS.

4 Nation, 6 July.

reminded them that they could legitimately claim to be responsible for the introduction of the measure. (1)

1 Freeman's Journal, 26 Aug. 1878. There was a third reason for the relative absence of obstruction in 1878. A select committee on Parliamentary procedure, of which Parnell was a member, was in constant session throughout the year to frame new rules for the conduct of business, and Parnell seems to have thought it wiser to suspend his more violent efforts while he was participating in its discussions. The recommendations of this committee were not laid before the house until the following session. The first of its proposals to be accepted by the house was one limiting the right of a private member to raise any issue of public importance as an amendment to the motion on going into supply. It was a privilege much valued in the past (it had been used to move the home rule motion in 1876) and its limitation was one of the first important curtailments of the rights of private members which arose out of the obstruction crisis. But it scarcely met the Parnellite problem. Most of the new proposals were of an equally mild nature; the most important embodied in its earliest form the rule dealing with 'order in debate'. It provided for the suspension from the service of the house during the remainder of the sitting of any member named by the chair as obstructing the rules of the house, and for the further suspension of the member for a week or more at the pleasure of the house if found guilty of the same offence three times during the session. (Standing orders of the house of commons, p. 72, H.C. 1880, (405-Sess. 2), lvi. 103. (Order in debate)).

This rule was not in fact put into effect until the session of 1880, and the parliament which had seen the obstruction crisis of 1877 expired without having framed any rules to meet a repetition of it. When obstruction was in fact revived these new rules proved quite inadequate to deal with it, and it was only with the introduction of the revolutionary machinery of the closure and the guillotine in the sessions of 1882 and 1887 that obstruction of the kind used in 1877 was finally made impossible. (Amended standing orders of the house, p. 3-5, H.C. 1882, (429), lii, 242, and Hansard, 3rd series, cccxv, 1594.)

The session of 1878 was unfruitful in Irish legislation, apart from this one measure, and inconclusive in relation to the controversy on parliamentary tactics. One last reason remains to be given for this state of affairs: the intense preoccupation of parliament and of the United Kingdom with the eastern crisis. Yet it was the issue of imperial policy which, before the session concluded, was to produce a division in the home rule party which reacted violently upon the movement in Ireland and which, perhaps more than any other development, completed the destruction of that personal affection for Butt which had even survived the rejection in Ireland of his policy. Partly through the exertions of Gladstone, a violent anti-Turkish feeling had been engendered in both islands. The great mass of Irish opinion was immovably hostile to the government on this issue, and the action of Bowyer, Harman, Dunbar, Lewis, and Ward in voting with the ministry on the supplementary estimate for the armed forces at the beginning of the session had evoked severe criticism in Ireland. But Bowyer and Harman were notoriously subservient to the ministerial whip, and Lewis and Ward were also noted for their conservative leanings. Real anger was not aroused in Ireland until when Hartington carried liberal criticisms of Disraeli's eastern policy into parliament with a formal motion of censure, Butt himself threw his weight behind the ministry. Butt had already scandalised Irish opinion earlier in the month by speaking at a public dinner in praise of the British parliament which

he called the mother of representative institutions, and the seat of 'the intellect, the life, and the power of this great united nation'.<sup>(1)</sup> Now, speaking on the fourth night of the debate on Hartington's motion, he said:

I think England was losing her place in the estimation of foreign powers, and I think that was owing to our ministry being under the influence of "peace at any price"...England has responsibilities already, created by her name, by what she has achieved, by the extent of the empire she has founded, and by the colonies and commerce which she has established in every part of the globe. She cannot descend from her high position and let it be believed that she has ceased to be a living and moving power, while Russia works her wicked will upon the nations of ~~the nations of~~ the earth. <sup>(2)</sup>

In speaking and voting as he did, Butt was simply giving expression to his unashamed loyalty to the British empire and to the conviction, which he had formed as long ago as the Crimean war, that in the expansion of Russia lay the greatest menace to European security.<sup>(3)</sup> But Irish opinion, always puzzled by Butt's idealistic imperialism, and instinctively viewing these 'foreign' entanglements from the standpoint of Irish opportunity, recoiled in exaggerated horror from this panegyric of the British empire. The Irish people, said Clery, speaking after Butt, could have no interest in imperial affairs until the wrongs inflicted upon them by England had been undone.<sup>(4)</sup> Sullivan was much more explicit. He felt compelled, he said, by Butt's

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1 Daunt Journal, 17 July 1878, MS 3041.

2 Hansard, 3rd series, cxxlii, 1084-91.

3 Butt to Beach, 11 Feb. 1878, Butt MSS, vol iii, MS 832.

4 Hansard, 3rd series, cxxlii, 1094-6.

speech to justify the vote which he intended to give against the government. Butt had been cheered, he remarked, only by the conservatives - 'Russia's lust for territory indeed! Had he no word to say of England's?' What about Warren Hastings, he asked? Russia was inadvertently the agent of liberty in Bulgaria - had Butt no satisfaction at that? Could he not have advocated liberty and independence as the solution of the Balkan problem?<sup>(1)</sup> Hartington's motion was defeated by 338 votes to 195; nine home rule members voted with the opposition and sixteen, including Butt, with the government.<sup>(2)</sup> The majority abstained.

In Ireland a wave of criticism greeted the news of this division in the party, and in particular of the speech and vote of the home rule leader. 'The leader of the party (3) went over bodily to the camp of the enemy', wrote the Nation. It was only on these major party divisions, wrote the Freeman's Journal, that the Irish party could hope to exert any influence; its utter disintegration on such occasions rendered it a nullity. Had the party met in an effort to secure united action, as had been recommended by the resolution of the conference last January, it asked? 'The Irish people are beginning to ask whether, as a matter of fact, the Irish party

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1 op.cit., 1114-3.

2 ibid., 1121-5. O'Donnell also spoke and voted with the ministry; his attitude to imperial questions probably destroyed his chances of becoming one of the popular leaders in the movement.

3 Nation, 10 Aug. 1878.

is a reality or not, and if it is, towards what its policy tends.'<sup>(1)</sup> A touch of personal venom was added to these criticisms by the London correspondent of the Nation: 'The spectacle of the leader of the Irish people presenting the incense of their approval at the shrine of Jingo, shows us what we have been spared by his absence on previous similar occasions.'<sup>(2)</sup> This new note of personal bitterness was not surprising in the writer, a young man called Timothy Healy now making the first of many such contributions to political controversy, at the rate of a pound a week.<sup>(3)</sup> But it was strikingly echoed by other hitherto more restrained critics of the party leadership. The executive of the Home Rule Confederation passed a resolution condemning Butt's action;<sup>(4)</sup> several branches followed suit. In one a speaker said of Butt: he would not give the snuff of a farthing candlelight for all the nationality that existed in that man. It was now on the tapis that he was to be one of the paid commissioners of the new education bill, and if this was the case, he hoped they had heard the last of him - (a voice - They ought to make a judge of him and shelve him decently).<sup>(5)</sup>

One letter to the Nation expressed the hope that neither Butt nor O'Donnell would ever again be allowed to sit for an Irish

1 Freeman's Journal, 5 Aug. 1878. Saunders News-Letter, the Dundalk Democrat, and the Cork Examiner also joined in the criticisms of Butt's speech. (quoted in Nation, 10 Aug.)  
 2 Nation, 10 Aug.  
 3 T.M. Healy, Letters and leaders of my day, p.56.  
 4 Nation, 17 Aug. It was proposed by Healy, who had begun to take an active part in the confederation in 1877. (Letters and leaders of my day, p.54.)  
 5 Nation, 17 Aug.

constituency; the popular reaction, he wrote, had been at first "Were they drunk or mad?" Then, with one accord, and with bitter indignation, we exclaimed, "No! not drunk nor mad, but the veriest pair of renegades."<sup>(1)</sup> Meanwhile in Liverpool Lysaght Finigan called Parnell 'the de facto leader of the Irish people'.<sup>(2)</sup>

Parliament was prorogued on 16 August. It was to be recalled in December to consider the Afghan war, and the whole imperial issue was to be reopened amidst even more bitterness, but for the moment the last struggles of Butt's movement were transferred again to the remnants of its Irish organisation. The Freeman's Journal had doubted the continued existence of a home rule party; 'what has become of the Home Rule League?' asked the Nation in September.<sup>(3)</sup> 'I am told that the Home Rule League has collapsed', wrote P. Cahill of the Queen's County Independent Club to Richard Lalor.... 'No association could get on after such an exposure as that of the election of the council last spring'....<sup>(4)</sup> Cahill was referring to a sordid cabal which had become damagingly public in the previous February. It will be recalled that the possession by the Parnellites of a possible majority amongst the active members of the council had caused considerable embarrassment to Butt in

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1 Nation, 17 Aug. 1878.

2 ibid., 7 Sept.

3 ibid., 21 Sept.

4 Cahill to Lalor, 9 Sept. 1878, Lalor MSS, 8566. Cahill was still at this time highly critical of Parnellite tactics in parliament.



1877. It was a situation which his supporters had apparently resolved should not recur. Each January the members of the league elected fifty members to the new council. In 1878 the first ballot was invalidated on the ground of informalities in its return;<sup>(1)</sup> when the results of the second were announced it was found that six members of the previous council who had been particularly active in support of the Parnellite policy in parliament, Reverend H. Kelly, O.D.C., John Dillon, George Fottrell, Dr. J.E. Kenny, H.J. Gill, T.C., and J.W. Foley elected. Several of these men had sat on the council since 1874. Their defeat as yet aroused no controversy, as there remained, in the co-option which now followed under the rules of the league of a further fifty members to complete the council, an opportunity which courtesy dictated should be taken to bring on the defeated six. But when the first fifty met to perform this operation, it became obvious, as Patrick Egan wrote, that 'a combination had been entered into and elaborate arrangements made to keep these gentlemen off the council'.<sup>(2)</sup> In repeated ballots the six were proposed but always rejected in favour of candidates devoted to Butt. Special instructions were given to the secretary McAlister not to release to the press as in the past the names of the

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1 Nation, 26 Jan. 1878.

2 ibid., 2 Mar.

proposers and seconders of the different candidates for the council, and the voting figures in each division. Butt himself, however, and five other members of parliament who had opposed the holding of the conference in the previous January were known to have been present, while Irish bills were being voted down by narrow majorities and Butt was pleading ill-health as an excuse for his constant absence from Westminster.

Butt secured a more docile council; the exposure of the manoeuvre by which this was achieved was, however, the last blow to the already waning fortunes of the league. In May McAlister wrote to Butt that nothing short of a revolution could set up the league again:

Do you know that we are without money to pay our salaries this month? One party will not subscribe because of the obstructionists; the Nation office clique are endeavouring to prevent others from subscribing. This is done deliberately to break us down. I don't see how we are to get on...I am entirely despondent. (1)

'We are in debt £150', he wrote to Butt in July, 'have no money to pay our salaries and no promise of money'. Alfred Webb, the original treasurer of the league and before that of the association, had resigned several months before in view of the complete failure of the national roll scheme and the emptiness of the league's coffers. (2) His successor, T.H. Webb,

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1 McAlister to Butt, 27 May 1878, Butt MSS.

2 Nation, 22 Oct.

could see no other course but to cut down the staff by releasing McAlister himself. 'I am <sup>w</sup>perfect despair at our prospects', concluded McAlister. (1) To Butt Webb himself wrote complaining that he was constantly being dunned by the creditors of the league.

You will regret to hear that this time there has not been any response to the circular you drew up respecting the finances of the H.R. League. McAlister sent out some forty copies of it to a selected list of M.P.'s and others on Monday and Tuesday last.

If there was still no response in a few days time, he concluded, McAlister would have to be discharged. (2)

There was no response, and a week later McAlister wrote to Butt:

Webb, Fay, and Galbraith have had a consultation with the result that James Collins has been called on to resign. I have been told that at no distant day I ought to do the same. In fact nearly everything is to be wound up. I do not know what to say or do or think..... (3)

Collins gave a month's notice, and appealed to Butt to get him a job on the staff of the new intermediate education authority. (4) A few days later the financial position of the league became so desperate that Collins was asked to alter his notice from a month to a fortnight. Refusing to do this, he was threatened with a week's notice of dismissal. (5)

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1 McAlister to Butt, 5 July 1878, Butt MSS.  
2 Webb to Butt, 6 July, *ibid.*  
3 McAlister to Butt, 15 July, *ibid.* Collins was McAlister's assistant, and a protege of Butt's, of whom he has many recollections in his reminiscences, Life in Old Dublin, (Dublin, 1913.)  
4 Collins to Butt, 16 July, Butt MSS.  
5 Collins to Butt, 18 July, *ibid.*

At the same time McAlister himself was finally asked to resign. 'Can you get me an appointment in the new Intermediate Education Office?' he wrote to Butt: 'Can you get James Collins something there too?';<sup>(1)</sup> It was ironic, this scrambling for the places created by the one Irish measure of importance passed in the lifetime of Butt's party. Another supporter of Butt's, Philip Callan, joined the list of applicants. 'Is there any chance of the post in re intermediate education?' he wrote on 7 July;<sup>(2)</sup> or in the administration of Cyprus.<sup>(3)</sup> The home rule movement was in liquidation.<sup>(4)</sup>

Parnell and his followers were able meanwhile to strengthen their position in the country. In November at Ballinasloe Parnell addressed the first in a series of tenant-right meetings, under the chairmanship of the president of the local tenants' defence association. A resolution of support for the Parnellite policy at Westminster was passed, and a letter read from Dr MacHale praising Parnell, as 'the sterling hereditary advocate of Irish interests'.<sup>(5)</sup> In October the English Confederation for the second year in succession held its annual convention in Dublin. Butt refused to attend it,

1 McAlister to Butt, 19 July 1878, Butt MSS.  
 2 Callan to Butt, 7 July, *ibid.*  
 3 Callan to Butt, 15 July, *ibid.*  
 4 'The home rule movement is in my opinion broken up', wrote Galbraith to Daunt, 22 Aug., Butt MSS, vol.iii, MS 832.  
 5 Nation, 9 Nov. This meeting preceded the Tralee meeting mentioned by R.B.O'Brien, Life of C.S.Parnell, (3rd ed.), vol i, p.174.

because he had not been consulted about its organisation, and because he and his followers looked upon the proposed 'consultative' meeting with the Irish home rulers which was to occupy the last evening of the convention as an attempt to by-pass the league and put pressure upon the Irish movement. (1) Brooks, Shaw, and Conyngham adopted the same attitude, but sympathetic letters were read from O'Shaughnessy, Kirk, and Daunt. This assembly of the reorganised convention was confined to delegates, members of the home rule 'hundred', (2) and members of the executive; only seventy attended in all, and the convention bore, ironically, a more middle-class aspect than that of the previous year. But the secretary was able to report that the confederation had surmounted the financial difficulties which had threatened to destroy it twelve months before. Parnell was unanimously re-elected president, but O'Donnell retired from the honorary secretaryship. The following day the consultative meeting, which was attended by nine members of parliament, (3) agreed to submit to the public meeting that evening resolutions calling upon the party to adopt an energetic policy, deploring the lethargy of the home

1 Nation, 26 Oct. 1878.

2 Honorary members who paid £5 a year. This device had been introduced within the previous year to raise money for the confederation.

3 Biggar, Ennis, Gray, O'Clery, O'Donnell, O'Sullivan, Parnell O'Connor Power, and Sheil.

rule council, and urging the return of supporters of the active policy at the general election. Three thousand people attended the public meeting which followed that evening in the Rotunda. A resolution welcoming the delegates of the confederation to Dublin was proposed by Gray, who called for 'determined, persistent hostility to the government which refuses us what we are sent to demand'. The agreed resolutions were then passed on the motion of Power who openly admitted that they were directed at the return of candidates pledged to the parliamentary policy of Biggar and Parnell. (1)

The success of this meeting emboldened the followers of Parnell 'to go on and stir up the league a bit'. (2) To Daunt T. D. Sullivan wrote:

We mean to reform and extend that organisation, which is now almost dwindled to nothing. We mean to get new members for it, which means additional funds, and to put the machine into good working order. The first step we have to take is to call a general meeting of the league and get them to consult on the situation. In order to get up that meeting we have to send in a requisition to the honorary secretaries signed by thirty members of the league, and I have been requested to apply to you for authority to attach your signature to it. (3)

But the majority which Butt had so carefully secured upon the

1 Nation, 26 Oct. 1878. From this meeting arose Devoy's celebrated telegram which inaugurated the debate on the new departure which runs parallel to the story of these last months of Butt's movement.

2 T. D. Sullivan to Daunt, 25 Oct. 1878, Hickey MSS.

3 *ibid.* In the following February, the league could not have afforded the expense of a conference even if it had desired to call one. (Devoy's Journal, 3 Feb., 1879.)

4 Nation, 26 Nov. 1878; Butt to Daunt, 17 Nov., Butt MSS, vol III, no 232.

5 Cahill to Lalor, 2 Nov., Lalor MSS, 8204.

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was a permanent barrier to any such attempts at a reorganisation of the league. In September the council shelved the obligation distinctly laid upon it by O'Connor Power's resolution at the national conference in January to summon another conference of the same kind at the end of the year. According to Power this meeting was attended only by Butt himself, his son Robert, Callan, Brooks, and O'Leary.<sup>(1)</sup> In November the council was compelled by the constitution of the league to bow to the requisition, and a meeting of the league was arranged for 10 December, to be preceded on 19 November by an afternoon meeting to receive notice of resolutions for its consideration.<sup>(2)</sup>

Meanwhile in November Butt published the first of four long-promised manifestoes on his parliamentary policy. They proved to be only yet another recapitulation of the arguments which had gone before. P. Cahill, who like Daunt favoured the adoption of an active policy under Butt's leadership, wrote to his friend Richard Lalor, urging him not to call a meeting of the Queen's County Independent Club to consider the issues raised at the confederation convention until it was seen what Butt's manifestoes would offer in the way of 'some line of action which all may follow'.<sup>(3)</sup> He had

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1 Nation, 21 Dec. 1878. But in any case, as John Dillon admitted in the following February, the league could not have afforded the expense of a conference even if it had desired to call one. (Freeman's Journal, 5 Feb. 1879.)

2 Nation, 16 Nov. 1878; Butt to Henry, 17 Nov., Butt MSS, vol. III, MS 832.

3 Cahill to Lalor, 2 Nov., Lalor MSS, 8566.

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expected a call to arms; he was disappointed.<sup>(1)</sup> In these last months of his life Butt, as he strove to counter the appeal of the Parnellite policy throughout the country, grew more and more irreconcilably hostile towards his rebellious followers. In October he was trying to arrange a private meeting with the 'moderates', who wished to maintain 'a legal national and constitutional movement'.

Sooner or later we must separate from the revolutionary party and the time for striking the blow is only a question of prudence....I think it very possible the best thing may be to give up our old party organisation and associate the moderate men together in an entirely new formation. (2)

The publication of Devoy's telegram and the public controversy on the new departure played on his fear of revolution,<sup>(3)</sup> and in his mind there grew increasingly the conviction of a fenian conspiracy against him. He rejected Henry's contention that the differences in the party were mere domestic quarrels; he believed they originated in: ~~a deep laid~~

*a deep laid*  
plan carried out by the paid agents of an American junta of traitors to destroy any party of constitutional action.

Our differences are as wide and deep as the difference between constitutional action and treason.

I do not believe it possible that any way can be made for the home rule cause or an Irish party until in some way or other those who manage either are severed from those who identify themselves with treason.

I think this is coming in the natural course of events. (4)

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- 1 Cahill to Lalor, 4 Nov. 1878, Lalor MSS, 8566.
  - 2 Butt to Henry, 9 Oct., Butt MSS, vol iii, MS 832.
  - 3 Butt to Henry, 17 Nov., *ibid.*
  - 4 Butt to Henry, 5 Jan. 1879, *ibid.*



Members of the extreme right wing of the party like Bryan and Harman were prepared to consider this step, but Henry would have none of it.<sup>(1)</sup> The projected reorganisation fell through.

At the end of November parliament was recalled to consider the war which had broken out in Afghanistan. Henry wrote as usual to the press calling for a meeting of the party to consider the issue before the opening of the special session;<sup>(2)</sup> the Nation reminded the party of the unique opportunity which was presented to it by the war - the Irish members could prevent a single penny being voted for supply until some concession was made to their demands.<sup>(3)</sup> Butt, however, thwarted in his efforts to abandon the obstructives, refused pointblank to call a party meeting to confer with them; at the same time he seized the opportunity to postpone the requisitioned league meeting until the following January.<sup>(4)</sup> The efforts of Parnell and his allies to call a party meeting by requisition were deliberately obstructed by the secretaries of the party, Ward and Meldon.<sup>(5)</sup> Instead, Butt laid down in a public letter to Ward what he considered the proper course for the party to adopt in the crisis. He did

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1 Butt to Henry, 9 Oct. 1878, Butt MSS, vol iii, MS 832.  
2 Nation, 30 Nov.  
3 Ibid.  
4 Freeman's Journal, 30 Nov. At the same time Montagu publicly announced his withdrawal from the league on account of Butt's failure to discipline the obstructives and his persistence in introducing bills which had no hope of success. In April 1879 Montagu formally severed his connection with the party. (Nation, 5 Apr. 1879).  
5 Nation, 7 Dec. 1878.

not even consider the proposal that the Irish members should threaten to obstruct supply; no hostile action whatever, he held, should be taken. Even to propose, as Parnell had suggested, an amendment to the address in relation to the franchise question would appear to be aimed at 'creating confusion in the counsels of a nation at a time when to do so is to help the cause of its enemies'.<sup>(1)</sup>

This letter, almost Butt's last public utterance, was decisive of his position in Ireland. To Butt any other attitude in wartime would have been treason to the empire; to an Irish people convinced of the truth of the dictum that England's difficulty was Ireland's opportunity, Butt's action was treason to the Irish nation. The last vestige of respect for or restraint towards the home rule leader left the public controversy on his parliamentary policy. 'Mr Butt seems to think that the policy of self-effacement on every great occasion is the way to win for Ireland her rights', wrote the Freeman's Journal, deploring at the same time the temporary abandonment of the league meeting.<sup>(2)</sup> The Nation went further:

1 Freeman's Journal, 30 Nov. 1878.  
 2 ibid.

Butt had 'at last removed all doubt as to his fitness for the post of leader of the Irish national movement'.<sup>(1)</sup> 'This old man whom we trusted', was the phrase with which Healy dismissed Butt in his London letter; 'since the formation of the party', he wrote, 'no one sitting on the opposition side of the house has been of more assistance to the government than the honorable member for Limerick.'<sup>(2)</sup> 'My personal patience is utterly worn out by Mr. Butt', wrote Father Lavelle.<sup>(3)</sup> 'Can we have misread the lines?' asked the Cork

Examiner:

Is it Isaac Butt, the champion of Irish nationality, who writes that there should be no obstacle placed in the way of gratifying that thirst for domination which possesses the present government?..... After this, it is idle to conceal that the crisis in the affairs of the home rule party has come. On such a proposal it cannot consent to be led. <sup>(4)</sup>

The Weekly News, a subsidiary of the Nation, carried a cartoon depicting the reconciliation of Butt and Disraeli.<sup>(5)</sup>

But the fiercest condemnation came from O'Connor Power. When a meeting of the party was finally held on 5 December he denounced Butt as a traitor to the party and the cause, and in a letter published in the Freeman's Journal on 6 December he repeated this accusation. The Freeman deplored the violence of Power's attack as likely only to cause a reaction in Butt's

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1 Nation, 7 Dec. 1878.  
 2 ibid., and 14 Dec.  
 3 Nation, 14 Dec.  
 4 quoted, ibid.  
 5 ibid.

favour; <sup>(1)</sup> so also did Daunt in a letter to the Nation of 21 December. But the executive of the Home Rule Confederation complemented Power on his 'timely warning' to Butt, <sup>(2)</sup> and while the party as a whole repudiated it, <sup>(3)</sup> the efforts of Ward to get up an effusive address to Butt in retaliation met with only a mixed response. Fay, Bryan, Digby, Dease, and Harman were delighted to sign it; <sup>(4)</sup> Brady refused to do so on the ground that it was insufficiently condemnatory of Power; <sup>(5)</sup> O'Clery agreed to sign it out of personal respect for Butt, but declined 'all responsibility for any political significance that might be sought to be attached to the document in question.' <sup>(6)</sup> Sullivan, Nolan, Henry, O'Sullivan, and Browne apparently refused to sign it at all. <sup>(7)</sup> Butt's loyal friends of the Limerick Corporation, on the other hand, found time to redress the balance with a vote of confidence in the home rule leader, before they adjourned as a mark of

1 Freeman's Journal, 6 Dec. 1878.  
 2 Nation, 14 Dec.  
 3 Freeman's Journal, 7 Dec.  
 4 Ibid., 11 Dec., Nation, 21 Dec. All these five had been continuously indifferent to the efforts of the party in the preceding two sessions. Dease refused to attend the conference of January 1878, and Digby was hooted at it. Both these two were openly censured by the Queen's County Independent Club for their persistent absenteeism. (P. Cahill to R. Lalor, 21, 22 Jan. 1878; Lalor to Cahill, 9, 14 Jan; Lalor to Digby, 30 Aug., Lalor MSS, 8566. Also an undated draft resolution of censure and record of parliamentary attendance of both members in Lalor MSS, 8573.) Charles Dawson, former secretary of the Butt testimonial committee, pointed out sarcastically that many of those who were now most anxious to secure the retention of Butt's policy had refused to subscribe to the testimonial two years ago. (Nation 21 Dec.)  
 5 Nation, 21 Dec.                      6 Freeman's Journal, 11 Dec.  
 7 Nation, 21, 28 Dec.

respect to the memory of the late Princess Alice.<sup>(1)</sup> But for Power there was a simple and unanswerable rejoinder: the home rule leader, he said, now affected to despise the Irish popular opinion upon which he had once rested his authority, 'because the multitudes no longer assemble in the name of Isaac Butt, but in the of Charles Stuart Parnell'.<sup>(2)</sup> When the new council of the league was elected in January Henry headed the poll over Butt.<sup>(3)</sup>

At the beginning of February Butt faced his followers for the last time in the long-deferred meeting of the league. There was only a small attendance, probably not much in excess of seventy.<sup>(4)</sup> The usual resolutions calling for vigorous action in parliament and determined organisation in the country were passed unanimously. But the decisive struggle took place on the motion of T. D. Sullivan, reaffirming the resolution of the 1873 conference recommending that the home rule members of parliament should hold themselves aloof from the English parties, and urging the members to act up to this recommendation in the spirit of the resolutions of the conference of January 1878 calling for increased activity and more regular attendance. The debate on this resolution continued all day with an adjournment for lunch. John Dillon

1 Nation, 21 Dec. 1878.  
 2 ibid.  
 3 ibid., 25 Jan. 1879. The struggle between the two factions of the co-option of the fifty additional members was repeated, but the Parnellites were able to improve their position.  
 4 The report of this meeting is taken from Freeman's Journal, 5 Feb. 1879, and Nation, 8 Feb.

condemned the leadership most bitterly, comparing Butt's current policies with the speeches he had made 'when he was really Mr. Butt'. Butt made no secret of his conversations with the ministers - if these had not taken place 'some of them would tell you that you would never have had that intermediate education act in its present shape'. He put more work into drafting bills, he said, than into walking matches in the lobbies, but his efforts had been undermined in 1877 just when they were gaining ground. He appealed again for the unity which had existed in the party in the coercion debates - forgetting, apparently, that the first criticisms of his parliamentary policy had been aroused by his treatment of this issue in 1874 and 1875. Henry refused to be convinced of the value of Butt's private negotiations with the government. Conciliation had failed, he said, but he was prepared, as were the people, to follow Butt loyally on the one condition that he should go over to Westminster and announce 'that the time for conciliation is ended, and that we must have results.'

Mr Butt - I won't say any such thing.  
 Mr Mitchell Henry - If that is not done I look for no more good from the Home Rule League, from the meeting of Irish members, or from any attempt to keep up a united and active party.

Parnell stressed the moderation of the resolution; he did not ask the party to endorse obstruction, he said: all he sought was activity - in particular that the party should follow the advice which Ronayne had once given him to take part in the discussions on English business.

Despite these assurances, Butt insisted upon regarding the motion as one of censure. His attitude made it impossible for men like Henry to vote against him, and an amendment substituting a simple reaffirmation of the resolution of the conference of the preceding January, calling for united and vigorous action, was carried by thirty-two votes to twenty-four. Eleven members of parliament voted with Butt and five against. (1)

The backwoodsmen of the party had thus once again helped Butt to frustrate the demands of the Parnellites for a reconsideration of the parliamentary policy of the movement, and he retired from the meeting with the year-old deadlock unresolved. The supporters of Parnell were again shown that they could hope to achieve nothing before the general election. The meeting of the party which preceded the opening of the 1879 session could muster an attendance of only fifteen members. (2) When the ministry announced its proposals for the session it was found to have abandoned its intention to introduce an Irish university bill as a companion to its intermediate education act. Butt had been 'sold', wrote the Nation, and the conciliatory policy had received its coup

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1 For the amendment: Brooks, Browne, Butt, Callan, Delahunty, Fay, Henry, Lewis, McKenna, Martin, Meldon, and Shaw. Against: Biggar, Ennis, Kirk, Parnell, and O'Sullivan. The following week the annual conference of the Ulster Home Government Association passed a resolution endorsing the policy of Biggar and Parnell. (Nation, 15 Feb.)

2. ibid, 22 Feb.

(1) de grace. The party met on 15 February to consider retaliatory action; only twenty-four members turned up, and Butt himself was amongst those absent. In the circumstances any decision was deferred. Also deferred on the same grounds was the proposal to appoint a vice-chairman empowered to summon the party together during Butt's frequent absences; the right wing of the party saw in this suggestion a device to supplant Butt's leadership, and sought time to sound the tocsin to the absentees. (2) It was their last, and, as it proved, an unnecessary service to their leader. Butt's health had never recovered from his illness in the autumn of 1877. In January 1879 he complained to Henry of difficulty in breathing, (3) and at the end of February he fell severely ill with bronchitis. (4) In March he was reported to be recovering, (4) but at the beginning of May he suffered a stroke and on 5 May he died. (5) His death aroused genuine sorrow, (6) but he passed on the whole quietly from the political arena in which he had become only an embarrassment. There were many obituaries, but

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1 Nation, 22 Feb. 1879. In June the government changed its mind, influenced, possibly, by Liberal support for the O'Connor Don's university bill, and introduced in the house of lords and carried a bill which, while leaving the three Queen's Colleges, Trinity College, and the University of Dublin untouched, replaced the Queen's University by the 'Royal University of Ireland', a purely examining body on the model of that of London. Non-sectarian in essence, the measure evoked little catholic enthusiasm; it did, however, provide an indirect endowment for the Catholic University by the grant to its professors of one half of the fellowships of the new body. Shaw's amendment demanding facilities for collegiate education was rejected by 259 votes to 92. (Annual Register, 1879, pp. 67-1 T.W. Moody, The Irish university question of the nineteenth century, in History, vol XLIII, No 148, June 1958.)

2 Nation, 22 Feb.

3 Butt to Henry, 5 Jan. 1879, Butt MSS, vol 111, MS 832. MS 831.

4 Nation, 8 Mar. 5 R.B. Butt to Callan, 5 May, Butt MSS, 11, A

6 Davant Journal, dated 2 May (probably in error), MS 3041; Freeman's Journal, 7 May, Nation 10 May etc.



most realistic was the youthful Healy's objective footnote to the career of the old leader:

He gave practical direction to the national aspirations, rekindled patriotic fire, and then, aided by the spirit he evoked, then? - Then he failed! Before his death so long had he accustomed Irish patriots to look elsewhere for a leader, that now these men will miss him least. (1)

party had lasted for over a year, it could not be broken easily by the reversal of the new rule leader. He had become little more than a symbol of the refusal of the right wing of the party to be drawn into the embrace of the Parnellite policy; and supporters of this symbol could not alter their determination, faced with the choice between two alternatives - that of a rupture in the solemnity of the party, the Parnellite party and the eternal conflict now, they elected the latter. It was a

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1 Nation, 10 May.

Healy records that in the ballot Biggar voted for Henry, as the better man; Farnell voted for John, 'when he gave he could cast'. The by-elections in New Ross in 1878, and in Longford and Sligo in 1879 made it obvious that Farnell would look and in all probability obtain a popular mandate for his policy at the next election. Meanwhile he

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1 F. W. Healy, Letters and leaders of my day, p. 68.  
2 Parnellite candidates contested all these elections. In New Ross George Deasy with 50 votes was beaten by the conservative Colonel Tottenham with 95; in Longford Justice McCarthy and in Sligo Lyneagh Finigan were elected on an obstructionist platform.

CONCLUSION

The death of Butt was not a climacteric in the history of the movement. The stalemate which paralysed the party had lasted for over a year; it could not be broken simply by the removal of the home rule leader. Butt had become little more than a symbol of the refusal of the right wing of the party to be forced into the endorsement of the Parnellite policy; the disappearance of this symbol could not alter their determination. Faced with the choice between two alternatives as Butt's successor in the chairmanship of the party, the energetic Henry and the eternal mediator Shaw, they elected the latter. It was a decision without importance; a general election was imminent, and Parnell hoped for nothing from the party before it. Healy records that in the ballot Biggar voted for Henry, as the better man; Parnell voted for Shaw, 'whom he knew he could oust'<sup>(1)</sup>. The by-elections in New Ross in 1878, and in Longford and Ennis in 1879 made it obvious that Parnell would ask and in all probability obtain a popular mandate<sup>(2)</sup> for his policy at the next election. Meanwhile he

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1 T. M. Healy, Letters and leaders of my day, p. 68.  
 2 Parnellite candidates contested all these elections. In New Ross George Delany with 90 votes was beaten by the conservative Colonel Tottenham with 95; in Longford Justin McCarthy and in Ennis Lysaght Finigan were elected on an obstructionist platform.

continued to increase his personal authority outside what was left of the formal organisation through his contacts with the land and fenian movements. The election of Shaw was no more than another spasm in the anti-Parnellite reflexes of the home rule members; the party had been moribund since the end of 1877 and remained so.

In practice, then, the home rule party of Butt canalised the feelings of the Irish people for at most four years, from the beginning of 1874 to the end of 1877. In 1874 Butt was the unquestioned leader of the Irish people; in 1878 he was an anachronistic survival, a barrier to the development of the national movement, increasingly regarded as a renegade by the men who had cheered and chaired him to the representation of Ireland four years before. This was a collapse of startling swiftness. In the preceding pages some effort has been made to describe the processes by which it was brought about. It remains only to draw these threads together and to arrive at some tentative conclusions.

In the first place, the popularity of Butt, though genuine and unquestionable, was never as firm a basis to political authority as in the case of other Irish demagogues. He gained the affection owed to a charming and humane personality; he never, perhaps, personified the racial myth as instinctively as the other oleographed heroes of Irish

history. Part of this was due to inherent weaknesses in the man himself. He lacked both the ruthlessness and the glamour, the deliberate showmanship, of the great demagogue; above all, he lacked the supreme self-confidence which enables the Parnells, the O'Connells (at least till 1843), and the de Valeras to ride tigers in the certain knowledge that they will be able to dismount at their own convenience. But partly this was his own choice, his own deliberate abdication of much of the authority which might have been his. In day to day politics he was a shrewd tactician; in his last struggles he showed he could be as unscrupulous as most political controversialists. But he was, perhaps, a man of greater intellectual breadth than most political leaders, and he possessed, consequently, an ultimate vision and an ultimate sense of responsibility from which most of them are immune. Socially he was if anything less conservative than Parnell, but if, unlike Parnell, he was unable to exploit revolution, he did not choose to do so; he did not approve of revolution. Equally he could not harness the energy of separatism to his movement; but equally, unlike many of the leaders who followed him and of the supporters who attended him, he abhorred separatism. Home rule was not for him a tight-rope between English obstinacy and Irish nationalism, a compromise to be won by waving the green flag of separation

in the face of John Bull; it was the best and the most honourable arrangement between the two islands. The ordinary people in the home rule movement were emotionally near to separatism; Parnell managed to persuade them that he was of their kind, their delegate, wanting what they wanted and determined to drive the best bargain on their behalf - which happened to be home rule. Butt, on the other hand, believed in the empire which Irishmen had helped to create; he believed that they could find a full national expression within its framework; emotionally he was moving towards an ideal of commonwealth which was politically in advance of his time. There was thus a fundamental dichotomy here. The people were puzzled by his imperialism; they forgave it as tactical; when they found he meant it they called him traitor.

But imperialism was only one basis upon which Butt built his federalism. The other was national unity. Butt learnt his nationalism in the 1840's. He learnt it from the practical lesson of the famine that the heart of empire beat too remotely from Irish misery; he learnt it, also, not from O'Connell but from the emotional, literary, and idealistic spirit of the men who followed Thomas Davis. Not for nothing did Thomas McNevin call the protestant nationalist movement which Butt typified in this period 'Orange Young Ireland'. Butt did not formally articulate his nationalism until

twenty years later, but his values had been crystallised in that period, and when he founded the Home Government Association he was seeking to put into practice the kindly ideal of Davis:

What matter that at different shrines  
We pray unto one God -  
What matter that at different times  
Your fathers won this sod -  
In fortune and in name we're bound  
By stronger links than steel;  
And neither can be safe nor sound  
But in the other's weal.

And oh! it were a gallant deed  
To show before mankind,  
How every race and every creed  
Might be by love combined -  
Might be combined, yet not forget  
The fountains whence they rose,  
As, filled by many a rivulet,  
The stately Shannon flows.

His movement, it must be remembered, was launched in the false dawn of protestant nationalism which followed on the disestablishment of the Irish protestant church. To reconcile the protestants, and to achieve his ideal of a 'united nationalist party', Butt went to the length of adopting a special formula, upon which he built his movement. The members of the home rule organisation and of the home rule party, he declared, were bound together only by their loyalty to that one principle of home rule; they were free to agree or disagree upon every other subject of political controversy.

In practice this formula was never a success. Home rule candidates, including Butt himself, found it necessary to endorse a wide variety of Irish grievances on the hustings; home rule members in parliament, led by Butt, joined in pressing for their reform. Irish conservatives were unable to see the distinction between the efforts of virtually all the members of the party acting together, and the acts of the party as such. By 1873 the battle for conservative support had been lost. Only one protestant conservative home ruler, E. R. King Harman, was ever returned for an Irish constituency.

The home rule formula broke down before the necessity to endorse popular Irish grievances; it operated, however, sufficiently strongly to prevent the party from securing the fruits of that endorsement. In the first place, the Irish members were often accused of regarding their common membership of the party as imposing upon them only the obligation to vote for an annual home rule motion. But it was in fact inherent in Butt's formula that he could demand no more of them than this. It was not merely that he was unable to exact pledged discipline from them; he did not choose to do so; together with men like John Martin, he regarded such discipline as intolerable to any men of principle.

of 1874. In the first place, this election was fought upon

Inevitably, home rule members absented themselves from the divisions on his Irish bills, or even voted against them, and his policy of argument along the broad front of Irish grievance served only to illustrate the futility of and the contradictions in his own movement. In the second place, his fanatical devotion to an ideal of Irish national unity made it impossible for him to exploit an Irish sectarian issue, not only to the extent that Parnell was able to do so, but even so far as to mollify class interests in Ireland. Butt never secured the approval of the catholic clergy, despite his endless efforts to resolve the university question; the land conference of 1875 and the recriminations which followed in the parliamentary session of that year showed that he had equally failed to win the loyalty of the tenant-farmers.

Yet despite these inherent contradictions, the shattering debacle which broke up the first party might not have followed if a little practical good fortune had attended Butt, and he might have died in an aura of modest success, mourned, if quickly replaced, by an affectionate people, who had never learnt the difference between their ambitions and his. But a number of practical factors destroyed the hopes of the new party even before it entered Westminster.

All these factors arose out of the general election of 1874. In the first place, this election was fought upon



a franchise far more restricted than that which returned the '86 of '86'. The introduction of the ballot produced the first signs of an alteration in the class composition of the Irish representation; it was an alteration which, as has been shown in Chapter XIII, expressed itself most noticeably in the case of the twenty-four newly elected home rule members, who included among their number men who were to prove themselves some of the most loyal and energetic of the Irish representatives. But the alteration was as yet only slight, and without a redistribution of seats and an assimilation of the franchise to that of England, could scarcely affect the contest.

This factor was coupled with an even more fatal circumstance. The home rule movement was not established on anything like a national basis until the formation of the Home Rule League by the national conference of November 1873. The league held its first meeting in January 1874. Less than a fortnight later it was called upon to fight a general election in as little time. Inevitably it found itself totally unprepared, and above all, virtually without candidates. The effect of this sudden dissolution was, in the circumstances, disastrous. Home rule was able to destroy liberal unionism as a political force in Ireland, but the liberal members of parliament as a quid pro quo were able

to swamp the first home rule party. When the election was over Butt claimed, technically, sixty seats for home rule; but when he led his party into Westminster he found himself able to depend upon roughly one third of this number; one third were unknown quantities, and the remainder former liberals the sincerity of whose conversion to home rule was in most cases dubious, and the majority of whom regarded their membership of the 'party' as binding them only to an annual vote upon the issue of home rule. Confronting this handful Butt found, enthroned with an overall majority, not the pliant and rational Gladstone, but the in Irish matters immovable Disraeli. The sterility of the party was from that moment assured.

In these circumstances there was perhaps only one course which offered a hope of ultimate success. This was to abandon the liberal deadwood of the party, and with it any hope of progress in the lifetime of the current parliament, and to concentrate upon the return of a larger, more resolute, and more disciplined force at the next election. This was the advice which sincere but realistic admirers of Butt such as John Ferguson consistently pressed upon him. He was not willing to take it. He chose instead to do the best he could with the force at his disposal, but as a part-time politician, and in his later years an ailing and prematurely aging man, he had neither the energy nor the

authority to achieve anything. He was not even able to check the cynical absenteeism of a large number of his followers, and refusing to denounce them, was tainted in Irish eyes with their insincerity. His reluctance to abandon the moderates was the logical outcome of his character and morally unexceptionable; his failure to realise that he was compelled in practice to choose between them and the advanced nationalists was a political blunder. He lost ultimately not because he failed to convince the English parliament of the justice of his cause, but because he failed to convince the Irish people of the sincerity of his party's advocacy of it. And it was on this issue, basically, that he differed from Parnell, and that Parnell won the leadership from him.

Parnell saw that the movement was losing its following in Ireland, and unlike Butt he was prepared to accept the necessity for a ruthless realignment. Obstruction was never a practical parliamentary policy; in its way it was just as futile as the patient reasoning of Butt. Butt was quite right when he said in 1873:

If eighty men by such means could carry home rule, eighty men could carry the permissive bill, or the inspection of nunneries, or any other measure which they would conspire to force upon parliament. (1)

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1 Conference proceedings, p. 170.

Having made his demonstration in 1877, Parnell did not revive serious obstruction until the following parliament, which, once it accepted the unpleasant necessity to do so, was able relatively quickly to introduce rules to make it impossible. But it is extremely unlikely that Parnell ever seriously intended to propose the adoption of obstruction as the normal policy of the home rule party; what he hoped to achieve was something quite different. By his obstructive tactics he dissociated himself from a lost cause, lifted himself above the ranks of his colleagues, and won the attention of the advanced party. Obstruction might achieve nothing practical, but the fact that the Parnellites were prepared to stay up all night infuriating the English won for them in Ireland a popular sympathy and a popular belief in their sincerity which their colleagues had, in many cases deservedly, lost. It was thus the first of the processes which led to Parnell's becoming the undisputed leader of the Irish nation, and as such it had quite achieved its end by the time that the changes in the rules of the house made it impossible. In modern political parlance it was a stunt, and as such it served its purpose.

Butt retained enough of his authority to prohibit the movement from adopting Parnell's tactics. By so doing he ensured Parnell's ultimate succession to the leadership

on the terms most favourable to himself. The party did not expel Parnell, but it disowned him, and destroyed itself. From the end of 1877 there was in effect no home rule party, and virtually no home rule league. Parnell went to the country and through the land league and the new departure multiplied the authority which his parliamentary tactics had won for him. In 1880 he came back to the party and revived it by the injection of his own prestige. There is a real continuity between his movement and Butt's, but it was a continuity which expressed itself far more really through the development of Irish public opinion than through the technical continuity of the chairmanship of the party. Given authority, Parnell learnt from the lesson of Butt's failure. He did what Butt was both unable and unwilling to do - he went down into the constituencies and showed the Irish members that they held their seats at his will, and he exacted from them in return a pledge of total obedience. Upon these twin pillars of his personal authority rested the home rule party of Parnell.

Yet if Parnell avoided the mistakes which destroyed Butt, his success nevertheless owed much to the work of the older man. The breakdown of Butt's policy has been described and analysed above; it remains to give him credit for his achievements. In 1868 Gladstone's offer

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of 'justice for Ireland' had brought her people nearer, perhaps, than ever before in their history to a final acceptance of the union settlement. Above all the offer of disestablishment had won over to the support of the English Liberal party almost unanimously the catholic church in Ireland, which welcomed Gladstone as the heaven-sent deliverer of the Irish people. The clergy and the Irish liberals were able in the 1868 election to exact from the Irish representatives an unprecedented degree of uniformity with the English Liberal party, and Gladstone took office with a complete mandate from Ireland. In five years of superb political tactics Butt replaced liberal unionism by home rule as the spokesman of Irish grievances. He canalised the emotional nationalism of the people in the Amnesty Association, and at the same time taught fenianism its political power; he manoeuvred the Irish liberals behind the principle of fixity of tenure and in so doing secured the rejection of the land bill. He was aided in this achievement by external political developments, just as he was opposed by them in the years that followed; but the insight and the timing of his land, amnesty, and home rule agitations were the expression of real political genius. In these years his was the one personality behind which all those parties were content to coalesce; no one else could have done what he did.

'You will not accuse me of self-conceit', he wrote to Henry in December 1873, 'if I say that much of our present success depends on ..... combinations which I planned and carried out alone, and of which in the beginning no one saw the meaning.'<sup>(1)</sup> It was no more than the truth.

It was in those years that Butt had erected his memorial; he had summoned forth from defeat the instinctive nationalism of the Irish people, and permanently established the ideal of an Irish national party. Having done that, as Healy so tersely observed, he failed. But he had moulded the form in which Irish nationalism was to find parliamentary expression for the next forty years, and he had ensured that no Irish party could ever again accept anything less than federal home rule as the ultimate solution to the Irish question. When Parnell broke away from Butt three years later he could do so as the alternative leader of an Irish party; his policy could be put forward as the alternative policy of an Irish party. This was Butt's achievement, that he awoke the constitutional nationalist spirit that was to judge him, that he laid down aims for Irish parliamentary agitation, for the non-fulfilment of which Parnell could accuse him before the bar of this nationalist spirit, and finally, that he evolved the parliamentary slogan under which Parnell could regroup the

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1 Butt to Henry, 3 Dec. 1873 (copy), Butt MSS.

(a) Counties

Pop.

Wardwork

national movement in a more realistic, more disciplined, and more effective manner. It is not then, perhaps, too much to say that by his achievement Butt had made possible the political phenomenon of the party of Parnell.

London	71,884	2,737	2,737	2,737	2,737
Louth	80,713	2,351	2,351	2,351	2,351
Meath	110,373	4,136	4,136	4,136	4,136
Queen's	80,350	2,435	2,435	2,435	2,435
Westmeath	90,872	2,353	2,353	2,353	2,353
Down	143,254	6,497	6,497	6,497	6,497
Sligo	55,472	2,337	2,337	2,337	2,337
<b>TOT</b>	<b>1,457,638</b>	<b>40,142</b>	<b>40,142</b>	<b>40,142</b>	<b>40,142</b>
<b>Dublin</b>					
Clare	108,308	4,408	4,408	4,408	4,408
Cork	244,612	18,872	18,872	18,872	18,872
Kerry	201,808	8,413	8,413	8,413	8,413
Limerick	217,877	6,512	6,512	6,512	6,512
Tipperary	249,166	8,034	8,034	8,034	8,034
Waterford	134,433	5,477	5,477	5,477	5,477
<b>TOT</b>	<b>1,515,608</b>	<b>48,243</b>	<b>48,243</b>	<b>48,243</b>	<b>48,243</b>
<b>Down</b>					
Galway	271,478	8,512	8,512	8,512	8,512
Leitrim	106,744	2,800	2,800	2,800	2,800
Mayo	256,036	3,079	3,079	3,079	3,079
Monaghan	157,272	3,600	3,600	3,600	3,600
Sligo	184,045	2,161	2,161	2,161	2,161
<b>TOT</b>	<b>915,135</b>	<b>18,413</b>	<b>18,413</b>	<b>18,413</b>	<b>18,413</b>
<b>Ulster</b>					
Armagh	260,210	10,961	11,715	10,961	10,961
Down	120,000	8,751	7,443	7,443	7,443
Fermanagh	153,906	6,304	6,412	6,304	6,304
Monaghan	227,087	4,636	4,636	4,636	4,636
Down	300,380	11,455	11,644	11,455	11,455
Fermanagh	153,768	4,081	4,175	4,081	4,081
London	106,000	6,512	6,512	6,512	6,512
Monaghan	228,433	6,350	6,350	6,350	6,350
Tyrone	230,000	6,481	6,571	6,481	6,481
<b>TOT</b>	<b>2,214,036</b>	<b>63,210</b>	<b>67,061</b>	<b>63,210</b>	<b>63,210</b>
<b>IRELAND</b>	<b>5,780,007</b>	<b>273,010</b>	<b>276,773</b>	<b>273,010</b>	<b>273,010</b>



APPENDIX I : Irish Electoral Statistics

(a) Counties

	Pop 1861	1864	Electorate 1868-9	1873-4	pop 1871
<u>Leinster</u>					
Carlow	57,137	2,449	2,309	2,182	51,650
Dublin	410,252	4,744	4,465	4,233	405,262
Kildare	90,946	3,055	2,999	2,892	83,614
Kilkenny	124,515	5,151	5,159	5,130	109,379
King's Co.	90,043	3,380	3,435	3,387	75,900
Longford	71,694	2,767	2,815	2,753	64,501
Louth	90,713	2,441	2,443	2,334	84,021
Meath	110,373	4,155	4,018	4,144	95,558
Queen's	90,650	3,438	3,726	3,596	79,771
Westmeath	90,879	3,568	3,884	3,567	78,432
Wexford	143,954	6,457	6,204	6,137	132,666
Wicklow	86,479	3,537	3,613	3,560	78,697
TOT	1,457,635	45,142	45,070	43,915	1,339,451
<u>Munster</u>					
Clare	166,305	5,465	5,649	5,460	147,864
Cork	544,818	15,572	16,105	15,660	517,077
Kerry	201,800	5,415	5,506	5,474	196,586
Limerick	217,277	6,318	6,571	6,417	191,936
Tipperary	249,106	8,996	9,498	9,246	216,713
Waterford	134,252	3,477	3,445	3,464	123,310
TOT	1,513,558	45,243	46,774	45,721	1,393,486
<u>Connaught</u>					
Galway	271,478	5,516	5,387	5,048	248,457
Leitrim	104,744	2,389	2,673	2,571	95,562
Mayo	254,796	3,679	3,783	3,607	246,030
Roscommon	157,272	3,650	3,814	3,811	140,670
Sligo	124,845	3,181	2,233	3,529	115,493
TOT	913,135	18,415	17,890	18,566	846,213
<u>Ulster</u>					
Antrim	369,210	10,921	11,715	10,552	404,015
Armagh	190,086	5,721	7,443	7,141	179,260
Cavan	153,906	6,304	6,415	6,348	140,735
Donegal	237,395	4,685	4,596	4,588	218,334
Down	308,680	11,435	11,646	11,797	293,449
Fermanagh	105,768	4,861	5,175	4,752	92,794
Londond 'ry	184,209	5,512	5,582	5,466	173,906
Monaghan	126,482	5,350	5,591	5,558	114,969
Tyrone	238,500	8,421	8,878	8,971	215,766
TOT	1,914,236	63,210	67,041	65,173	1,833,228
IRELAND	5,798,967	172,010	176,775	173,375	5,412,377

## (b) Boroughs

	pop 1861	1866	Electorate 1868-9	1873-4	pop 1871
<u>Leinster</u>					
Athlone	6,227	216	318	336	6,617
Carlow	8,973	245	352	317	7,773
Drogheda	17,436	574	726	697	16,135
Dublin	263,751	10,879	12,899	12,764	265,668
Dundalk	10,428	267	447	568	10,893
Kilkenny	17,713	563	739	727	15,609
New Ross	7,132	194	259	242	6,813
Portarlington	2,874	101	134	136	2,778
Wexford	11,673	307	520	523	11,857
TOT	346,207	13,346	16,394	16,310	344,143
<u>Munster</u>					
Bandon	6,419	243	295	363	6,074
Cashel	5,458	148	203	-	-
Clonmel	11,143	339	436	452	9,484
Cork	102,256	3,250	3,536	4,371	97,887
Dungarvan	8,645	270	311	314	7,700
Ennis	7,175	178	231	242	6,101
Kinsale	4,850	133	172	188	5,248
Limerick	56,802	1,944	2,032	2,225	49,670
Mallow	4,841	173	208	247	4,150
Tralee	10,355	253	263	319	9,701
Waterford	28,790	1,082	1,383	1,428	29,843
Youghal	6,514	242	278	293	6,090
TOT	253,518	8,255	9,348	10,442	231,948
<u>Connaught</u>					
Galway	25,161	1,180	1,381	1,445	19,820
Sligo	12,565	390	520	-	-
TOT	37,726	1,570	1,901	1,445	19,820
<u>Ulster</u>					
Armagh	9,320	421	603	621	8,952
Belfast	78,344	3,615	12,168	15,000	174,394
Cardiffg's	9,417	1,201	1,290	1,166	9,452
Coleraine	6,236	252	346	389	6,236
Downpatrick	4,317	181	241	254	4,154
Dungannon	3,994	177	245	257	3,955
Enniskillen	5,820	245	341	401	5,906
Lisburn	8,585	272	469	568	9,319
Londonderry	20,875	863	1,483	1,679	24,328
Newry	13,108	557	796	940	14,181
TOT	160,016	7,784	17,982	21,275	260,877
IRELAND	797,467	30,955	45,625	49,472	856,788

APPENDIX II : Members of Parliament, 1868.

<u>NAME</u>	<u>Constituency</u>	<u>Party</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Religion</u>
Annesley, Hon H.,	Cavan	C	Landowner	Prot
Archdale, M.E.,	Fermanagh	C	Landowner	Prot
Bagwell, J.,	Clonmel	L	Landowner	Prot
Ball, J.T.,	Dublin Univ	C	Barrister	Prot
Barry, A.H.S.-,	Cork Co	L	Landowner	Prot
Bingham, Lord	Mayo	C	Rentier(eld. son)	Prot
Blake, J.A.	Waterford City	L	Rentier	R.C.
Blennerhasset, Sir R.	Galway Boro	L	Landowner	R.C.
Booth, Sir R.G.	Sligo Co	C	Landowner	Prot
Brady, J.	Leitrim	L	Medical Doctor	R.C.
Bruce, Sir H.H.	Coleraine	C	Landowner	Prot
Bruen, H.	Carlow Co	C	Landowner	Prot
Bryan, G.L.	Kilkenny Co	L	Landowner	R.C.
Burke, Viscount	Galway Co	L	Rentier (eld. son)	Prot
Callan, P.	Dundalk	L	Barrister	R.C.
Castlerosse, Visct.	Kerry	L	Rentier(eld. son)	R.C.
Cogan, W.H.F.	Kildare	L	Landowner	R.C.
Cole, H.	Fermanagh	C	Landowner	Prot
Colthurst, Sir G.C.	Kinsale	L	Landowner	Prot
Conolly, T.	Donegal	C	Landowner	Prot
Corbally, M.E.	Meath	L	Landowner	R.C.
Corry, H.T.L.	Tyrone	C	Rentier (younger son)	Prot
Crichton, Visct	Enniskillen	C	Rentier (eld. son)	Prot
Dalway, M.R.	Carrickfergus	C	Landowner	Prot
Damer, L.W.D.	Portarlinton	C	Landowner	Prot

D'Arcy, M.P.,	Wexford Co	L	Brewer	R.C.
Dawson, R.P.	Londonderry Co	C	Landowner	Prot
Dease, M.O'R.,	Louth	L	Landowner	R.C.
Delahunty, J.	Waterford City	L	Merchant	R.C.
De la Poer, E.	Waterford Co	L	Landowner	R.C.
Devereux, R.	Wexford Boro	L	Merchant	R.C.
Dick, W.W.F.	Wicklow	C	Landowner	Prot
Digby, K.T.	Queen's Co	L	Rentier	R.C.
Downing, M.	Cork Co	L	Landowner	R.C.
Dowse, R.	Londonderry City	L	Barrister	Prot
Ellis, Hon L.A.-	Kilkenny Co	L	Rentier (eld. son)	Prot
Ennis, J.J.	Athlone	L	Rentier (eld. son)	R.C.
Esmonde, Sir J.	Waterford Co	L	Landowner	R.C.
Fagan, W.A.	Carlow Boro	L	Rentier	R.C.
Fitzgerald, Lord O.	Kildare Co	L	Rentier (younger son)	Prot
Fitzpatrick, J.W.	Queen's Co	L	Landowner	Prot
Fitzwilliam, Hon. H.W.	Wicklow	L	Rentier (younger son)	Prot
Forde, W.B.	Down	C	Landowner	Prot
Fortescue, Rt Hon C.	Louth	L	Landowner	Prot
French, F.,	Roscommon	L	Landowner	Prot
Gavin, G.,	Limerick City	L	Rentier	R.C.
Core, W.O.-	Leitrim	C	Landowner	Prot
Gray, Sir J.	Kilkenny Boro	L	Newspaper Prop.	Prot
Gregory, W.H.	Galway Co	L	Landowner	Prot
Greville, A.W.F.	Westmeath	L	Rentier (eld son)	Prot
Guinness, Sir A.E.	Dublin City	C	Brewer	Prot
Hamilton, Lord C.	Tyrone	C	Rentier (younger son)	Prot

Hamilton, I.T.	Dublin Co	C	Landowner	Prot
Hamilton, M. of,	Donegal	C	Rentier (eld son)	Prot
Herbert, H.A.	Kerry	L	Landowner	Prot
Heygate, Sir F.W.	Londonderry Co	C	Landowner	Prot
Johnston, W.,	Belfast	C	Landowner	Prot
Kavanagh, A.M.	Carlow Co	C	Landowner	Prot
Keown, W.,	Downpatrick	C	Landowner	Prot
Kirk, W.,	Newry	L	Merchant	Prot
Knox, L.E.	Sligo Bor	C	Newspaper Prop	Prot
Knox, W.S.	Dungannon	C	Rentier (younger son)	Prot
Lefroy, A.,	Dublin Univ	C	Landowner	Prot
Leslie, C.P.	Monaghan	C	Landowner	Prot
McClure, T.	Belfast	L	Merchant	Prot
McEvoy, E.,	Meath	L	Landowner	R.C.
McMahon, P.	New Ross	L	Barrister	R.C.
Maguire, J.F.	Cork City	L	Newspaper Prop	R.C.
Mathews, H.	Dungarvan	L	Barrister	R.C.
Monsell, W.,	Limerick Co	L	Landowner	R.C.
Moore, C.	Tipperary	L	Merchant	R.C.
Moore, G.H.	Mayo	L	Landowner	R.C.
Murphy, N.D.	Cork City	L	Solicitor	R.C.
Nugent, F.S.G.-	Longford	L	Landowner	Prot
O'Beirne, J.L.	Cashel	L	Merchant	R.C.
O'Brien, Sir P.	King's Co	L	Barrister	R.C.
O'Conor, C.O.	Roscommon	L	Landowner	R.C.
O'Conor, D.M.	Sligo Co	L	Landowner	R.C.

White, C.W.  
Whitworth, S.

Tipperary  
Drogheda  
L  
L  
L

O'Donoghue, D.	Tralee	L	Landowner	R.C.
O'Loughlen, Sir G.	Clare	L	Barrister	R.C.
O'Neill, Hon. E.	Antrim	C	Rentier (old son)	Prot
O'Reilly, M.W.	Longford	L	Landowner	R.C.
Pim, J.	Dublin City	L	Merchant	Prot
Power, J.T.	Wexford Co	L	Landowner	R.C.
Russell, F.W.	Limerick City	L	Merchant	Prot
St. Lawrence, Viset	Galway Boro	L	Rentier (old son)	Prot
Saunderson, E.J.	Cavan	C	Landowner	Prot
Seymour, G.H.	Antim	C	Rentier (younger son)	Prot
Shaw, W.	Bandon	L	Banker	Prot
Sherlock, D.,	King's Co	L	Barrister	R.C.
Shirley, S.E.	Monaghan	C	Landowner	Prot
Stacpoole, W.,	Ennis	L	Rentier (old son)	Prot
Stronge, Sir J.M.	Armagh Co	C	Landowner	Prot
Sullivan, E.	Mallow	L	Barrister	Prot
Synan, E.J.	Limerick Co	L	Landowner	R.C.
Taylor, T.E.	Dublin Co	C	Landowner	Prot
Trevor, Lord A.E.H.	Down	C	Landowner	Prot
Urquhart, W.P.-	Westmeath	L	Landowner	Prot
Vance, J.	Armagh City	C	Merchant	Prot
Vandaleur, C.M.	Clare	C	Landowner	Prot
Verner, E.W.	Lisburn	C	Rentier (younger son)	Prot
Verner, W.	Armagh	C	Rentier (old son)	Prot
Weguelin, C.	Youghal	L	Merchant	Prot
White, C.W.	Tipperary	L	Landowner	Prot
Whitworth, B.	Drogheda	L	Merchant	Prot

## THE 1868 ELECTION

I was never able to get as precise an estimate as I would have liked. When the last clear estimate was given in the Times (27 Nov. 1868) there were still 26 seats to come in. By checking the winners of these 26 seats I arrived at the following total for the United Kingdom:

Liberals.....	387
Conservatives.....	<u>272</u>
Majority.....	115

This is the same as the estimate given by the Annual Register for 1868. In relation to Ireland the Times counts one borderline case as Liberal which I counted as Conservative (Dalway, Carrickfergus), but on the other hand it counts as one seat each the tied contest in Horsham, which the Liberals won on petition the following April.

So a majority of 115 seems a fair estimate.

APPENDIX III : Classification of members, 1868

(1) Party

Irish members.....	Liberal 65,	Conservative 40.
Ulster members.....	Liberal 3,	Conservative 26.
Rest of Ireland.....	Liberal 62,	Conservative 14. (inc. T.C.D.)

(2) Religion

Irish members.....	Protestant 68,	Roman Catholic 37	} all liberals
Ulster members.....	Protestant 29,	Roman Catholic 0	
Rest of Ireland.....	Protestant 39,	Roman Catholic 37	

*Handwritten notes:*  
 { 28 lib. }  
 { 40 con. }  
 { 3 lib. }  
 { 26 con. }  
 { 25 lib. }  
 { 14 con. }

(3) Occupations

	(a) Irish members	(b) Ulster members	(c) Rest of Ireland	(d) Libs	(e) Cons
Landowners	54	16	38	23	26
" " eldest sons	12	4	8	7	5
" " younger sons	7	5	2	2	5
	73	25	48	57	36
Rentiers	4		4	4	
Bankers	1		1	1	
Brewers	2		2	1	1
Merchants	11	3	8	10	1
Newspaper Proprietors	3		3	2	1
	17	3	14	14	3
Barristers	9	1	8	8	1
Doctors	1		1	1	
Solicitors	1		1	1	
	11	1	10	10	1

(4) Religious denominations: Ratio of population to M.P.'s

Where Protestants were less than 10%.....	26 Prot,	32 R.C.
" from 10% to 20%.....	5	5
" over 20% .....	35	0

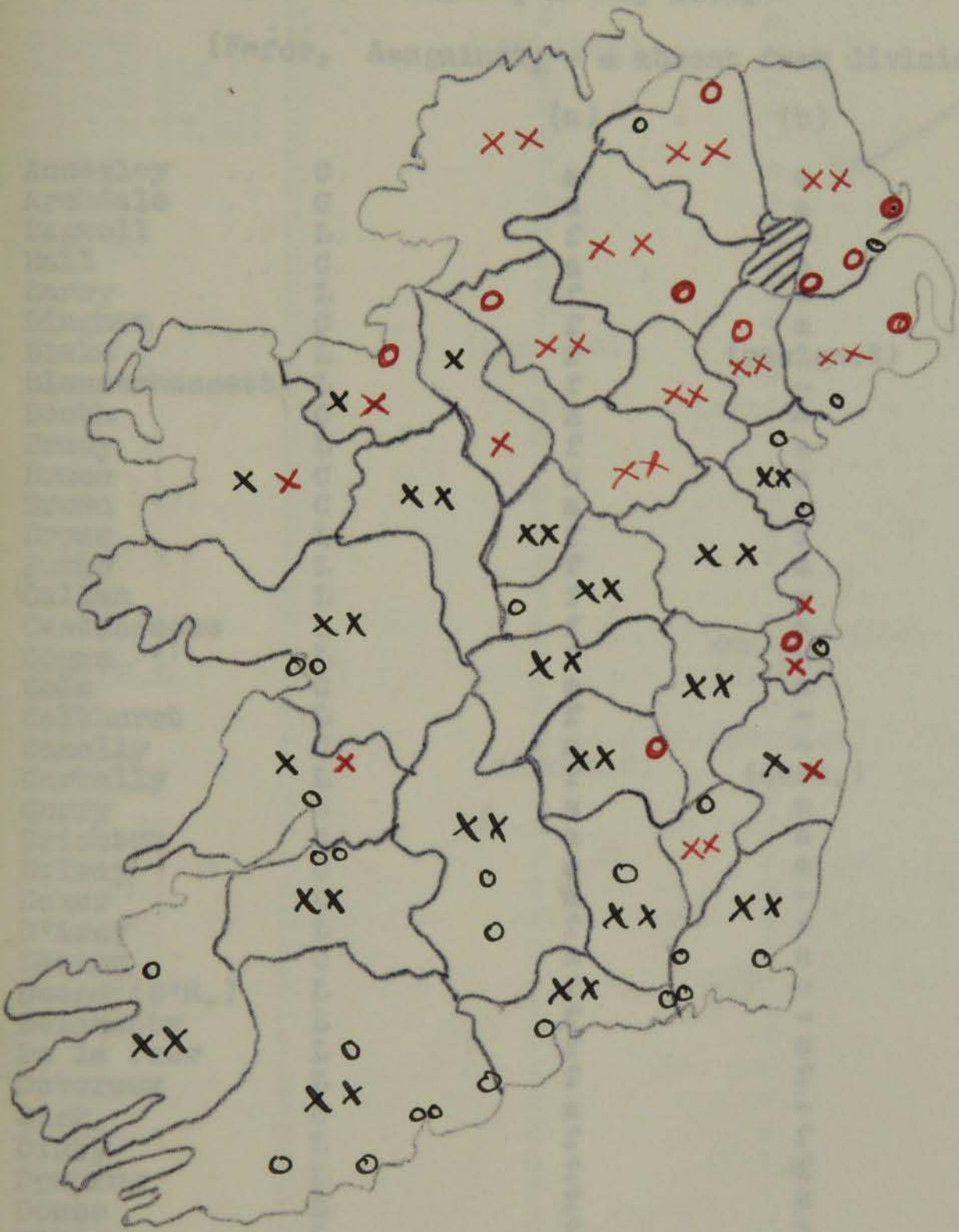


APPENDIX IV : The distribution of parties, 1868

(a) The Irish members and the divisions on the 2nd reading of the Irish Church Bill, 23 March 1868.

(b) The Irish members and their's motion for 'Parliamentary Tenants-Rights', 19 May 1871.

(Refer, Appendix I, Division)



	County seats	Brough seats
Liberals	X	O
Conservatives	X	O

APPENDIX V.

(a) The Irish members and the division on the 2nd reading of the Irish Church Bill, 23 March 1869.

(b) The Irish members and Gray's motion for 'Permissive Parliamentary Tenant-Right', 19 May 1870.

(F=for, A=against, - = absent from division).

		(a)	(b)
Annesley	C	a	a
Archdale	C	a	a
Bagwell	L	f	-
Ball	C	a	a
Barry	L	f	-
Bingham	C	f	a
Blake	L	f	(resigned)
Blennerhassett	L	f	-
Booth	C	a	-
Brady	L	f	-
Bruce	C	a	a
Bruen	C	a	a
Bryan	L	f	f
Burke	L	f	a
Callan	L	f	-
Castlerosse	L	f	a
Cogan	L	f	-
Cole	C	a	a
Colthurst	L	f	-
Conolly	C	a	-
Corbally	L	f	(decd.)
Corry	C	a	a
Crichton	C	a	a
Dalway	C	a	a
Damer	C	a	-
D'Arcy	L	f	f
Dawson	C	a	a
Dease (O'R.)	L	f	-
Delahunty	L	f	-
De la Poer	L	f	a
Devereux	L	f	f
Dick	C	a	-
Digby	L	f	f
Downing	L	f	f
Dowse	L	f	a
Ellis	L	f	a
Ennis	L	f	a
Esmonde	L	f	a
Fagan	L	f	f
Fitzgerald	L	f	a
Fitzpatrick	L	f	(peerage)
Fitzwilliam	L	f	-
Forde	C	a	a

		(a)	(b)
Portescue	L	f	a
French	L	f	-
Gavin	L	f	f
Gore	C	a	a
Gray	L	f	f
Gregory	L	f	f
Greville	L	f	a
Guinness	C	(unseated)	
Hamilton (Ld C)	C	a	-
Hamilton (I.T.)	C	a	-
Hamilton (M.of)	C	a	(unseated)
Herbert	L	f	a
Heygate	C	(unseated)	(unseated)
Johnston	C	a	-
Kavanagh	C	a	a
Keown	C	a	a
Kirk	L	f	a (for Whitworth, Feb 1868)
Knox (L.E.)	C	(unseated)	- (Cregelin, May 1860)
Knox (W.S.)	C	a	- (Cregelin, May 1860)
Lefroy	C	a	(retired) (Lefroy, Feb 1870)
Leslie	C	a	- (Leslie, Jan 1870)
McClure	L	f	a (Lefroy, Feb 1870)
McEvoy	L	f	- (Nugent, Jan 1870)
McMahon	L	f	f (Sullivan, April 1870)
Maguire	L	f	f
Mathews	L	f	-
Monsell	L	f	-
Moore (C.)	L	f	(decd.)
Moore (G.H.)	L	f	(decd.)
Murphy	L	f	-
Nugent	L	f	(peerage)
O'Beirne	L	(unseated)	
O'Brien	L	f	f
O'Conor Don	L	f	f
O'Conor (D.M.)	L	f	f
O'Donoghue	L	f	-
O'Loughlen	L	f	-
O'Neill	C	a	a
O'Reilly	L	f	-
Pim	L	f	-
Power	L	f	f
Russell	L	f	-
St. Lawrence	L	f	f
Saunderson	C	a	a
Seymour	C	a	(decd.)
Shaw	L	f	-
Sherlock	L	f	-
Shirley	C	a	a
Stacpoole	L	f	f

		(a)	(b)
Stronge	C	a	-
Sullivan	L	f	-
Synan	L	f	f
Taylor	C	a	-
Trevor	C	a	a
Urquhart	L	f	f
Vance	C	a	-
Vandaleur	C	f	a
Verner (E.W.)	C	a	a
Verner (W.)	C	a	-
Weguelin	L	f	(unseated)
White	L	f	-
Whitworth (B.)	L	(unseated)	(unseated)

also

Whitworth (T.)	L	f	f (for Whitworth, Feb 1869)
Guest	L		f (Weguelin, May 1869)
Seymour (H.)	C		a (Seymour (G.), Aug 1869)
Dease (E.)	L		f (Fitzpatrick, Jan 1870)
Plunket	C		a (Lefroy, Feb 1870)
Nugent (R.)	L		f (Nugent, Jan 1870)
Waters	L		f (Sullivan, April 1870)

Analysis

(a) Disestablishment

Liberals	for 64,	against nil,	absent nil.
Conservatives	for 2,	against 36,	absent nil.

(b) Fixity of Tenure

Liberals	for 24,	against 13,	absent 24.
Conservatives	for nil,	against 24,	absent 14.

On this division Cogan, Murphy, and others 'left the house to avoid voting'.

Table (a) is based upon Hansard, cxciv, 2127-31.  
Table (b) is based upon Freeman's Journal, 21st May 1870.

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APPENDIX VI : Members of Parliament, 1874.

(A)

The 59 claimed for home rule by the Nation

Bigger, J.G.	Cavan	Merchant	Prot
Blennerhassett, R.P.	Kerry	Barrister	Prot
Bowyer, Sir G.	Wexford Co	Barrister	R.C.
Brady, J.G.	Leitrim	Medical Doctor	R.C.
Brooks, M.	Dublin City	Merchant	Prot
Browne, G.E.	Mayo	Landowner	R.C.
Bryan, G.	Kilkenny Co	Landowner	R.C.
Butt, I.	Limerick City	Barrister	Prot
Callan, P.	Louth & Dundalk	Barrister	R.C.
Collins, E.	Kinsale	Merchant	R.C.
Conyngham, Lord F.	Clare	Rentier (Y. son)	Prot
Digby, K.T.	Queen's Co	Rentier	R.C.
Dease, E.	Queen's Co	Landowner	R.C.
Downing, M.	Cork Co	Landowner	R.C.
Dunbar, J.	New Ross	Barrister	R.C.
Ennis, N.	Meath	Tenant farmer	R.C.
Errington, G.	Longford Co	Landowner	R.C.
Esmonde, Sir J.	Waterford Co	Landowner	R.C.
Fay, C.J.	Cavan	Solicitor	R.C.
French, C.	Roscommon	Rentier (Y. son)	R.C.
Gray, Sir J.	Kilkenny City	Newspaper Prop	Prot
Henry, M.	Galway Co	Merchant	Prot
Lewis, H.O.	Carlow Boro	Landowner	R.C.
MacCarthy, J.G.	Mallow	Solicitor	R.C.

McKenna, Sir J.N.	Youghal	Financier	R.C.
Martin, J.	Meath	Rentier	Prot
Martin, P.	Kilkenny Co	Barrister	R.C.
Meldon, C.	Kildare	Barrister	R.C.
Montagu, Lord R.	Westmeath	Rentier (Y.son)	R.C.
Moore, A.J.	Clonmel	Landowner	R.C.
Morris, G.	Galway Boro	Land agent	R.C.
Murphy, N.D.	Cork City	Solicitor	R.C.
Nolan, Capt J.P.	Galway Co	Landowner	R.C.
O'Brien, Sir P.	King's Co	Barrister	R.C.
O'Byrne, W.R.	Wicklow	Landowner	R.C.
O'Callaghan, W.F.	Tipperary	Rentier(Y.son)	Prot
O'Clery, K.	Wexford Co	Barrister	R.C.
O'Conor Don	Rescommon	Landowner	R.C.
O'Conor, D.M.	Sligo Co	Landowner	R.C.
O'Gorman, P.	Waterford City	Rentier	R.C.
O'Keefe, J.	Dungervan	Landowner	R.C.
O'Leary, W.H.	Drogheda	Medical Doctor	R.C.
O'Loughlen, Sir C.	Clare	Barrister	R.C.
O'Reilly, M.W.	Longford	Landowner	R.C.
O'Shaughnessy, R.	Limerick City	Barrister	R.C.
O'Sullivan, W.H.	Limerick Co	Tenant farmer	R.C.
Power, R.	Waterford City	Rentier	R.C.
Redmond, W.A.	Wexford Boro	Rentier	R.C.
Ronayne, J.P.	Cork City	Engineer	R.C.
St Lawrence	Galway City	Rentier(Eld.son)	Prot
Shaw, W.	Cork Co	Banker	Prot

Sheil, E.	Athlone	Rentier	R.C.
Sherlock, D.	King's Co	Barrister	R.C.
Smyth, P.J.	Westmeath	Barrister	R.C.
Staepoole, W.	Ennis	Landowner	Prot
Sullivan, A.M.	Louth	Newspaper Prop.	R.C.
Synan, E.J.	Limerick Co	Landowner	R.C.
Tighe, T.	Mayo	Landowner	R.C.
White, C.	Tipperary	Landowner	Prot

Conservatives:

Archdale, W.H.	Fermanagh	Landowner	Prot
Ball, J.T.	Dublin Univ	Barrister	Prot
Beresford, Lord C.	Waterford Co	Landowner	Prot
Booth, R.G.	Sligo	Landowner	Prot
Bruen, H.	Carlow Co	Landowner	Prot
Chaine, J.	Antrim	Landowner	Prot
Close, M.C.	Armagh Co	Landowner	Prot
Cole, H.A.	Fermanagh	Rentier(Y. son)	Prot
Connolly, T.	Donegal	Landowner	Prot
Corry, H.W.L.	Tyrone	Rentier	Prot
Corry, J.P.	Belfast	Merchant	Prot
Crichton, Viset	Enniskillen	Rentier (Eld. son)	Prot
Dalway, M.R.	Carrickfergus	Landowner	Prot
Damer, L.W.D.-	Portarlington	Landowner	Prot
Dick, W.W.F.	Wicklow	Landowner	Prot
Gore, W. <del>Co</del>	Leitrim	Landowner	Prot
Guinness, Sir A.E.	Dublin City	Merchant	Prot
Hamilton, I.T.	Dublin Co	Landowner	Prot

Hamilton, M. of	Donegal	Rentier(Eld.son)	Prot
Johnston, W.	Belfast	Landowner	Prot
Kavanagh, A.M.	Carlow Co.	Landowner	Prot
Leslie, C.P.	Monaghan	Landowner	Prot
Lewis, C.E.	Londonderry City	Solicitor	Prot
Macartney, J.	Tyrene	Land owner	Prot
Mulholland, J.	Downpatrick	Landowner	Prot
O'Neill, Hon. E.	Antrim	Rentier (Eld.son)	Prot
Plunket, D.R.	Dublin Univ	Barrister	Prot
Shirley, S.E.	Monaghan	Rentier(Eld.son)	Irot
Taylor, T.E.	Dublin Co	Landowner	Prot
Trevor, Lord A.	Down	Landowner	Prot
Vance, J.	Armagh City	Merchant	Prot
Verner, E.W.	Armagh Co	Landowner	Prot
Wallace, Sir R.	Lisburn	Landowner	Prot

Liberals:

Cogan, W.H.F.	Kildare	Landowner	R.C.
Crawford, J.S.	Down	Land agent	Prot
Dickson, T.A.	Dungannon	Merchant	Prot
Herbert, H.A.	Kerry	Landowner	Prot
Law, H.	Londonderry Co	Barrister	Prot
O'Donoghue, The	Tralee	Landowner	R.C.
Smyth, R.	Londonderry Co	Univ. Prof.	Prot
Swanston, A.	Bandon	Merchant	Prot
Taylor, D.	Coleraine	Merchant	Prot
Whitworth, W.	Newry	Merchant	Prot



APPENDIX VII - Classification of members, 1874.

(1) Parties. The difficulties attending party classification in relation to the 1874 election, discussed in Chapter XII, make it impossible to arrive at a simplified table such as that for 1868 in Appendix III.

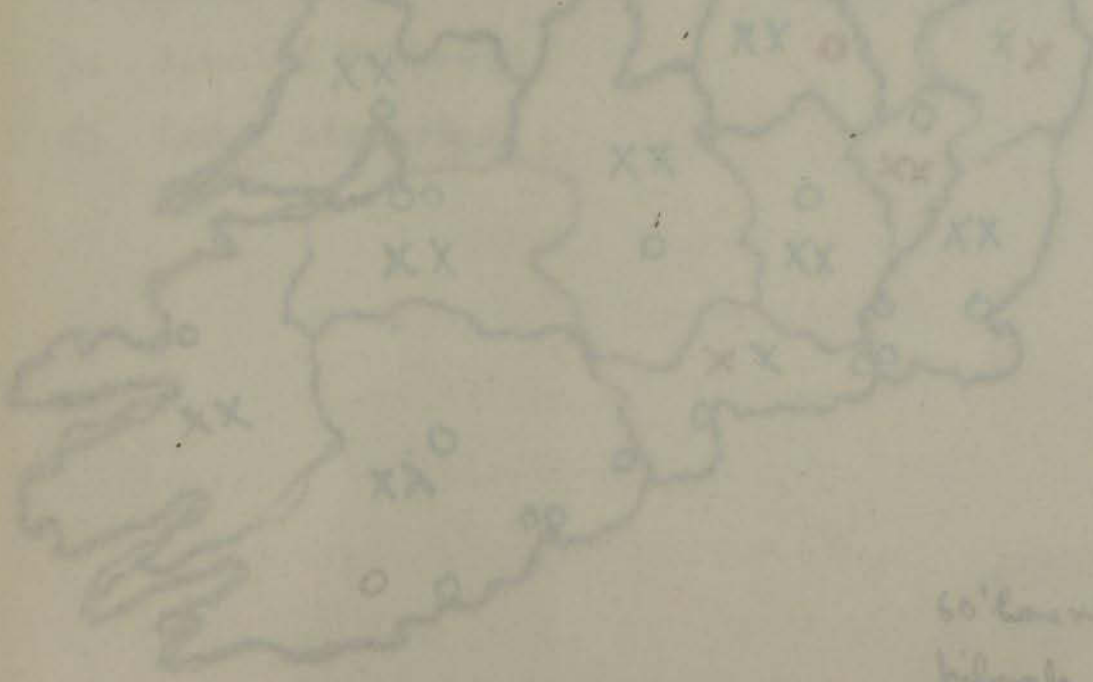
(2) Occupations. The classification of members returned in 1874 by their occupations is considered in Chapter XIII and in Table (A) at the end of that chapter.

(3) Religion.

Irish members.....	Protestant 54,	Roman Catholic 48.
Ulster members.....	Protestant 28,	Roman Catholic 1.
Rest of Ireland....	Protestant 26,	Roman Catholic 47.

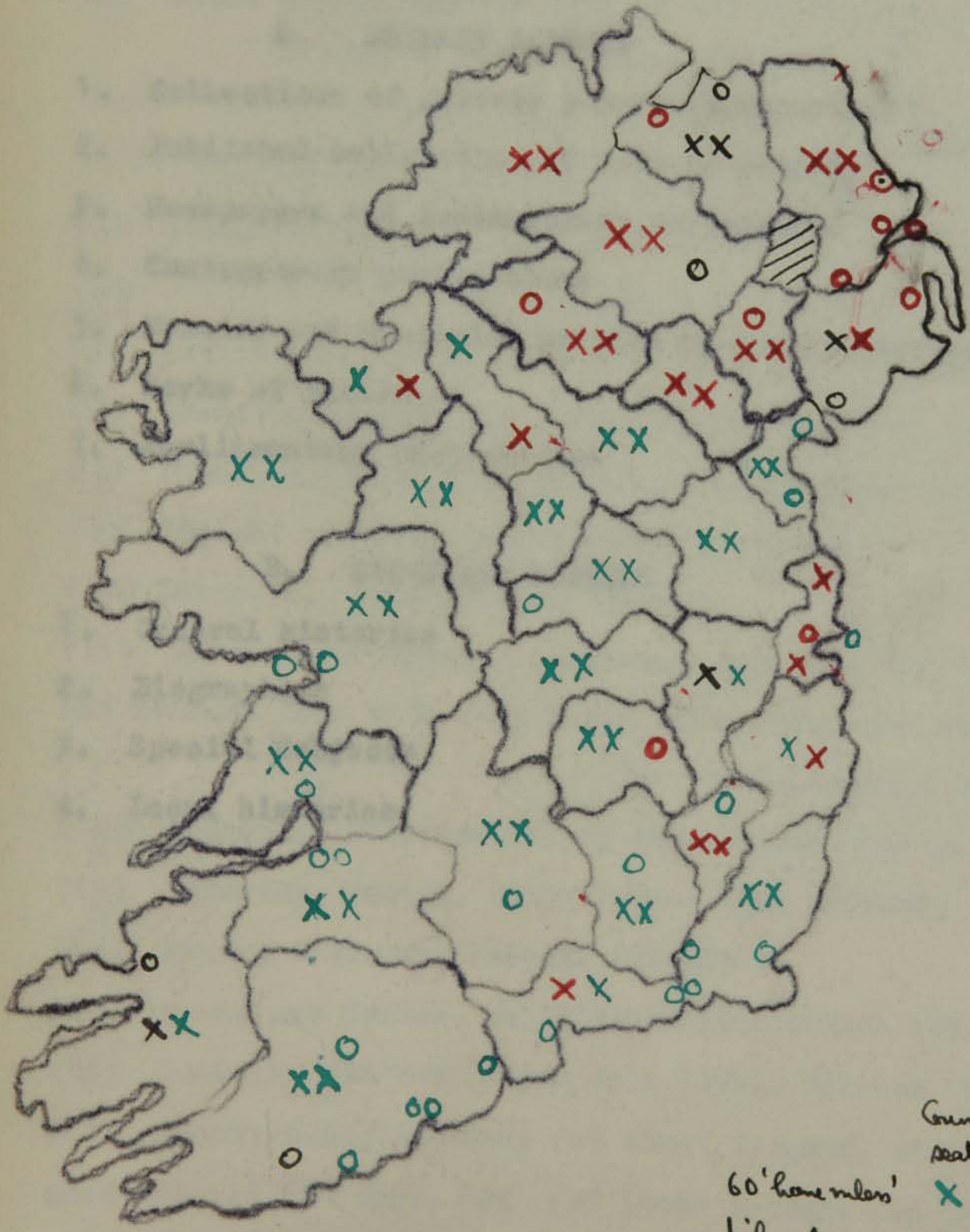
Of the 59 claimed for home rule by the Nation:  
 Protestant 13,  
 Roman Catholic 46.

In short, although the 1868 election was fought almost wholly upon a denominational issue, eleven more Roman Catholics were returned to parliament in 1874 under the popular influence of the ballot and the home rule agitation. As in the case of the question of class and representation considered in Table (A), this result is most clearly illustrated in regard to the newly-elected home rulers: out of 24 home rule members who had been elected for the first time in 1874, 21 were Roman Catholics and 3 Protestants.



	County seats	Parish seats
60' Counties	X	0
Wick	X	0
County Wick	X	0

APPENDIX VIII : The distribution of parties, 1874



	County seats	Borough seats
60' home rulers	X	O
liberals	x	O
Conservatives	X	O

A. PRIMARY SOURCES

1. Collections of private papers (manuscript)

(1) Anderson, J.S., Green Collection of Papers, 1812-18

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Synopsis

A. PRIMARY SOURCES

- 1. Collections of private papers (manuscript)
- 2. Published collections of private papers
- 3. Newspapers and contemporary periodicals
- 4. Contemporary publications
- 5. Memoirs and histories written by contemporaries
- 6. Works of reference
- 7. Parliamentary publications

B. SECONDARY SOURCES

- 1. General histories
- 2. Biographies
- 3. Special subjects
- 4. Local histories

(10) Taylor, A., letters (MS 3071).

(11) ... The following ... this very large collection were used by ...

(12) ... 1814-7 (MS 3031-2).

(13) McCarthy, Justin, diary 1874-8 (MS 3670-8).

(14) Mahon, O'Connell, letters (MS 3471).

(15) Keble and Colles, collections, letter-book (MS 3304).

(16) Russell, William (Baron 1875), letters (MS 3517-9, 3527).

(17) Moore, G.E., letters: (a) bound volumes, of which I have used vol vii (MS 3951), and (b) loose letters and other documents (MS 399 and 3977).

A. PRIMARY SOURCES

1. Collections of private papers (manuscript)

- (1) Anderson, S.L., Crown Solicitor's Office, diary 1868-74 (MSS 5965-9).
- (2) " " " letter-book (MS 5970).
- (3) Butt, Isaac, private letters and miscellaneous MSS:
  - (a) Three bound volumes, MSS 850-2.
  - (b) c. 4000 loose letter, MSS 8686-8713 (see note in preface)
  - (c) some additional loose letters, MS 10415.
- (4) Daunt, W.J.O'Neill, journal, 1868-79 (MS 3041).
- (5) " " letters, (MSS 8045-8).
- (6) Fitzpatrick, John Wilson, letters (PC 458).
- (7) Greville-Nugent, F.S (Baron Greville 1869), letters (MS 8239).
- (8) Hickey collection of miscellaneous letters (PC 411).
- (9) Kinight of Kerry letters (MSS 5949-50).
- (10) Lalor, R., letters (MSS 8564-7).
- (11) Larcom, Sir Thomas, press-cuttings etc. The following MSS numbers from this very large collection were used by me: 7842, 7493-9, and 7539.
- (12) McCarthy, Florence, diary 1874-7 (MSS 7251-2).
- (13) McCarthy, Justin, diary 1874-8 (MSS 3690-8).
- (14) Mahon, O'Gorman, letters (MS 8491).
- (15) Meade and Colles, solicitors, letter-book (MS 3924).
- (16) Monsell, William (Baron Emly 1873), letters (MSS 8517-9, 8629).
- (17) Moore, G.H., letters: (a) bound volumes, of which I have used vol vii (MS 895), and (b) loose letters and other documents (MSS 899 and 8597).

- (18) O'Brien, J.F.X., letters (six unnumbered boxes).
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